

Understanding Faculty Senates: Moving from Mystery to Models

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The role faculty play in the intellectual enterprise of colleges and universities is widely accepted as integral (Barnett, 1994). However, their role in governance and decision-making has been a point of contention for many campuses (Floyd, 1985; Gerber, 2001). The result of faculty participation in governance has often been associated with institutional ineffectiveness (AGB, 1996; Allen, 1971; Fisher, 1997). Discussions about faculty involvement in university decision-making commonly invite discussion about senates as the organization by which most faculty participate in governance (Glimour, 1991).

Absent from the discussion on faculty governance is a comprehensive understanding of senates. Different functional and structural qualities that exist among the diversity of senates are virtually unknown. I liken collectively understanding the role senates' play in governance to an unsolved mystery. In order to improve the involvement of faculty in governance, a conceptual understanding of faculty senate involvement is needed.

As a way to bring about better understanding of faculty senates, this study provides a conceptual frame to comprehend them. Based on 12 site visits and telephone interviews with 42 senate presidents, I offer four models of faculty senates in order to establish a taxonomy by which senates can be better understood and studied. To begin, I provide a perspective of faculty participation in governance. I then review a small sample of studies on senates, describe the study, and introduce the models. Lastly, I discuss additional insights from the data that help clarify the models and identify important factors for the continued study of faculty senates.

Faculty Participation in Governance

Formal faculty involvement in governance began in the early 1900's. The firing of a Stanford professor for espousing his views on labor practices and railroad monopolies marked the beginning of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). The AAUP, since its inception in 1915, has championed the issue of academic freedom and issues of faculty involvement in governance. Today the most widely recognized publication on faculty governance is the AAUP's 1966 "statement on government of colleges and universities". The statement was first drafted in 1920 to emphasize the importance of faculty involvement in both academic and non-academic decision-making. The statement called for shared responsibility among university constituents for various aspects of the university and specifically grants authority over academic matters to faculty (AAUP, 1966).

Over the next three decades presidential authority weakened as they began to assume more responsibility outside of the university (AGB, 1984). Institutions also experienced tremendous growth in student enrollment, expenditures, development, and external relations (Altbach, et.al, 1999). As a result, the administrative responsibility of institutions also expanded. The professionalization of institutions along with the continued specialization of faculty created significant role shifts with respect to how institutions were governed (Corson, 1971; Collis, 2000). Institutions today boast budgets and organizational structures comparable to for-profit companies. At the same time,

there has been a decline in faculty zeal to participate in governance creating multiple contexts for institutional decision-making (Scott, 1997).

Although faculty have traditionally maintained control in areas of curriculum, instruction, and tenure, the last two decades introduced a number of issues that have blurred the lines of authority. Issues such as distance education, intellectual property, corporate sponsorship, and patent policies have both educational and administrative implications. Consequently, the issue of faculty involvement in governance is confused. The role faculty senates' play (or should play) in governance has become an increasingly difficult question to address.

These and similar issues has been made even more difficult given the modest understanding that exists concerning the role and function of faculty senates. In my estimation, such lack of understanding stems mainly from two sources. The first is the vast diversity that exists among institutions and senates. There are over 2,000 four-year colleges and universities in the United States (Carnegie Classification, 2000). Many of them maintain independence as a result of being private, and all of them maintain some uniqueness having distinct cultures, histories, environmental context and demands. Equally distinctive are the senates that operate within institutions making them difficult to collectively grasp.

The second reason that makes the questions concerning the senate difficult to answer is the lack of empirical or theoretical work done on senates (Lee, 1991). The body of literature that specifically addresses faculty senates in

a way that provides substantive understanding is limited. Consequently, those seeking to make sense of senates have been left to speculate about the challenges and plausible solutions. Although not much literature is empirically informed, a fair amount of discussion on faculty governance exists. The following is a review of the studies I deem as having made an impact on how senates are viewed.

