

Report to President Larry Minks

State of Shared Governance at Southeastern Oklahoma State University

Faculty Senate, April 2010

Early in the spring 2010 semester, at the request of the Faculty Senate, I emailed the following request to all Southeastern Oklahoma State University faculty:

The Faculty Senate is seeking to document cases of administrative disregard for principles of shared governance and cases of administrative encroachment into the faculty domain of curriculum since the 2003 Higher Learning Commission accreditation visit. To this end, the faculty are being asked to send written, detailed cases to me. I will accumulate the cases and present them to the administration. If you wish to remain anonymous, please send unsigned, hard copies of case details to me through campus mail.

Written responses were received from 12 faculty members, most of whom desired to remain anonymous.

First, past administrative tendencies to add and delete academic programs without formal faculty approval appear to have abated. It has been several years since the Administration has succeeded in making curriculum changes without the formal approval of the faculty, which included the addition of the Native American Management option and deletion of the Physics program. More recent attempts by the Administration to impose curriculum changes, such as the addition of the State-wide Leadership program and the deletion of the Masters of Education, have followed due process, at least so far, even though they have been met with faculty rejection on academic grounds. I believe Southeastern is the only Regional University that does not currently offer the State-wide Leadership program. In the on-going case of the Masters of Education program, the consequence of the faculty rejection of the Administrative proposal to delete the program is currently unknown. Consequently, no current violations involving Administrative incursion into the faculty domain of curriculum have been reported, as yet.

Most of the written statements received from the faculty focus on growing concerns with processes of shared governance and a growing and deepening sense of mistrust and disrespect fomented by policy and administrative hubris that threaten the health and vitality of the institution. Written comments have been provided under conditions of anonymity. In addition to written comments, a number of junior and senior faculty from all academic Schools have talked to me privately expressing their reluctance to provide written statements, submit responses to the Faculty Senate survey, or voice publicly their professional opinions and criticism out fear of retribution from Deans and above.

In large part, the rift is being generated by closed processes, contrary to stated policy, in which Chairs, Deans, Vice-presidents, and Presidents are appointed without, or in direct contradiction to, the advice of, and in consultation with, the faculty. In other cases, unnecessary problems created by administrative imposition of ill-considered and sometimes arbitrary policies could be avoided if inclusive procedures were followed.

All of the following are written responses received by the Faculty Senate in response its call. Attempts have been made in some cases, especially those with longer statements, to protect the identity of the faculty member. Occasionally, I have substituted phrases in italics. The first section of comments represents broad references to the University whereas the second section of comments, while of general interest, are directed at decision of the Dean of a specific academic School. The final section are comments, while not directly concerned with shared governance, are of significant importance to the end of mutual respect and trust between faculty and administration.

Section 1: University-wide Issues

- 1. No faculty input into academic administrative officers, no official searches, announcements, deadlines, etc.**

2. Search committee members have been appointed by the administration.
3. I am serving on a search committee outside of my home department. We have surveyed a large number of applicants and have decided on and scheduled three applicants for interviews. Today, I received an e-mail from the chair that says he was told to set up an interview with a new applicant. Incensed, I questioned why we would be told to allow someone to “jump the line” to interview for the position, and the search chair just reiterated that s/he was “told” to do so.
4. The department voted on a department chair, heard nothing from the administration for months, and then we were informed that *someone not voted on by us had been appointed by the administration, even though there were 2-3 other people who were considered for the position.*
5. When the *Department Chair resigned*, the faculty met and, following the guidelines in Section 4.10.3 of the University’s Policies and Procedures Manual, voted unanimously in favor of *one nominee* as their selection for the next chair. That information was duly passed up the chain of command, but instead the faculty was subsequently informed by administration that they had selected *another* to be the next chair, totally disregarding the faculty’s choice with no explanation as to why, even though the *favored candidate* was fully qualified and willing to serve. Further, according to Section 4.10.4 of the Policies and Procedures Manual, the faculty is supposed to have participation and input into the evaluation of the department chair. To date that has never happened.
6. In anticipation of the upcoming program review process, the *Department* faculty was presented with several vitae and asked to select their preference for a consultant. There was one applicant that all of the faculty immediately rejected. It was the consultant that had conducted the last program review. She was from a school and program that were very different than Southeastern’s and did not grasp what our program was about nor what we were trying to accomplish here. Consequently, she gave the *program* a largely negative review. From the remainder of the applicants the faculty selected another individual who was from a school and program very similar to ours, and the hope was that she would be more in tune with our efforts. The faculty passed their choice up the chain of command and were later notified that instead of respecting the faculty’s choice, Dr. Weiner had arbitrarily and unilaterally selected the one individual that faculty had expressly rejected. While the faculty will certainly do their best in program review, there exists the fear that they have been set up to fail. Whether this was intentional on Dr. Weiner’s part or simply the result of poor administrative decision-making, the end result is that it creates a high probability of another poor review, and the responsibility should lie with *the Administration*. *Another Department program* experienced a virtually identical occurrence when the consultant of choice was rejected by the administration, which then substituted another consultant that the faculty had specifically indicated they did not want.
7. Several apparent violations of shared governance have arisen recently in relation to the practices of *the Dean*. It should be noted that the appointment of *the new Dean* occurred with no search committee, no open application process, and no consultation with the *EBS* faculty, even though Section 3.7.2 of the University Policies and Procedures manual state, “Selection of academic deans and chief academic officers should be the responsibility of the president with the advice of, and in consultation with, the appropriate faculty.” (emphasis added)
8. In the Fall of 2008 the administration unilaterally decided to no longer use the tenure and promotion guidelines that had been developed by academic departments. This has been documented and addressed by the Faculty Senate this academic year.
9. In the Fall of 2008 the administration discontinued the long-standing practice of informing tenure and promotion candidates of administrative decisions (i.e. of recommendation or denial). This change in practice was reversed (apparently as the result of faculty objections) in the Spring of 2009.

