GUIDELINES FOR ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT HEADS: SHARED GOVERNANCE

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

Provided by
the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President

Guidelines for Academic Department Heads: Shared Governance

Mississippi State University

Introduction

These guidelines are provided by the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President as a resource for academic departments heads (DHs) on the expectations and policies regarding shared governance. To ensure fair and consistent treatment of faculty, staff, and students in a department, it is important for the department head to incorporate shared governance into the decision-making process and strategic planning.

As with the term "academic freedom," the concept of shared governance has been interpreted in different ways since it came to the forefront of academia in the 1960s. An article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* by Gary A. Olson (July 23, 2009; available at http://chronicle.com/article/Exactly-What-Is-Shared/47065) describes shared governance as "a delicate balance between faculty and staff participation in planning and decision-making processes, on the one hand, and administrative accountability on the other." The participation of the various constituents in a decision does not, of course, relieve the administrator from being held accountable for the decision. As stated by Olson, the key to success is "broad and unending communication."

MSU's *Faculty Handbook* includes a section called *Principles for University Governance* that calls for "open consultation, communication, and participation in decisions and decision-making bodies, and understanding of the responsibilities and limitations of authority by all members of the university community." It also calls for administrative officers to "exercise due diligence" in seeking input from faculty, staff, students, and external constituents on issues affecting them. The inclusion of all members of the university community in the governance of the university is essential to building trust, mutual respect, and collegiality. The Table of Contents for the *Faculty Handbook* and a link to the entire handbook are available at:

http://www.msstate.edu/web/faculty_handbook/

To foster an environment of shared governance in a department, it is essential that department heads consult with those who will be affected by decisions (faculty, staff, students, and/or external constituents as appropriate) prior to the decisions being made. Department heads should allow adequate time for discussions and feedback, and should communicate their decisions to the various constituencies. This does not imply that every decision must be the result of a formal vote. It does imply, however, that the affected constituents are always informed and allowed to provide input.

The *Faculty Handbook* includes very clear statements regarding the importance of shared governance on the campus. It states that matters that affect "the academic mission of the university (curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, advising, degree requirements, faculty scholarship, faculty status, faculty service)" must include faculty involvement in both the generation and the implementation of relevant policies. If an administrator does not follow the advice and recommendations of the faculty on such matters, he/she is expected to provide reasons for this action. Such events are expected to be "extraordinary."

The expectations regarding shared governance vary from department to department, but generally include decisions regarding academic programs, curricula, and courses; promotion and tenure; faculty hiring; strategic planning; and admission to graduate programs. The primary method for ensuring shared governance is through the committee structure within a department.

Annual Faculty Evaluations and Reviews

During the annual faculty evaluation and review process, the DH must address the faculty member's teaching load relative to productivity in research and/or service. The teaching needs of the department are a component of this discussion. For tenure-track faculty members, the written review *must* include a statement on the faculty member's progress toward promotion and tenure. For tenured associate professors, this review should include a statement regarding the faculty member's progress toward promotion to professor. The annual evaluation and review also involves a written agreement between the DH and the faculty member about the faculty member's goals, responsibilities, and expectations for the next year.

More details regarding the annual faculty evaluation and review are found in Section 7.0 of the *Faculty Handbook*. This includes the proper procedure to follow should the DH and the faculty member be in disagreement on the evaluation.

Three Year Reviews of Department Heads

According to AOP 10.02 Academic Administrators and Directors, a thorough review and evaluation of each academic DH will be conducted by the dean at the end of each three year period. Starting in 2013, this process is to be coordinated centrally through the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President. After the review, a decision is to be made by the dean regarding the continued administrative appointment of the DH. The Provost has chosen to add the following provision to the process: *If the majority of the faculty are not generally in favor of a continued appointment of the DH and the dean decides to reappoint, the dean will address the reasons for his/her decision in a public forum with the faculty.*

Promotion and Tenure Committees

Each department is required to have a Promotion and Tenure (P&T) Committee as well as departmental P&T guidelines. General guidelines for the makeup of this committee are found in the *Faculty Handbook*. Answers to frequently asked questions regarding the evaluation of different types of faculty activity in the promotion and tenure process are available at http://www.provost.msstate.edu/pdf/tips.pdf.