Research on Faculty Governance

A good deal of scholarly attention has been paid to faculty involvement in governance (Bila, 1999; Hollinger, 2001; Miller, 1996). Scholars have paid less attention to the function of faculty senates as the predominate organization whereby faculty participate in institutional governance. The majority of literature on faculty governance discusses the involvement of faculty broadly and from a variety of perspectives (Baldrige & Kemerer, 1976; Keller, 2001; Kolodny, 2000; Morpew, 1999; Schuster, et.al., 1994). For example, numerous articles discuss the importance of shared governance (Hardy, 1990; Ramo, 1997), examine the impact of institutional change in relation to current governance structures (Benjamin& Carroll, 1999; Collis, 2000), or discuss the importance of faculty participation in governance (Keller, 1987; Miller, 1999). Each of these approaches to the challenges of governance is helpful yet they do not distinctly analyze the function of faculty senates. I organize the literature according to discussion on democratic participation in decision-making, faculty perceptions of effective governance, and concepts of faculty participation in governance.

Most studies are based on the assumption that faculty participation in governance is important to effective institutional decision-making (Birnbaum, 1988; Williams et. al, 1987). This assertion is based upon the notion that increased employee participation in decision-making is associated with increased employee satisfaction and performance (Floyd, 1985). Several scholars call for increased faculty involvement as a means to improve institutional effectiveness, noting that faculty are the moral guides for institutions that would otherwise respond solely to market demands (Gerber, 1997; Ramo, 1997; Richardson, 1999). On the contrary, other scholars claim that faculty becoming overly involved in governance slow institutions' ability to make fast pace decisions that the higher education environment now calls for (AGB, 1996; Duderstadt, 2000; Evans, 1999). Beyond the question of to what extent should faculty participate still lies the question of how to effectively involve them in governance.

Dill and Helm (1988), assert that faculty participation in governance has gone through three different periods, which they term, faculty control, democratic participation, and strategic policy-making. Whether or not most institutions have moved to the strategic policy-making stage is questionable. Democratic participation appears to be more accurate as much of the literature is steeped in the notion that governance is a democratic process in which faculty should be involved (Hardy, 1990; Lewis, 2000; Marcus; 2001; Mortimer& McConnell, 1978). In that vein, many scholars examine the affects of faculty involvement (or the lack thereof) in specific institutional decisions such as fund-raising, budget cuts,

program discontinuance, strategic planning, and athletics (Dill& Helm, 1988;Dimond, 1991;Dykes, 1969; Kissler, 1997; Newman& Bartee, 1999).

The focus on democratic participation (for the sake of democracy) has overshadowed the discussion on how to effectively involve faculty in governance and to what extent has more or less involvement improves decision-making. Arguably the method and results of faculty involvement is equally important as the extent of their involvement for effective governance.

Identifying how faculty perceive their involvement in governance helps develop understanding of what factors are important to their effective involvement in governance. Williams et.al. (1987) provides six perceptive categories of how faculty view their involvement in governance. The categories are as follows: a) collegial- those who prefer a shared governance approach b) activists- those who reject a strong administrative role in governance c) acceptors- those who are willing to go along with what others decide d) hierarchicals- those who prefer a strong administrative role in governance and e) copers- those who manage to “get by” under current circumstances. These models help understand how faculty view their role in governance. Nevertheless, they do not necessarily help understand how such perceptions are played out within the organizational constructs of faculty senates.

Lee (1991) examined both structural and cultural qualities of senates to determine faculty perceptions effectiveness. She found that senates which were faculty dominated versus senates mixed with staff or administrators were perceived as more effective. Senates that had positive cultural contexts,

meaning faculty held affirmative views about the senate, were perceived as more effective. And, on campuses where the president and provost positively engaged the senate and the idea of shared governance, the senate was perceived to be more effective.

There are only a handful of studies that directly address the role of faculty senates in governance (Baldrige & Kemerer, 1976; Birnbaum, 1989, 1991; Gilmour, 1991; Lee, 1991; Moore, 1975; Trow, 1990). Unfortunately, there are fewer that provide a theoretical frame for viewing senates. Birnbaum (1989) acknowledged the structural ineffectiveness of many senates but recognized that senates also perform latent functions. In an attempt to explain why senates persist in spite of such organizational ineffectiveness, he offered a symbolic perspective that provides an alternative view of senates. He claimed that although senates can be ineffective according to the bureaucratic flow of the organization, they can still perform symbolic or cultural functions that are purposive. For example, senates may symbolize faculty commitments to professional values or an acceptance of the current authority relationship between faculty and the administration.

