

Cautionary Tales: Protests of Presidential Actions and Lessons for Shared Governance

Although campuses often experience conflicts over governance, the major points of contention more often than not occur when a substantial portion of the faculty believes that the institution's president has made decisions about what these faculty members believe to be academic matters without involving them adequately in the decision-making process. As this chapter will describe, there are also ample examples of presidents who have made decisions with only minimal consultation with the faculty and sometimes unilaterally, with no consultation whatsoever. These are the presidents who most often inspire faculty dissent and even votes of no confidence.

On some campuses, conflicts arise over the pace of change. Although presidents like the University of Virginia's Teresa Sullivan believe that the best decisions in the academy are made incrementally, other presidents—often at the directive of their boards—believe that change needs to be made quickly and all at once.

These conflicts become the most intense when the president and the trustees do not give great deference to the faculty on all things academic. And in fact, it is no longer the case that academic programs are viewed either as being sacrosanct or as being susceptible to change only with the concurrence of the faculty. It is no longer the case that academic programs and faculty positions

are protected when it comes to cost cutting. Or to put it another way, although colleges and universities have often throughout their history made decisions in nonacademic areas prompted by scarce resources, the concerns about resources in recent years have led presidents and boards at a number of institutions, even those among the more affluent, to make decisions about academic matters based mainly on financial considerations.

Chief Financial Officers Seek Academic Cost Reductions

The 2012 *Inside Higher Ed* survey of chief financial officers (CFOs) at both public and private institutions affirms that many of those overseeing the budgets of their institution now look to the academic program for cost reductions. As several CFOs have explained it to me, in their institutions, the academic program is often the only area left where savings might be had.

The survey yielded the following results: 43 percent of business officers said their institution should be considering teaching loads even though it was not doing so. Forty-one percent wanted there to be some consideration of underperforming academic programs, and 41 percent said they would like tenure policies to be revised.

Other business officers reported more success in these areas, with 51 percent of respondents saying that eliminating underperforming academic programs was under discussion on their campus. Numbers were relatively consistent across sectors and institution types, meaning that tackling that issue might have more to do with institutional culture than with institution type.

In responding to the survey a year later, the business officers expressed a good deal of pessimism about the future of higher education. Only 27 percent had confidence in the viability over the coming five years of their institution's financial model. Half that number, 13 percent, had confidence in their financial model if they were looking ten years out.

Although the majority (57 percent) of the CFOs in the 2013 survey believed that they would need to reallocate resources within their institution rather than to count on new revenues, slightly fewer than half as many as the previous year (21 percent versus 43 percent) identified increasing teaching loads as a promising cost-cutting strategy. In 2013, the CFOs surveyed did not include “eliminating underperforming academic programs” in their list of top five cost-cutting strategies even though, in 2012, 42 percent thought that strategy “should be on the table.” Fifty-eight percent now believed that developing and expanding online programs would produce new revenues for them.

I can only wonder whether the conflicts that have been occasioned when institutions have tried to make changes in the academic program have discouraged some presidents and financial officers from attempting to make changes on their own campuses.

This year’s survey of chief financial officers was notable in another way. Ninety-two percent of the business officers now are focused on “retaining current students” as a revenue-producing strategy, seeing this as far more fruitful than “expanding online programs.” Yet, as I argued in chapter 3, the increasing reliance of college campuses on contingent faculty, the majority of whom are part-time, through no fault of the adjuncts often runs counter to this desire for improved retention.

Faculty Votes of No Confidence in the President

Although to my knowledge, no one has tracked the number of faculty votes of no confidence in the president, it appears that such votes are happening more often than in the past. Often these votes are in protest of what faculty members judge to be a failure on the part of the president to honor the practices of shared governance when it comes to academic matters. In such situations, in addition to protesting what they see as unilateral decision making, faculty members also typically cite a failure of consultation or a process of apparent consultation that in reality either limits or ignores faculty

input, flawed communication, and a lack of transparency on the part of the administration in academic and nonacademic areas alike. It is not uncommon for faculty members in such situations to criticize the emergence on their campus of what they see as a culture that is top-down and corporate rather than collaborative in nature.

Presidents and other members of the administration particularly come under attack when they do one or more of the following:

- Move too quickly in the view of the faculty and thereby violate the faculty's penchant for extended deliberations
- Eliminate academic programs that would once have been considered sacred
- Introduce new academic programs without faculty involvement
- Change how the academic programs are organized
- Alter how funds for departmental budgets and faculty lines are allocated
- Redefine the criteria for tenure and promotion
- Seek to create greater efficiencies and increase faculty "productivity" as defined by the number of students taught, class hours taught, or both

In my experience, most faculty members are reluctant to vote no confidence in their president. In many of the instances I cite, faculty members had concerns for an extended period of time. Thus, although I am sure that there are exceptions to what I'm about to say, it is my sense that the cause of faculty discontent generally is not a single presidential action or statement but rather an accumulation of actions or assertions that suggested presidential disregard of or disrespect for the faculty. The catalyst for a formal vote of no

confidence frequently is simply the equivalent of a lit match being tossed into an already smoldering bush.

Moreover, not all votes of no confidence in a president are warranted or even caused by presidential action. For example, faculty members on some campuses have sought to undermine a president, who by most accounts had been effective, for reasons of personal animus, political differences, or simply an antipathy to anyone in authority. In addition, some faculty members have simply been unwilling to compromise; have been unwilling to let go of past grievances; have genuinely misunderstood the various responsibilities of the board, the president, and the faculty; or have been overly zealous in their expectations about the role faculty members should play in decision making of all sorts.