Section 2: Governance Concerns with Specific Actions of the Dean of the School of Education and Behavioral Sciences (EBS)

(The separate paragraphs under each number generally represent comments from different faculty members.)

In the interest of shared governance, it is important that the faculty of Southeastern be made aware of recent events in the School of Education and Behavioral Studies regarding the decision-making process. The dean of EBS has made repeated attempts to undermine and usurp faculty responsibility and autonomy. The following are three examples from the fall 2009 semester alone. All were done with absolutely no prior faculty consultation or input.

1. The dean presented the faculty with a radically changed class schedule for the fall 2010 semester, despite the fact that there are several references in the University's Policies and Procedures manual indicating that class scheduling is the purview of the department chair and the faculty rather than the dean. This proposed schedule contained conflicts that create problems for both faculty and students alike where such problems did not exist before. It has the very real potential for causing enrollment to drop and the possibility that some classes would not make at all.

The dean...put forth to the faculty a radically redesigned class schedule for the Fall 2010 semester. First, class scheduling is supposed to lie with the faculty and department chair rather than the dean. Second, this schedule exhibited a lack of basic understanding of the scheduling process and created multiple conflicts for both faculty and students alike. Inherent in the dean's version of the schedule were the possibilities that enrollment would drop and that the time it took a student to complete his/her degree would be extended because they would not be able to get all the classes they needed in a timely manner.

A two-day teaching schedule *was* presented to the faculty from the Dean.

A two day teaching load was not established for all faculty. No reason was provided as to the discriminatory actions toward some faculty over others. The Program Coordinators were burdened with making sure the schedule would fit the needs in their area. The burden on coordinators is extreme at the present time. The schedule would violate current practices developed by the University. For example, there were courses scheduled to start at three o'clock in the afternoon. Little attention was given to the needs of students in developing a working schedule of classes. Students want course that are back-to-back so that they can leave campus or work and home duties.

2. The dean proposed the implementation of a single grading scale of his making for all EBS classes. Considering that courses in EBS range from freshmen level general education classes to graduate seminars to HPER athletic classes to teacher education practice teaching, it is simply not feasible to apply one scale to such diversity. Further, it has historically been the responsibility of each faculty member to determine how his/her class is graded, rather than having that imposed upon the faculty by an administrator.

We received an email last semester *from the Dean of EBS* encouraging us to have a standard grading scale in all classes. (It seems like the grading scale should be up to each faculty member, and should be stated clearly in the syllabus.)

The dean...attempted to impose a single grading scale on all classes in *the School*. It has traditionally been the right of each instructor to determine how his/her class is graded, and as long as that is spelled out on the syllabus and made clear to the students on the first day of class, there is no need for change. In addition, because of the wide range of classes taught in EBS (including graduate level classes) attempting to force all grading into a single mode creates unnecessary hardship for both students and faculty.