Miller (1999) conceptualizes faculty involvement in governance by using three models. The first model views trustees, administrators, and faculty as three separate branches of government within the institution. Similar to the U.S. configuration of government, the trustees are viewed as the judicial branch, the administration is viewed as the executive branch, and the faculty are viewed as the legislative branch. I consider this model with caution given the literature that

suggests many boards act as a rubber stamp, administrators have varying levels of authority, and all faculty are not involved in governance (Chait, et.al, 1996; Keller, 1987; Scott, 1997).

Miller alternatively offers a watchdog and ladder model. The watchdog model assumes that a small selected group of faculty work to stay informed concerning the actions of the administration and alerts others when decisions contrary to faculty interest are in the making. While this may take place on some campuses, this model does not take into consideration the political aspects of governance and assumes that faculty are in agreement concerning decisions under consideration. For instance, an administrative decision to merge two academic programs can divide faculty depending on resources that can potentially be gained or lost.

The ladder model assumes that the level of faculty participation in decision-making is gradual and based on the degree administrators allow. Non-participation, degrees of tokenism, and degrees of faculty power constitute the rungs of the ladder. This model holds that over time faculty move up the ladder continually gaining more involvement in decision-making. The caveat for using this model is that the cultural aspects of faculty/administrator interaction is not always linear and often changes due to turnover. As a result, steps on the ladder may not be gradual; the level of faculty involvement may change, decrease over time, or steps on the ladder may be skipped depending on the quality of interaction among constituents, and according to particular decision-types.

I use three points to summarize the literature on faculty governance and senates. First, faculty involvement in governance remains a cornerstone of higher education and an institutional value for many campuses. However, disagreement exists over what areas faculty should have decision-making authority and the extent of their involvement in campus decision-making. Second, there is little known about the structural, cultural, or functional qualities of faculty senates. Different senate types or differences that exist across institutional sectors have not been delineated. Third, the development of theory that explains the role faculty senates' play in governance is primitive. The limited theoretical understanding of senates significantly impairs the ability of those in higher education to develop policy that more effectively involves faculty in governance.

The lack of empirical and conceptual work specifically on senates leaves two distinct gaps in the literature. This study, to the extent possible, intends to narrow that gap. Given the dearth of research that exists, combined with the confusion surrounding faculty senates, a conceptual frame to view senates is needed. This study provides empirically based models of faculty senates that cut across institutional types providing a frame to comprehend them. Doing so will enhance the discussion and study of faculty senates.

The Study

Conceptually the aim for creating these models was to draw a picture for those who study and work within institutions of higher education. The picture is

intended to be a replica of faculty senates in four-year colleges and universities. Although every fine detail was not captured, this portrait reflects an image that shows how faculty senates participate in governance. The purpose of advancing these models is not to suggest that one is better than another or that there is one model most fitting for a particular institutional type. As prelude to such analysis, these models simply provide a way to comprehend faculty senates and their role in governance. I define the term theoretical model as a tentative description that accounts for the known properties of a particular subject matter or object.

Sample and Data

The models of faculty senates are based on data collected from a series of site visits and telephone interviews. The site visits were conducted at 12 campuses. Based on the Carnegie Classification of Higher Education Institutions, six are doctoral institutions, two are masters institutions, and four are liberal arts colleges. Eight of the institutions are public and four are private. From each campus approximately five individuals were targeted to participate in hour-long interviews. A total of 51 participants were interviewed during the site visits. The remaining nine participants that were targeted but not included were not interviewed due to schedule changes that could not be reconciled during the visit. Participates included, faculty senate presidents, senior academic officers, university presidents, and faculty involved in the senate. The hour-long interviews focused on the institutional concept of shared governance and the involvement of faculty senates in decision-making. Participants were asked a series of open-ended questions and asked to give examples of major institutional decision-

making. They were then asked to classify the involvement of their faculty senate in governance.

