

Report of the Senate ad hoc Committee on Renewal

May 26, 2016

A. INTRODUCTION

The events of April 2015 revealed the degree to which members of the Western community both care about their university and desire a strong voice in its governance. Recognizing this, Western's Senate took the opportunity to examine, reflect upon, and renew itself by creating the ad hoc Committee on Renewal in June 2015. The Committee's mandate has been to examine the status of collegial governance at Western, with a focus on Western's Senate. We were directed to consult widely with the Western community, as well as review Senate's constitut TJ 0.002 Tw [(d)10.5(es)-2(c)-2(r)-6(i)2.6(bed)]TJ -0.006 Tc

Governance¹ in the context of the post-secondary education system refers to the "process of policy making and macro-level decision making within higher education...It is a multilevel phenomenon including various bodies and processes with different decision making functions. Certain entities have authority over specific kinds of decisions." (Kezar & Eckels, 2004, p. 375). As early as 1906, the Flavelle Commission laid the foundation for bicameral or 'shared' governance models in Canadian universities, assigning authority for academic matters to members of the university community (faculty and academic administrators) and authority for the administrative affairs of the institution to a board of citizens (Jones, Shanahan, & Goyan, 2001 p. 136). Provincial legislation established Western's bicameral governance structure (a Board of Governors and an Academic

Much of the academic study on the topic of university governance has focused primarily on the efficiency and effectiveness of governance structures, but some has also focused on the human factors that impact governance (Kezar & Eckel, 2004). Jones and Slonick (1997) conducted the first rigorous study of Canadian university governing boards, examining composition and roles of both board members and the boards themselves.

Although there were differences across Canadian universities, findings suggested thatositi0 Td [()-11.2l ram f

concluded that “the road to increased senate effectiveness likely lies in open, frank, and engaged discussions and work in these areas as much as, if not more than through structural changes.” (p. 517).

The ad hoc Committee on Renewal (see Committee Membership, Terms of Reference) was created in response to similar concerns about our Senate’s effectiveness as a governance body and the perceived lack of university community participation in decision-making processes at Western. The Board of Governors created its own review task force to examine its effectiveness. These were the first reviews of Western’s governance in almost 20 years since a review was last mandated by the UWO Act in 1996. -

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In carrying out its mandate, this Committee adopted the assumption that collegial shared governance expressed in and through the senate is central to the identity and well-being of a university. Especially in times of multiplying external pressures and demands, effective senates are crucial to maintaining the autonomy and success of the university system (Final Report of Review of UWO Act, 1996). The characteristics of good collegial governance include a commitment to values that promote participatory democracy, such

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- ” Advertisements in *The Western News* and *The Gazette* (print and online) on two occasions,
- ” Publication of a link to our website in the electronic *Western Alumni News*,
- ” Open town hall meetings with each Faculty,
- ” One-on-one consultations with members of the community who indicated an interest in talking with a Committee member,
- ” Several calls for feedback to Senators following submission of the Interim Report, and
- ” A final consultation with the Board’s Bylaws Committee whose members have been charged with implementing the recommendations from the Board’s governance review committee.

The Committee’s objective was to provide multiple avenues for feedback to ensure that the voices of all who wished to address the Committee and the issues within its purview would be heard. An executive summary of the objectives of the Committee, along with an overview of Western’s governance structure, was made available to the community as a whole through the Committee’s website and was distributed to participants attending town hall meetings. Consultations were largely completed by the end of November 2015, although several that could not be scheduled prior to that date were held in the Winter term of 2016.

The interim report was presented to Senate on January 22, 2016. The report focussed on emerging themes regarding the current state of collegial governance and the Senate. The intention was to elicit feedback from Senators and the community regarding recurring patterns identified to that point. Major themes that were identified included: Transparency, Consultation and Communication, Representation, Engagement, and Culture and Leadership. Aside from comments querying the limitations of the conventional data collection strategy we employed, the f

we identified in the Interim Report. We considered ways of a) improving the community's understanding of Senate, b) communicating Senate decisions and explaining clearly the processes through which these decisions are reached, c) improving community engagement, d) enhancing the effectiveness of Senators, e) improving information flow and the conduct of Senate meetings, f) enhancing the representativeness of Senate, and g) improving specific Senate committees' terms of reference.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS

Senate charged this Committee with the task of recommending ways to establish more robust and transparent decision-making processes based on a review of Senate structures and processes. Thus, many of the recommendations below focus on structural change. If implemented, these structural changes may create the conditions for positive changes in the culture, however, in and of themselves,

and leadership. Indeed, throughout our consultations we heard concerns about a top-down leadership style in Senate and in other areas of the university. While the evaluation of leadership is not in our mandate, we would state that collegial leadership is essential to good collegial governance, and effective university leadership necessarily involves a strong commitment to Senate, collegiality, consultation, and transparency.