An email *was sent by the Dean* creating a standardized grading policy for EBS courses. The only reason given was that there was "concern" that our grade appeals would be lost. No indication as to who was concerned or why they would be concerned was provided. E-mails indicated that both senior and junior faculty did not see a need to create the policy. The policy was still included in the Policies and Procedures manual. The will and response of the faculty was either not presented to the Dean or he just ignored the wishes of the faculty.

3. Shortly before the end of the fall 2009 semester, the dean put forth to the faculty his own version of a policies and procedures manual for EBS. He indicated that he wanted it approved in a very short turn-around time because it was needed for the NCATE visit in the spring, although so far there has been no hard evidence put forth to verify that NCATE does in fact require a p&p manual specifically for one school. It fell to group of EBS faculty by the dean's document than those placed on faculty in the other two schools. With the possible exception of some sort of specific requirement for licensure or accreditation of an particular program, it is inappropriate to treat faculty of one school differently than those in other schools. One of the basic purposes of university-wide documents is to guarantee equal treatment of all faculty. Further, allowing one dean to unilaterally make his/her own rules creates the precedent that would allow the other deans to do the same and the end result would be no consistency across campus with faculty subjected to the whims of each dean.

In late November of 2009 the Dean of the School of Education and Behavioral Sciences (SEBS) posted a "draft" of a school-wide Policies and Procedures Manual on the SEBS BlackBoard site. EBS faculty were informed of this posting by an email message in which we were told to review the manual and to inform the Dean of any comments prior to the first day of classes in the Spring semester. This was followed by a flurry of emails circulated among SEBS faculty, expressing concerns about: the course of the policies, the apparent lack of faculty input in the draft, the compressed timeframe given in which to review and comment on the manual, the unprecedented move of having such an important task "assigned" over the Christmas break, and the apparent lack of any opportunity for faculty to independently and collectively review the document. An SEBS Policies and Procedures Committee, chaired by Dr. Jon Reid, was given the charge of reviewing the Manual before the start of classes. I was on the committee. While lamenting the incredibly short timeframe to complete our charge, the committee recognized the importance of our task and approached it with utmost seriousness. The committee members devoted countless collective hours to reading, checking, interpreting and commenting on the Manual. We met for approximately 11 hours over two days in early January, carefully reviewing every line of the Manual. WE found that many portions were superfluous (already covered in existing policy documents), several portions superseded or were at odds with existing University policy, some sections had no pedigree indicating faculty involvement in their creation, and some sections were "cut and pasted" from policies in the School of Business (in at least one instance still containing references to and using the language of the "business" policies). As the result of our work, the Manual was cut from 50 to 25 pages. This was sent to the Dean with our request that our revisions be posted for SEBS faculty to review, and that this serve as a step in a continuing process of communication in further formulation of school policies. Our committee did not received any response from the Dean, and our revised manual was never posted. To this day the original 50-page "draft" Manual remains posted on the SEBS Bb site.

Late in the Fall 2009 semester, the dean put forth a policies and procedures manual...designed expressly for the EBS. Subsequent examination by EBS faculty revealed that much of it was inappropriate and often in

direct contradiction to the University's Policies and Procedures Manual and/or other already existing university-wide document, and held EBS faculty to very different stands than those for the faculty of the other Schools. Just as state law cannot supersede university-wide policy.

A bogus policy and procedures manual *was* sent to faculty for review over the Christmas break. Without input from the faculty, the bad (and in places bogus) policies would have been presented (to NCATE and others) as having been passed by faculty. The Dean's idea of shared governance is to seek "feedback" and if there is no feedback then faculty must agree.

The policies presented were not policies that were voted on by faculty. For example, the Post-tenure review policy in the manual was discovered not to be the policy that was developed by the committee on Post-tenure Review and had never been presented to faculty for a vote. The timing of the process is extremely suspicious in that it was to be done over Christmas break. All comments were to be sent to *the Dean* without open discussion. The manual was presented as a necessity of NCATE, yet the experts on NCATE indicated that it was not a requirement as had been presented in the email from the Dean.