In addition to the site visits, telephone interviews were conducted with 42 faculty senate presidents at doctoral institutions across the country. The average length of institutional affiliation among this sample was 23 years. Thirty-one of the institutions were public and eleven were private. A set of 12 semi-structured questions were asked focusing on structural and cultural aspects of the senates and factors they perceived to be associated with senate effectiveness. The goal of conducting the interviews was to gain insight from those most involved with senates concerning their perception of the role it plays in governance.

In analyzing data from both the site visits and telephone interviews I sought to draw out meaningful themes across each of the interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). By reviewing the interviews and notes, themes were identified in relation to how faculty senates functioned in the overall context of institutional governance. Based on the themes, six models of senates were identified. I then conducted a second analysis of the data using the six models and they were subsequently reduced to four.

Based on a review of the literature and these data, I offer the following four models of faculty senates. As a note, I use the term faculty senate to refer to the formal faculty governing body on a campus. Faculty council, academic senate, or other terms may be used on different campuses. These models are intended to provide four conceptual frames to view senate involvement in governance.

Models

Traditional

Traditional senates primarily function to represent and protect the interest of faculty in university decision-making. These senates usually have limited legal authority thus their ability to impact decisions is often minimized to making recommendations that the administration reserves the right to act upon or dismiss. Governing documents such as by-laws, a constitution, or state statutes dictate the extent of their legal authority. These senates maintain authority in areas that have been traditionally the domain of the faculty; curriculum, promotion and tenure, and issues related to faculty working conditions, (i.e., example, sabbatical policies, the faculty handbook, or merit pay). Their influence in other areas of university decision-making is minimal and is often reduced to being consulted when the administration deems it necessary.

Traditional senates are not assertive and usually do not have their own agenda. Instead they are responsive to the initiatives and actions of the administration. These senates do safeguard faculty rights against perceived administrative transgressions. In the event of a crisis or contentious action by the administration, these senates can become a legitimate force that check and balance administrative authority. In these institutions presidential and administrative authority is often strong. Overall these senates function as an association that represents faculty interests rather than an integrated partner in campus governance and decision-making.

Influential

Faculty senates that are influential function as a legitimate governing authority within the institution. Like traditional senates, influential senates also maintain authority over curriculum, promotion and tenure, and faculty work conditions. However, these senates also participate and significantly influence decision-making that encompasses a broader spectrum of the university. Decisions such as athletics, development, budget priorities, and the selection of new senior administrators are a few areas where these senates are meaningfully involved.

Influential senates drive issues and promote policy changes that result from having an agenda that is concerned with the entire university, not just faculty issues. Influential senates are responsive to the administration, but the administration also responds to them as a result of being a recognizable governing body on the campus. These senates view themselves as responsible for the general welfare of the institution and take responsibility for improving its overall quality.

These senates are viewed as influential because they have the ability to create change and are perceived by other institutional constituents as a legitimate governing authority on the campus. Influential senates usually exist on campuses where the power center shifts between constituencies as the contextual circumstances shift. They usually maintain a collaborative opposed to a confrontational relationship with the administration. Consequently, they

function as an integrated governing body of the campus with the formal authority to legislate change in particular areas and the ability influence decision-making in a variety of others.

Dormant

Faculty senates that are dormant are relatively inactive and inoperable. Although these senates are fewer in numbers, they do exist. These senates usually do not meet on a regular basis and are not actively involved in campus governance. In effect, they exist in name only and operate as a ceremonial artifact. Even with respect to traditional academic issues they are inactive as an organization. Decision-making authority over academic matters frequently rests with individual schools and colleges. Usually there is a lack of infrastructure to facilitate activity and faculty participation may be expressed through informal processes. Dormant senates are marked by inactivity, and low-level organization. The structural power of the president and administration is often strong.

Consonant with Birnbaum's perception of faculty senates, these senates may perform latent functions that are not related to university governance and decision-making. For example, the senate may serve as a scapegoat for the administration, a ceremonial past-time for faculty, or a screening device for future administrators (Birnbaum, 1989). Because these senates are viewed by campus constituents as ceremonial and dormant as it relates to their involvement in governance, their function as an organization in decision-making is minimal.

