
Conveying a Suggested Path Forward on Shared Governance at UW

WHEREAS, the University of Wyoming, by agreement of the Board of Trustees and the Administration, led by the President, operates on the principle of Shared Governance as articulated in UW Regulation 1-4 Shared Governance and founded on the key principles of communication; service and participation; and responsibility, community, and civility.

WHEREAS, the University of Wyoming Faculty Senate in Resolution 488 urged the Board of Trustees to act immediately to engage with the faculty and other constituent groups on campus to collaboratively develop corrective actions to reestablish an atmosphere of mutual respect, with the goal of rebuilding trust and a willingness to work together, and to ensure a more transparent and inclusive decision-making process guided by the University of Wyoming's principles and regulations regarding Shared Governance.

WHEREAS, the President of the University of Wyoming responded to a circulated draft of FS Resolution 488 by stating:

I recognize now that my existing structures to involve faculty -- such as including the Faculty Senate chair on my Cabinet, monthly meetings with the chair, convening a Faculty Sounding Board to informally discuss issues, and meeting regularly with Faculty Senate and deans -- have not adequately addressed such concerns. Clearly, we need to reassess and commit to strengthening our shared governance practices.

I remain deeply committed to the University of Wyoming and to working with Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, ASUW, our deans and the Board of Trustees to rebuild trust, improve communications, ensure shared governance remains strong and work with you all to make our university the best it can be.

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of the University of Wyoming responded to the passage of FS Resolution 488 with a statement that includes:

We understand that the Board of Trustees' decision to terminate Dr. Wright's leadership of the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences has raised questions and concerns across campus and among UW's constituents. The dean's dismissal, combined with past administrative and other changes, has caused disruption and growing concern about how shared governance has been implemented at the university. These concerns have raised important questions about how decisions are made, how voices are included and how we live out our core values in practice.

Further stating:

The board takes these matters seriously. A strong, transparent and inclusive approach to governance is essential -- not just for the health of the university, but for the trust placed in us by the people of Wyoming and by the thousands of alumni who continue to support and champion this institution.

In response, the board has directed President Seidel and Interim Provost Scott Turpen to lead a thorough and inclusive review of how shared governance is currently being operationalized across the university. We expect this process to include meaningful dialogue about what is working, what must be improved and how we can strengthen the relationships and trust that must exist to achieve our mission.

WHEREAS, shared governance has been defined in UW Regulation 1-4 Shared Governance:

Is the process by which various institutional constituents contribute to decision making related to University policies and procedures. Shared Governance is a basic tenet of universities as intellectual communities and represents a philosophy and practice that brings to bear community expertise to inform deliberations and to shape actions.

WHEREAS, the UW Faculty represented by the Faculty Senate have voiced their concern that while the principles of shared governance may have been agreed to in principle by the Board and Administration, the Dean's Council, and the Faculty, they are not being lived out in day to day interactions between these three distinct interests as they carry out decision-making and oversight of the three-fold mission—teaching, research, and outreach—of Wyoming's only Land Grant University. Shared governance thrives not solely on mutual respect but on mutual accountability to transparent and predictable processes. Accordingly, the Faculty Senate offers the following commitments and recommendations to promote the operationalization of shared governance at UW.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University of Wyoming Faculty Senate commits to fully cooperating with the board-appointed, ad hoc Shared Governance Committee as it examines the state of shared governance at the university and makes recommendations for strengthening consultation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University Faculty Senate has identified several Essential Arenas of Shared Governance for investigation as the Shared Governance Committee begins its work. These are areas where the principles of shared governance are not currently implemented, are ignored, or are actively circumvented. These Essential Arenas of Shared Governance should include timely, transparent, and meaningful communication grounded in mutual respect, transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making. Failure to follow the principles of shared governance across these arenas jeopardizes institutional trust and effectiveness. While shared governance may be affirmed in policy, its consistent operationalization across decision-making arenas remains the unresolved challenge.

ESSENTIAL ARENAS OF SHARED GOVERNANCE:

- Financial & Strategic Planning: Administration-led processes with faculty consultation and trustee approval, e.g., reorganization of Colleges, Departments, etc.;
- Academic Matters: Faculty-led processes with administrative support and trustee approval where necessary, e.g., authorization of degree programs, certification programs, etc.;
- Personnel Matters (excluding actions for cause): Administration-led processes with faculty consultation and trustee approval, e.g., leadership reassignments, contract non-renewals, or other personnel changes.
- Policy Development: Administration-led processes with faculty consultation and trustee approval for collaborative drafting of appropriate governance bodies, reorganization of governance structures, and patterns of formal interaction across the academy, e.g., including collaborative drafting of governance structures, council memberships, and voting rights.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University Faculty Senate strongly encourages the Shared Governance Committee to consider alternative models of engagement between the Board and Administration, the Dean's Council, and Faculty when these interests intersect within the Essential Arenas of Shared Governance. The Faculty Senate suggests that the Shared Governance Committee consider:

- Different structure that would allow for a three-way advisory vote process where the perspectives of the Board/Administration, the Dean's Council, and the Faculty Senate are formally recorded in decision making across all Essential Arenas of Shared Governance. The objective is to provide public opportunities for alternative perspectives and opinions, as well as practice the principles of shared governance. Votes would be a matter of public record and predicated on the commitment of all parties to their assigned roles.
- A process that allows for public expression of opinion and perspective on decisions made across the Essential Arenas of Shared Governance by the academy through a process of sharing majority/minority perspectives in writing to facilitate wider input, as well as a process for informing the academy of potential changes in management practices. For example, a process to address personnel matters (excluding actions for cause) could require agreement by at least two of the three levels of oversight to move forward—the Board/Administration, the Dean's Council, and the Faculty. A majority and a minority report or response could be drafted and made available to the public in the spirit of transparent communication and joint decision making.
- A process to establish and maintain effective trust relationships between the Faculty Senate and all members of the Dean's Council, the Administration, and members of the Board, not just those in leadership positions. The Faculty and members of the Faculty Senate need the support and understanding of members of the other governance bodies to ensure that Faculty interests are clearly and fairly represented.
- Appointment of a Board ombudsperson that could act to help resolve conflicts and concerns. They would serve as an intermediary, mediator, or facilitator, providing an informal and confidential space for individuals to address issues.
- A process—a Governance Health Check—to periodically assess the state of shared governance and develop an action plan to improve it. The first step to improvement is to develop an accurate assessment of the state of shared governance at the institution, with particular emphasis on: what does each constituency expect from effective shared governance? What are the benchmarks of good governance? How do these definitions and expectations differ?

Through these measures, the Faculty Senate seeks to foster a culture of shared responsibility, transparency, and trust for the benefit of the entire University community and the people it serves across Wyoming.

AUTHENTICATION: The foregoing Faculty Senate Resolution 489, duly adopted by the Faculty Senate of the University of Wyoming under date of May 5, 2025, is hereby transmitted to the President of the University of Wyoming for review in accordance with UW Regulations.



Treva E Sprout Ahrenholtz
Secretary, Faculty Senate
Dated: May 9, 2025