4. In the Fall of 2009, the Dean of the School of Education and Behavioral Sciences established a "school-wide" standing promotion and tenure review committee. This was a clear violation of the policy and established practice for selecting tenure and promotion review committees (Academic Policies and Procedures Manual 4.6.3—Step 2). This violation and the subsequent procedural anomalies produced by use of the "school-wide" standing committee are currently being heard by the Faculty Appellate Committee. Another problematic case caused by the procedural violation relates to an EIL colleague who applied for tenure in the fall of 2009. I am aware of this because in late November of 2009, I was asked by the Dean to chair the tenure and promotion committee of this colleague. It became clear to me that this process had been initiated using the school-wide standing committee. Evidently the Dean had become aware that this was procedurally suspect and thus asked me to chair a new committee. The tenure process and the mandated timelines were clearly compromised and I expressed my reluctance to chair the committee. However, I eventually agreed; in large part due to the fact that the Dean's decision on my promotion application was looming.

5. This effort by the Dean to provide a veneer of shared governance while in actuality circumventing any authentic or substantive faculty input and independent review of policy is also illustrated by the work of the Post-Tenure Review Committee that I was a member of. We met several times over the summer of 2009 to complete our charge of drafting a post tenure review policy. Our initial policy requirements were "doubled" by the Dean, and the committee voted to accept this. I was the sole dissenting vote on this measure, but bowed to the consent of the majority. Dean Mawer then sent the following email (dated Sept. 17) to SEBS faculty:

SEBS Faculty,

Attached is the recommendation of the Post Tenure Review Committee for the required 3 year review of tenured faculty members. The 3 year review is not an option: it is mandated by Univ. Policy 4.6.6. Please note that I edited the first paragraph so as to correspond to the present committee structure and added a clarification at the very end of the documents (i.e., 1/3 reviewed each year). All edits are in red. Please review the attached document. If you have any questions, suggestions concerns or additions—please direct them to me and I will forward on to the Chair of the Committee. Please have all of the questions, suggestions, concerns or additions to me within the next 10 days so that the committee may finish their charge. The committee will then return a final draft to me and that will become the Post Tenure Review Policy of the SEBS until it is reviewed or modified in the future. Thanks, Will

The committee was "re-formed" by this time and neither I (nor any other faculty member as far as I know) we given any more information on the matter. Nonetheless, note the pattern of asking faculty to direct all

correspondence on the matter directly to the Dean. This pattern does not constitute authentic shared governance, nor does it constitute “faculty driven” decision-making. I will add that the post tenure review policy that was included in the above mentioned SEBS “draft” Manual includes lengthy procedural additions that were not a product of the committee.

All of the above *EBS* events occurred with absolutely no prior consultation with nor input from the faculty affected. Continuously having to deal with repeated infringements on faculty autonomy has created feelings of frustration, distrust, and ill-will by the faculty towards the dean. That in turn has created a toxic work environment for all faculty.

In addition, the dean has attended all but one of the departmental faculty meetings...during the entire academic year is scheduled to attend *future* meetings as well. His continued presence effectively stifles any frank discussion the faculty might have regarding their concerns and takes precious time away from dealing with departmental issues that need to be addressed.

It is unknown whether the dean’s immediate superiors, the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the President, are aware of the extent to which the dean continues to challenge faculty autonomy, but if they are not, it conceivably could fall to the Faculty Senate to address this situation with them with a letter of protest and admonishment in order to protect traditional faculty rights.

Other written comments on shared governance issues:

1. Can you explain the phrase “shared governance?” I have never heard that used at SOSU.
2. It would take a book, thus I must abstain.
3. It would be much easier to document cases of shared governance.

Section 3: Trust and Mutual Respect

1. *There has been a pattern of extensive work by various faculty committees whose work is then dismissed, or the given a charge that is determined to be no longer needed. While this does not in itself constitute a violation of shared governance—and it might be the way things go in academia or be the result of administrative turnover—it nonetheless is demoralizing and appears to be a wasteful and inefficient use of faculty time and effort. The following list of cases...that I have been involved in could no doubt be added to by other faculty:*

- a. Department committees that developed T&P criteria (between 2005 and 2008)
- b. EBS Policies and Procedures Committee
- c. EBS Post-Tenure Review Committee
- d. EIL Post-Tenure Review Committee (2006-2007)
- e. Master of Arts in Education Committee (2009)

2. I would like to pass some information on about problems with the Administration not following its own rules. This is an example not of any appropriate decision on the part of the Administration (that is, it is not a grievance) but an explanation about how the secrecy and (it seems to me) hostility of the administration has inhibited communication and discouraged faculty from doing things that would help the university.