Cultural

Cultural senates function by means of informal governance and decision-making processes that occur in place of, or in addition to, formal structures of the senate. Although the formal structure may be operable, the informal processes by which faculty participate may be more effective in determining decision outcomes. These senates may have a “kitchen cabinet” which refers to small groups of influential faculty or individual members of the senate that impact major decision-making via informal processes. For example, well-respected senior faculty may be able to influence decision-making on a particular issue more than the formal proceedings of the senate. Other faculty members may have developed a strong relationship with the president or provost which gives them the benefit of access or can make the difference of whether an issue is even discussed.

Cultural senates can play a variety of functions in governance. Although they may structurally resemble other models, their impact is a reflection of the history, institutional values, and interaction between key players in the senate and in administration. The fusion of cooperative personnel and personalities is critical to impacting outcomes. The cultural model of faculty senates is based on well-established relationships and trust among key constituents. Likewise, distrust between constituents can lead to “deal-cutting” and other actions that circumvent the senate as an organization. In some cases, the result of failed senates can give way to alternative processes. In other cases, history or institutional culture can dictate how senates function. The function cultural

senates will vary due to the informal nature by which faculty participate in governance. The combination of personnel, decision-type, and campus politics will, in varying degrees, affect the influence of these senates in decision-making.

Additional insights

As a way to further explain these models I offer additional insights from the site visits and the telephone interviews. Considering what issues are under consideration, the interpersonal dynamics of senates, and the ability of senate to move from one model to another is important to better understanding these models. The following are key variables believed to impact the role faculty senates play in governance and decision-making. I use quotes from the site visits and telephone respondents to illustrate their importance.

Importance of Decision-type: The decision to discontinue football, an academic program, or determining general education requirements were only a few issues that had an impact on how the senate functioned. In other words, it is possible that a senate can function differently depending on the issue under consideration. In four cases from the site visits and ten cases from the telephone interviews this was apparent. This is important to mention in the event that a significant portion of campuses operate in a similar fashion. To be clear, there is a relationship between the role faculty senates' play in governance and the types of issues they usually deal with. At the same time, particular issues can arise on campuses that cause governing constituencies to function differently than

normal. Senates can, depending on the issue, function on the margin of a particular model.

For example, one traditional senate in this study that would not normally be involved in budgetary issues was in fact very assertive during a budget decision. The reason had much to do with the uniqueness of the issue. This urban doctoral campus was faced with the decision to build new dormitories on campus during a time when financial resources were scarce. The decision to build a new dormitory on this campus would significantly change the climate of teaching and learning. Alternatively, building new housing on the campus was also framed as an administrative initiative that will reap intended enrollment improvements, thus improve the budget.

Depending on how issues are perceived and framed (academic versus administrative) can influence the role of faculty senates' play in decision-making. One senate member explained: "never would we [the faculty senate] be so involved in budget matters but this issue of building new housing seems to be one of the few things both the faculty and administration want to do." A senate president from a different doctoral campus stated: "our senates can be more or less involved in decision-making depending on what's at stake. If there are no empires to build or money to be had then we pretty much stay out of the way." Further illustrating this point, a faculty member involved with the senate at a masters institution stated: "sometimes there will be issues that the faculty really feel strongly about. During those times we tend to act a little more responsible to ensure that the best decision is being made." The complexity of some issues

facing campuses produces multiple consequences that can involve faculty senates in ways that stretch the parameters of these models.

Personnel matters: One variable that should be considered when examining the role of faculty senates is personnel. That is, the extent key persons involved in governance are able to effectively communicate and the extent they are willing to cooperate. These persons include senate leaders, the president, chief academic officer, and others who play key roles in campus governance. The interaction among key player in governance can significantly change the role faculty senates play on campus.