The university's P&T procedures are available on the Faculty Senate web site (http://www.facultysenate.msstate.edu) and in the *Faculty Handbook*. As stipulated in these procedures, each department determines the structure of its P&T committee subject to certain conditions (see the P&T procedures for details). Unless the department uses a committee of the

whole, the members of the committee must be elected for a term stipulated in the department's P&T guidelines. The committee elects its chair each year.

Search Committees

The creation and filling of all faculty positions and professional staff positions is to be done in consultation with the faculty, staff, and students in the department. Formal search committees are required in the filling of all faculty positions (including instructors). A *majority* of the committee members must be *elected* representatives from the faculty. Staff, students, and external constituents shall be included as appropriate for the department.

The department head should contact Human Resources Management (HRM) and the Office of Access, Opportunity, and Success to provide training to the search committee members on the proper conduct of the search. In addition, HRM can provide advice on each step of the search process, including getting approval for the position, advertising the position, screening the applicants, checking references, and filling the position. The Vice President for Access, Opportunity, and Success is a senior leader who serves as a catalyst to leverage best practices and resources across Mississippi State University's campuses to promote a culture of student success across the institution where individuals from all racial and ethnic identities, ages, nationalities, social and economic status, first-generation status, and physical and mental abilities are able to thrive and be engaged. The VPAOS plays a pivotal role in advancing retention, student learning, and success. This includes expanding pathways and services for support and care that enhance academic achievement, student development, persistence, and degree completion. It also includes cultivating excellence through a supportive campus environment, transformational learning experiences, and immersive engagement opportunities at all levels.

It is the expectation that the department head will follow the advice of the search committee in filling the position by selecting an individual from the list of finalists. It is a good practice to allow all members of the faculty in the department to provide input on this decision. On those occasions when the department head does not follow the advice of the search committee, the department head must inform the committee as to the reasons for this decision.

Courses and Curricula Committees

The UCCC is responsible for screening proposed courses and curricula after they have been referred to the committee by the Dean's Office and for reviewing existing curricula. More specifically, according to the bylaws, it is the purpose of the UCCC to:

A. Determine if proposed curricula and courses are within the scope of the stated purpose of the university and of the college, school, or department concerned.
B. Determine if proposed courses duplicate existing courses.
C. Determine and maintain curriculum and course change policies and procedures.
D. Provide oversight of the University General Education Curriculum.
E. Recommend changes to the Graduate Council and the Academic Deans Council.

The current *UCCC Guide and Format for Curriculum Proposals* may be found at http://www.uccc.msstate.edu/GuideandFormat_2010.pdf. All proposals for changes to courses and curricula must originate in the academic department. Such changes must be voted upon either by the department's Courses and Curricula Committee (if one exists) or the entire faculty of the department. This process is the same whether the proposed action is to add, modify, or delete courses or degree programs for Campus 1 (main campus), Campus 2 (Meridian campus), or Campus 5 (distance education).

Proposals approved at this level are then sent to the department head for approval. Successful proposals continue through the approval process by going to the college or school Courses and Curricula Committee, the Dean, and the UCCC. More details regarding the rest of the courses and curricula approval process are available in the *UCCC Guide and Format for Curriculum Proposals*.

Degree Program Coordinators

Information regarding the requirements for degree program coordinators may be found at http://www.provost.msstate.edu/pdf/degree_program_coordinator.pdf. Each degree program, both undergraduate and graduate, must have a degree program coordinator. The department head

coordinates the process for selecting a degree program coordinator in consultation with the degree program faculty.