- c. All members of the community should be encouraged to attend a Senate meeting.
- d. Communication of Senate decisions should be enhanced through publishing (1) summary reports following monthly Senate meetings and (2) an annual report to the university community on Senate's activities over the year.

Recommendation 3: Articulate the roles and responsibilities for Senators

Rationale: Clearly stating roles and responsibilities enhances governance effectiveness (Kezar & Eckels, 2004), improves accountability and could begin to create conditions for cultural change. Following the principles of collegial governance, such a statement should insist that Senators:

- a. Conduct themselves with a sense of shared collective responsibility.
- b. Are accountable to both their constituency and to the general welfare of the institution.
- c. Prepare more fully prior to Senate and Senate committee meetings in order to make informed decisions at those meetings.
- d. Behave with tolerance and respect toward different views and differences in levels of knowledge.

Recommendation 4: Enhance education of and communication among Senators.

Rationale: Consultations revealed that it often took Senators quite a while to understand how Senate worked (for example, what the roles and responsibilities of Senators are) and to feel confident and prepared to become actively engaged in the work of Senate. In addition, it was noted that there was little opportunity for informal interaction between Senators. While addressing these concerns could be challenging with more than 100 Senate members, the following actions are recommended to facilitate conditions for engag6(t)-6.6()-2(e c)-b0 Tw ()Tj -0.005 Tc 0.005 Tw 1 Tw -1

remove an item from the consent agenda so that it could be discussed separately.

Recommendation 6: Conduct regular periodic reviews including: a) a full structural review every 10 years, b) an annual Senate performance evaluation conducted collectively and via individual Senators' self-reflection and c) reviews of standing committees' Terms of Reference every three years.

Rationale: Concerns about the accountability of Senate as a whole to the community and of individual Senators to their constituencies were raised frequently during our consultations. Periodic review of the effectiveness of governance structures and processes is an important element of good governance, ensuring the protection of our institutional values in the face of a rapidly changing post-secondary education landscape. These performance reviews could be confidentially conducted, summarized and made a part of an annual discussion in Senate.

II. Representation on Senate

Preamble : Since our last governance review 20 years ago, the composition of the university's academic staff has changed significantly, but our structures and processes have not kept pace with these changes. Eligibility to vote and serve on Senate is tied to the rank of Assistant Professor (or higher) in the UWO Act. The Committee spent many hours discussing the mechanisms by which representation on Senate could be enhanced, as well as the ramifications of those mechanisms. Multiple sources were consulted including University legal counsel. Our deliberations led to two possible mechanisms: 1) open the UWO Act, which would then present the Provincial Legislature with the opportunity to insert itself more prominently into the internal governance of the university or 2) create ranks that were equivalent to the rank of Assistant Professor internally through negotiations. Both would be protracted processes with uncertain outcomes. It is, of course, possible that

Recommendation 7a: All individuals who meet the Act's definition of Academic Staff² should be eligible to vote for members of Senate. In addition, those Academic Staff who also have at least two years of continuous service should be eligible to run for a Senate seat.

Rationale: All who contribute on an ongoing basis to the academic mission of the university should be able to participate in Senate. This practice would promote a culture of inclusivity and collegiality, and enhance effective decision-making. Two possible paths Senate may consider are:

- i. Recommend that the Board of Governors and Senate debate and discuss opening the UWO Act to reword section 25 of the Act such that the minimum rank of Academic staff eligible for Senate membership be broadened to include lecturers, assistant, associate and full librarians.
- ii. Recommend to the University and UWOFA that, through the process of either constructing a memorandum of agreement and/or of collective bargaining during the next contract negotiation sessions, equivalent ranks to Assistant Professors be created so that those with Academic staff qualifications meet all provisions of the Act for voting rights and membership in Senate (i.e., section 25).