Last year, I was one of the faculty who received tenure and/or promotion, and I believe the administration followed all of the rules fairly. However, the Policies and Procedures Manual states that “it is the responsibility of the faculty member to monitor the flow of materials” during the promotion process. I

had not heard about the the status of my promotion application since learning that (then) V.P. Minks had approved it. Since he was the person I had last heard from, I emailed him to simply ask what stage my application had reached. In doing so, I was following the rules in the manual. I did not receive a reply. Instead V.P. Minks apparently contacted deans, who contacted department chairs, announcing that it was entirely inappropriate for faculty members to contact him directly with questions about this process. I could tell from the wording of the message that our department received that Dr. Minks' response had been somewhat angry.

From: Lucretia Scoufos

Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2009 3:46 PM

To: Charles Matthews; Diane Dixon; Jerry Polson; John Mischo; Kenneth Chinn; Lucretia Scoufos; Steven Emge; Wayne Jones

Subject: Procedures

Please convey to your faculty that when they have an academic question/issue that they are to bring that question to you as chair first; if necessary, the dean will take it before the Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs. This is the appropriate procedure—not for a faculty member to go straight to the Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs. Faculty need to respect the chain of command and realize that this administration expects no less.

Further, most questions can be addressed through the Faculty Policy and Procedures Manual: for example, Section 4.6.3, Step 6 plainly states the final steps of the Procedure for Granting Promotion and Tenure. While, deadlines are stated in this section, I can further add that the Regents will meet this Friday, April 17, 2009, to determine who will be granted promotion and/or tenure. If you have someone in your department who has applied for either promotion or tenure, please advise that person(s) accordingly.

Thank you,
Lucretia

Lucretia Scoufos, Ph.D.

Dean

School of Arts and Sciences

Department Chair

Communication & Theater

Phone: 580-745-2552

Fax: 580-745-7475

I understand that all requests need to proceed through the “chain of command” (a term that I could not find in the Manual). But it appears that, based on my experiences, all communication must proceed through this chain as well. In other words, if I have a question for the president's office, I must ask my chair, who asks the dean, who asks the vice president, who asks the president. And at no stage am I allowed to ask whether appropriate contact go made from one administrative level to another.

Last year, I had asked the Southeastern administration about the possibility of hosting a statewide meeting of the Oklahoma Academy of Sciences, which is the major scientific organization in Oklahoma. I went through the chain of command, which was, at this state necessary. The idea was approved by our department, our chair, the dean, the vice president, and President Turner. When President Turner left, the idea went into limbo. Then last fall the president of the Academy asked me to consider it again. But as a result of my experiences, I had to tell him that I would not be willing to take responsibility for setting up the meeting. I asked other member of our department if they would like to do so, and they all declined as well. Here is the reason. Of course the chain of command would be followed for approvals and for scheduling

facilities and other matters. But if, after all permissions have been obtained and as the meeting date approached, something came up and I needed to ask the president's office a question, I would have to start all over at the bottom of the chain of command. You cannot run a meeting if every item of communication goes through a chain that may require a week to complete. If one of the administrators in the chain was out of town, the request could take more than a week. I was willing to do the work of organizing the meeting, but I am not willing to struggle against this obstacle course.

This experience has also left me feeling that as a mere faculty member I am unworthy to approach any member of the administration directly. This feeling may not accurately reflect any hostility on the part of the administration, but it is a reasonable conclusion from my experiences.

I think there are a lot of good things that faculty members would be willing to do to help the university gain greater recognition and respect, if only the administration did not create what I perceive to be an atmosphere of secrecy. If faculty members are not allowed to even ask questions directly of administrators, this rule should be put in the Policies and Procedures Manual.

Some of my more senior colleagues have told me that this obstacle course is the reason that they just do what is required for their jobs and do not attempt to do anything further for the university. I was hoping to be an exception to this practice and donate my enthusiasm and experience to help the university—but not if I meet this kind of resistance from the administration.

This letter is not a grievance, since it concerns no decision the administration has made against me. It is, rather, a plea that they would be more open to faculty members who would, in fact, do a lot more for the university if this were the case.

A Concluding Comment

While I applaud your efforts on the behalf of the faculty to identify violations of shared governance principles, I fear that when they are presented to the administration, they will fall on deaf ears, as so many faculty concerns often do. I would encourage you to make it clear to the administration that the faculty expects to see immediate good faith efforts to actively rectify existing problems and administrative oversight to keep such violations from occurring in the future. If that does not happen, I would hope you would be willing to forward the materials you have collected to the Board of Regents, the Chancellor, and the Higher Learning Commission and to make the administration aware that those are your intentions should they fail to appropriately address these issues.