In collaboration with the department head, the undergraduate degree program coordinator (or simply undergraduate coordinator) ensures that the program adheres to all university policies and serves as the coordinator of the academic advising for the program. The undergraduate coordinator also leads the faculty in curriculum review and development and reviews all course and curriculum proposals for the program. This may be done in coordination with the department's Courses and Curricula Committee if such a committee exists. The undergraduate coordinator also works with the department head to facilitate the annual assessment of the degree program.

The *Bulletin of the Graduate School* may be found at www.grad.msstate.edu/pdf/bulletin.pdf. The Office of the Graduate School is responsible for administering the university's graduate student admission policy. The graduate coordinator must be a tenured level 1 member of the graduate faculty who is academically qualified in the field. The department head, in consultation with the degree program faculty, coordinates the process for selecting a graduate coordinator.

The graduate coordinator of each graduate program has the authority to grant admission to the graduate program and is responsible for communicating this decision to the Office of the Graduate School and the applicant. While there is no requirement for a department to have a Graduate Admissions Committee, many choose to do so, in which case the graduate coordinator would coordinate with this committee in making the admissions decisions. In collaboration with the department head, the graduate coordinator ensures that the program adheres to all university policies and procedures, interacts with the Dean of the Graduate School to ensure adherence to all Graduate School policies and procedures, and leads the degree program faculty in curriculum review and development. This may be done in coordination with the department's Courses and Curricula Committee if such committee exists. The graduate coordinator, in collaboration with the department head, also facilitates the annual assessment of the degree program.

It is typical for departments to give a course release in recognition for service as either the undergraduate or graduate coordinator. Undergraduate and graduate coordinators on 9-month contracts may also receive compensation from the department (typically the equivalent of teaching a class in summer school) if they perform duties for these position in the summer.

Faculty Workloads

AOP 13.23 Faculty Workload addresses the assignment of workloads to tenure-track faculty, tenured faculty, and instructors. Some colleges and departments have workload policies that may be more specific than this policy, so you need to be aware of those. AOP 13.23 requires that a DH make the workload assignment in consultation with the faculty member and with the concurrence of the dean and provost. The workload is a combination of teaching, research/creative achievements, and service/engagement activities.

The following is a summary of the average teaching load in an academic year for a faculty member with an active research program. For each *discipline,* the typical number of classes taught depends upon the highest level of degree program offered. The approximate number of credit hours (CH) taught is given in parentheses.

Highest Level of Degree Program	Number of Classes
Undergraduate degree	6 (18 CH)
Master's degree	5 (15 CH)
Doctoral degree	4 (12 CH)

The teaching load may be adjusted upward for those faculty members who do not have active research programs. The teaching load for a full-time instructor is generally 8 courses (about 24 credit hours) per academic year.

A DH may reduce the assigned number of courses for a faculty member based upon factors such as the nature of the course, class size, rank and/or experience of the faculty member, number of

course preparations, number of graduate students, number of directed studies, development of new courses or curricula, demands on the faculty members research agenda, and level of university, professional, and/or public service.

If the faculty member is not funded solely from E&G funds, it is necessary for the DH to differentiate between those funds designated for research and those designated for teaching. The proportions for teaching and research are determined by the proportions funded by those designated budgets. Service activities may be funded by either of these budgets.

The determination of what is considered an *active research agenda* is the responsibility of the DH with input from the faculty member. The expectations for a faculty member's contributions in scholarly/creative achievements must be provided each year in the annual review. Adjustments in the teaching and/or service load due to external grants for research should be in proportion to the level of funding from those grants. Significant contributions in service to the department, college, or university may result in a reduced teaching load or a reduced expectation for research activity.

Departmental Bylaws or Guidelines

It is recommended practice that academic departments have a set of Bylaws or Guidelines that describe the functioning of the department. Examples of things to be included are: a list of committees describing their composition and the process for formation, the frequency and operation of faculty meetings, responsibilities of undergraduate and graduate coordinators, the departmental P&T process, significant dates in the academic year, and other items that are important to the faculty in the operation of the department.