As with any social or cultural context, people can impact outcomes. Those involved in governance can through their interactions influence the role of senates by continuing to operate within existing norms or creating new ones. For example, one faculty senate president from a doctoral institution explained: “under our old president we [the faculty] were never involved in governance. He just didn’t believe in it, and as a result we were shut out.” A former faculty senate president from a different doctoral institution lamented:

Unfortunately I don’t believe anything the administration tells us [the faculty]. For a long time they have shown an unwillingness to work with us on hard issues. In their minds it’s much easier to bulldoze ahead, and maybe consult us along the way or at the end. The relationship between the old administration and the old senate wasn’t that way.

One long time faculty member at a liberal arts college stated:

It’s hard for me to think that structural qualities are problematic for senates. We’ve had the same structure for 30 years and

governance never worked. In the last five years we gotten a new president and provost, and now it works but the structure hasn't changed a bit.

These quotes illustrate the impact personnel can have on the role of the senate in governance. Issues of trust between constituents, cultural norms, and traditions are played out by key individuals who, through their actions, impact the role of the senate.

Ability to shift: The senates in this study also showed the ability to shift from one model to another. Throughout the study it became apparent that some senates had, over time, transitioned from one model to another or was currently in the process of shifting. Personnel and structure was shown to significantly impact senates' ability to shift. The hiring of a new president or provost or structural changes that grant more or less authority to senates can quickly impact a senate's ability to shift from one model to another. Cultural shifts that restore trust, or improve the perception of senates can also impact the role of senates but usually happen over a much longer period of time.

One provost from a small liberal arts college explained: "Historically I think that our senate has been inactive; however in recent years the president and I have really made a push to make the senate more responsible for dealing with issues they deem important". A faculty senate president from a doctoral institution stated:

I think right now we [the senate] operate by making recommendations but we are moving toward becoming more critically involved in decision-making. Recently we have been trying to get a voting seat on the top administrative committee and

on the board. So far we have gotten the former which has really made a difference in how the administration views us and how much power we have.

The point here is that senates have the ability to shift from one model to another over the course of their existence which is important to understanding how some senate might fall in-between models. Presidents, faculty senate leaders, and particular issues are factors that can change how faculty senates function in institutional governance. The models of faculty senates (traditional, influential, dormant, cultural) represent a protean construct but take into account these important variables as key to better understanding them.

Discussion

As mentioned earlier, the aim is not to say which model is more effective than another. Rather it has been to simply offer a frame by which faculty senates can be viewed. By doing so, the models provide a construct that can make a complex matrix of senates more understandable. I am reminded of when the early organizational models of institutions were introduced. The bureaucratic, political, and cultural models of universities significantly changed the way scholars viewed institutions of higher education. Moreover, it has influenced the approaches taken to research. Hopefully, these models can enhance the understanding scholars and practioners have of senates. In this section I provide discussion on issues I deem important to the examination of senates and that help consider the usefulness of models that have been presented.

During the conception of this study I attempted to distinguish structural differences among faculty senates. Structural variables such as the number of

members in the senate, how often they met, committee structure, or who chaired the senate were thought to impact the function of the senate. On the contrary, I learned that structure did not significantly distinguish the impact of faculty senates in governance on these respective campuses. The function more than the structure of faculty senates more accurately defines their impact. Some senates may have distinctly different structures but serve similar roles with respect to their involvement in governance. Likewise, senates can have similar structures but serves significantly different roles. Although structure can influence function, I do not considered it to be the most important variable for determining models of senates. Up until now, senates have been primarily viewed structurally and their effectiveness has been, in some cases, associated with structural qualities. I argue that senates should be viewed and evaluated according to the role they play in governance opposed to their structural composition. Doing so requires issues of institutional culture, interpersonal dynamics, and decision-type to be taken into consideration.

Viewing faculty senates conceptually is beneficial when trying to understand them collectively. The diversity that exists among senates makes them difficult to comprehend as a group or subject of study. In order to understand any subject matter that is so diffuse, and at the same time complex, models are helpful. In many cases those familiar with faculty senates will be able to say, to some degree, that their institution does not neatly fit into one of the models presented here. While this may be true, the intent is not to fit every institution into one of the four models. The usefulness of these models is that

they can serve as a conceptual frame to understand the role faculty senates play in governance across a variety of institutional types. Conceptual thinking allows for senates to be viewed comprehensively rather than individually. Needless to say, each senate will have unique characteristics. Attempting to take individual senate characteristics into account makes seeing the big picture of how senates collectively participate in governance difficult.

