

UWS Shared Governance/Shared Decision Making Defined

University of Western States (UWS) cultivates an environment that promotes empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence, and engages its constituents in a continuous quest for institutional improvement. To facilitate such improvement, UWS practices shared governance. Shared governance at UWS is defined as a structure and process by which university constituents engage in their respective roles related to participatory decision-making by providing input and information into policies and procedures.

The legal and ethical authority, responsibility, and accountability for university governance resides with the Board of Trustees and is delegated to the president. Faculty, staff, administrators, and students are engaged in the decision-making processes of the university, where appropriate. UWS applies effective, efficient, and ethical leadership at all levels of the organization enabling the institution to identify its values, set and achieve goals, and improve teaching and learning.

Institution

For purposes of this document as it pertains to shared governance, institution is comprised of the following University of Western States constituents: Board of Trustees, president, executive administration, faculty, staff, and students.

In the UWS shared governance structure and process, trust, collaboration, accountability, communication, transparency, honesty, and integrity are foundational elements and are held as essential to the health and vitality of UWS. The shared governance structure promotes collaborative and collective responsibility for outcomes through broad awareness of the university vision, mission, values, and strategic and operational priorities.

Trustees

The Board of Trustees at UWS is comprised of 9 to 21 individuals from diverse backgrounds including health care, higher education, business, and law. The board is charged with governance of the institution and holds a fiduciary duty to the university. The Board of Trustees ratifies university strategic plans, approves the annual budget and allocation of resources, and evaluates the performance of the president.

The Board of Trustees serves as the primary guardian of the university mission.

Members of the Board of Trustees follow three fundamental duties:

- The **duty of care** requires that trustees are thoughtful, responsible and accountable for their decisions, especially in the areas of university finance, conduct and overall strategic direction.
- The **duty of loyalty** requires that trustees act in good faith to support and advance the interests of the university. Under the duty of loyalty, trustees have a

responsibility to ensure that decisions made by the board and the president produce the best possible overall outcome for the university.

- The **duty of obedience** requires that trustees carry out board business in a manner that best serves the university mission and upholds university bylaws and policies. Furthermore, trustees are responsible to ensure that the university follows nonprofit laws and regulations.

Communication between the board and university constituents is healthy for UWS and follows a prescribed pathway from the board through the president to the university constituents. A liaison from the faculty senate, generally the senate president, is invited to appear at the annual board meeting to provide a faculty senate update.

President

The university president is the institution's chief executive officer and the sole employee of the Board of Trustees. The president is responsible for keeping the board apprised of matters that impact the university, enacting board decisions, executing strategic and operational plans, and operationalizing the university mission. The president is the champion of the university's reputation and the key leader in advancing university interests with external bodies such as legislators, policymakers, community and industry leaders, accrediting agencies, professional associations, and licensing agencies.

The president facilitates a constructive relationship between the board and the faculty to ensure the board has a comprehensive understanding of program curricula, student learning outcomes, and scholarly activity. In addition, the president facilitates a relationship between the board and the administration in order to inform the board of university operations to support the mission and core functions of the institution, as well as ensure the operations align with strategic goals.

Faculty

All members of the faculty at UWS have a responsibility for teaching, assessment, curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, scholarly activity, research, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process within the parameters of legal and regulatory requirements, accreditation standards, best practices, and financial responsibility. Faculty contributions to personnel hiring decisions (including the selection of administrators), input into the budget, and determination of educational policies in the aforementioned areas is integral to shared governance.

Staff

Staff members serve a critical role in university operations and perform a leading role on institutional committees, task forces, and decision-making bodies. Input and participation from all personnel are invaluable in making sound decisions about allocating resources, setting goals, and guiding student life as it applies to the UWS strategic plan and mission.

Administrators

Administrators (which include vice presidents, associate vice presidents, deans, and associate deans) have a responsibility for institutional and departmental effectiveness, continuous improvement, policies, and procedures in their respective areas of responsibility. Administrators practice shared governance, as defined by UWS, to inform departmental and institutional decisions as well as facilitate the development and implementation of policies, procedures, and strategic and operational plans.

Administrators uphold the shared governance structure and process in order to ensure university constituents have opportunities to provide information and input into matters that pertain to their role, or that may substantively affect their role. Administrators cultivate an environment of shared responsibility and accountability by encouraging faculty members, staff members, and students to take initiative in improving the practices, programs, and services in which they are involved.

The basis for some final decisions is not appropriate to disseminate to faculty, staff, and students. When necessary and appropriate, decisions are made after evaluating data, weighing input from university constituents, and examining available resources. When possible, and in light of legal, confidentiality and/or other involved factors, substantive variance in the final decision from the recommendations received from university constituents is communicated as appropriate.

Committees

UWS maintains an active committee structure that is responsive to the needs of the university. Committee work is critical to the effective functioning of the university. For university committees, the president appoints committee chairs or they are established ex-officio (by virtue of position), and appoints all committee members. For college or department committees, the dean or department supervisor appoints the committee chair and appoints all committee members. In all university committees, the chair recommends committee members for open positions to the appointing administrator representative with input from the appropriate representative bodies. Efforts are made to assure that committee representation rotates to allow all willing members of the faculty and staff opportunities to serve. Faculty and staff committee appointments are for a maximum three-year term with committee members rotating on varied timelines, as much as possible, in order to assure committee memory is maintained when new members are added.