Recommendation 7b: Members of those constituencies which do not meet the definition of Academic Staff (e.g., post doctoral fellows) or those who do not hold the rank of Assistant Professor should be considered for seats on relevant Senate committees.

Rationale: In order to ensure that all relevant expertise is available for committee deliberations and collegial governance principles of inclusivity are upheld, postdoctoral fellows and other constituencies should be considered for seats on relevant committees. Senate bylaws or committees' terms of reference could be revised to accommodate their inclusion.

Recommendation 7c: An additional seat on Senate should be created in the administrative staff constituency.

Rationale: Given the increased number of individuals across the university who are in the administrative staff category, the Committee determined that an additional seat on Senate is warranted. The addition of a representative to an existing constituency would require a two-thirds vote of support in Senate and a subsequent request to the Lieutenant Governor in Council in the Provincial Legislature, however, it would not require opening the UWO Act.

III. Committee Structures and Processes

- a. University Research Board (URB): Historically, this committee has served an advisory role to the Vice-President (Research) but, in the 20 years since the last governance review, the prominence of research in the academic life of the institution has grown significantly. The Terms of Reference of the URB should be reviewed with consideration of the following:
 - i. The URB's mandate should parallel that of SCAPA. It should be tasked to "formulate, review, and recommend new or revised research policies to Senate for approval." Policy formulation could follow similar subcommittee and administrative committee paths as those followed by SCAPA.
 - ii. A URB subcommittee should be established to provide peer review of internal funding competitions with members elected by Senate and chaired by the VP Research.
 - iii. Membership on the URB should be expanded to include Deans of all Faculties.
 - iv. Membership on the URB should be expanded to include a Senate-elected member from each Faculty, who does not hold administrative responsibilities and has a strong record of research.
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they reflect a more balanced representation of elected to ex officio members.

We recommend the addition of four more elected members, which would bring the elected membership to eight. Doing so would enhance opportunities for debate and add voices of individuals having differing perspectives.

- c. *Nominating Committee and Related Processes*: There is a perception in the community that slates of nominees for Senate committees have been predetermined by the administration. Further, our consultations also revealed that elected members of the Nominating Committee often did not bring nominees to the deliberations, leaving many slates to be acclaimed at the Committee level. Thus, we recommend consideration of the following menu of actions intended to change both the preparation of committee members for considering nominees and the information made available to Senate and the community at large regarding the parameters used to create slates of candidates:
- i. Any Senators who have put their names forward should be given full consideration by the Nominating Committee in developing nomination slates for Senate.
 - ii. If no nomination for a vacant Faculty seat on Senate has come forward for election once the nomination period has been closed, the need for a candidate(s) should be referred to the Faculty-level Nominating Committee. If a Faculty does not have a Nominating Committee, Senate should require its Faculty Council to create one.
 - iii. Committee members should provide brief statements that describe nominees and the reasons why they should be considered for the position to be filled. Candidates who self-nominate or nominations from a Faculty Nominating Committee should also provide such statements. Doing so would enhance informed voting and potentially diminish the tendency for voting based on name recognition.
 - iv. The Terms of Reference of the Senate Nominating Committee should articulate the parameters/principles used to balance slates of nominees.

importantly, collegial governance ultimately strengthens the integrity and quality of the university as a whole.

The recommendations made above attempt to address the challenge of governing Western in a timely and effective manner while, at the same time, respecting collegial governance, including fair representation and meaningful consultation and debate in Senate. We hope that our report is just the first step in Senate's deliberations about how to foster and strengthen its democratic processes. There are many innovative models used at other institutions, such as electing a Speaker or Chair of Senate from the floor, that could be discussed in the future. We strongly encourage Senate to continue the conversation about its purpose and identity on an on-going basis.

At the core of much of what we heard throughout our consultations was the need to reinvigorate a culture of trust and inclusion across the university in general, to bridge the rifts between the various constituent groups, and to empower those groups who have so far been denied the opportunity to participate in governance processes. We are extremely grateful for the insightful contributions of a wide variety of people across Western who took part in our consultations. They spoke passionately about their desire to see Western improve. Listening to their commitment, creativity, and concern inspired us throughout our deliberations, and strengthened our belief in the power of collaboration, consultation, and collegiality.

References

Austin, I. & Jones, G. A. (2015). *Governance of higher education: Global perspectives, theories and practices*. New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