Thus far I have discussed faculty senates under the rubric of faculty involvement in governance. While considering the role of senates in governance it is important to be reminded that the senate is not the only means by which faculty can participate in governance and decision-making. Alternatives include ad hoc committees, individual advocacy, academic departments or schools, or collective bargaining unions to name a few. I do not mention these alternatives to negate the fact that senates are important but rather to keep in mind the alternative forms of participation and to consider how they might impact the role of senates.

The extent to which alternative means of participation have been more or less effective than senates is unknown. In institutions where senates (as an organization) are not meaningfully involved in governance does not necessarily mean that faculty are not. It is important to examine how alternative means of faculty participation in governance impact the effectiveness of senates. Equally important is determining how alternative means of participation impact the level of interest faculty have in senate activity. Many senates are viewed by administrators as adversarial or dysfunctional, yet faculty involvement has

remained a critical element to institutional governance. Studying alternative means of faculty participation in governance is key and can provide a way to better understand faculty involvement via the senate.

Looking forward to what can be done to advance the study of senates, there are two areas that are in need of immediate attention. The lack of scholarship and the lack of attention that has been given to leadership in the senate are two challenges to better understanding senates. The continued development of theoretical knowledge can enhance not only what is known about what senates do, but also the consequences of their activity.

Presently, the understanding that can be gleaned from the literature on faculty senates is disparate, at best. Perhaps needless to say, there is a need for more scholarship on faculty senates but the quality of such is what will determine how well we understand senate activity. Much of the literature that addresses faculty involvement in governance is augmentative or position biased. The “us against them” dichotomy that exists between faculty and administrators has not helped create governance systems that are equipped to handle the challenges of the 21st century. The questions that drive research on governance must focus on the most effective ways to make major university decisions that position institutions of higher education for success. The turf wars that currently exist are like “tug of wars” where the rope never moves far from the starting point. More scholarship that delineates good practice and provides better understanding of the dynamics involved with faculty senates is needed.

Faculty senates can also be significantly improved if the impact of leadership is better understood. Currently there is little known about what kind of faculty lead the senate, what effective senate leadership means, or the impact leadership has on senate effectiveness. The lack of faculty willingness to participate in senate has become increasingly common. In many instances it has become difficult to find faculty who are interested in leading the senate. In fact, in many cases the senate president is the person left holding the shortest straw or those typed as marginal scholars. Faculty reward structures, negative perceptions of the senate, and the time commitment necessary to lead the senate, are issues related to why senate leadership is unappealing.

Another issue important to understanding senates is the impact frequent turnover among senate presidents has on the organizational effectiveness of senates. Studies have been conducted on university presidents, deans, and other academic leaders because of their importance to the organization. It would be naïve to think that senate leaders do not, or cannot, impact the effectiveness of faculty senates. Senate presidents have been grossly ignored in the discussion of faculty senates. Examining the impact of leadership on senates is critical to the advancement of insight on how senates function.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this study I likened understanding faculty senates to solving a mystery. The development of these models (traditional, influential, dormant, and cultural) provides a way to understand faculty senates and the role

they play in institutional governance. They provide insight that makes senates significantly less mysterious. These models offer a way to conceptually frame faculty senates across a variety of institutional types. Variables such as decision-type, and interpersonal dynamics, and senates' ability to shift should be taken into account when considering these models.

Academic governance is of critical importance to higher education as it is the structure by which most institutions make major decisions concerning the direction and future of their campus. Faculty are likely to continue as a critical constituent in academic governance. Clearly, the more effectively faculty are involved in decision-making, the more institutions will be able to respond to environment demands surrounding higher education. Given this, it is important to advance research on how the two, governance and faculty are related. The extent that faculty senates can be better understood conceptually and how they relate to other governing bodies on campus can inform policy and practice intended to improve governance systems in higher education.

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