The examples that follow are not meant to be critical of any particular institution or president but rather seek to describe the kinds of significant problems that a failure of shared governance can create on college and university campuses. In this chapter and subsequent chapters, I will focus on and also name institutions whose stories have been widely reported in the press. In this chapter and in subsequent chapters, in order to preserve confidentiality for those colleges and universities that have been fortunate enough to avoid public attention and as I explained in the preface, I will try to disguise the identities of both the institution and the people involved. Sometimes I will change the location of the institution; sometimes I will assign the president, the board chair, or a faculty leader a different gender; and sometimes I will describe similar events that took place on more than one campus as though they had occurred at the same institution.

Highly publicized cases in the past few years at private universities like Gustavus Adolphus, St. Louis University, New York University, and Emory University and at public universities such as Florida Atlantic, SUNY-Albany, Marshall University, and Kean all illustrate the impact that contentiousness over who

has responsibility for academic and related matters can have on an institution's students, its alumni, its faculty, and often its reputation. Many of these cases also indicate the way that faculty, students, and sometimes alumni have turned coverage of their protests in the local and national press and via social media into a powerful weapon.

Gustavus Adolphus

The ongoing conflict about governance between Gustavus Adolphus president Jack Ohle, who enjoyed the public support of his board during his six-year tenure, and the Gustavus faculty and the students is a particularly interesting case study because of the way that the students created and maintained a website to garner attention and support for their efforts to oust Ohle. Specifically, the website, www.gustieleaks.com, made available, not only to the campus and alumni of this Evangelical Lutheran college of approximately 2,500 students in St. Peter, Minnesota, but also to the general public, a running commentary complete with an array of documents pertaining to Ohle's leadership and to faculty and student discontent. Although the board and administration from time to time attempted to provide a counter-narrative, most of their efforts were soon criticized on the website. For example, the site contains a February 2013 letter from Mark Bernhardson, the chair of the board of trustees, to parents and friends expressing support for Ohle. That was immediately followed by a letter to the same group from the faculty senate, denouncing Ohle. Other primary documents include letters from Ohle to the faculty and faculty letters to Ohle and to the board. Some documents are newspaper accounts, including pieces from the student newspaper. Yet others are narratives written by interested parties. The site also contains the results of an annual survey of faculty opinion.

Ohle's problems reportedly began early in his tenure in 2008–09 when the provost, then at the beginning of her second year, resigned, according to multiple press accounts because

Ohle had reduced her responsibilities. Two months later, the two academic deans also resigned, citing lack of presidential support. The vice president for student life then accepted a position at another institution. At the end of the academic year, the faculty asked the board of trustees to review Ohle's performance, a request that the board denied.

Over the next several years, the relationship between Ohle and the faculty became even more contentious. In October 2012, the faculty voted 88–7 with 14 abstentions to ask the board not to renew Ohle's contract and to end his presidency as soon as possible. The board did not do so. A faculty group outlining what it called *A Narrative Guide* for the GustieLeaks website explained that its concerns about Ohle fell into three categories: "1) decisions that deprioritize the academic program, 2) unilateral and uninformed decision-making, 3) disregard for the traditions, values, policies, and mission of Gustavus."

The faculty had a long list of complaints. They argued that President Ohle ignored the faculty's primary responsibility for hiring their colleagues and that he made statements that he later contradicted. They criticized what they saw as a lack of transparency. They argued that the faculty did not have an appropriate role in the budget process. They were particularly angered that Ohle decided without consultation with the faculty to change the accounting system so that departmental funds would not roll over at the end of the year. Although most institutions that I know do not in fact roll over unspent funds and although that decision would generally be viewed as an administrative not an academic matter, Ohle's decision represented a change in practice that had a direct impact on academic departments. Gustavus faculty members were also critical that they were not given what they judged to be ample time to review and respond to changes in the board's by-laws, particularly those that referred to the *Faculty Manual*. Faculty members argued that there was no way for the faculty to communicate directly with the trustees.

Throughout, the trustees expressed support for Ohle. For example, in the February 3, 2013 letter to Gustavus alumni, the board chair on behalf of the board wrote:

While we know there is work to be done, we are excited about the progress under the President's leadership. Be assured that the Board and President Ohle are committed to continuing to work with all of the College's stakeholders.

Our alma mater has experienced significant success over the past few years. The College has realized an increase in student enrollment as well as significant increases in both the number of applicants and the academic quality of those applicants. In addition, thanks to the support of so many of you, there has been a substantial increase in giving to the College, including . . . the kick-off of a \$150 million comprehensive fundraising campaign of which over \$100 million has already been raised.

That same month, Ohle and the board laid out for the campus an eight-step program to try to address campus concerns, including bringing in an external reviewer to assess Ohle's performance, allocating \$500,000 for each of two years to the academic programs to compensate for the funds transferred from departments in the accounting shift, arranging for direct interactions between the faculty and the board, and initiating listening sessions that Ohle would conduct with faculty, staff, and students. In other words, the president and the board tried to address the faculty's expressed concerns about both style and substance and to reassure them about shared governance.

Jack Ohle announced in May 2013 his plans to retire at the end of his current contract in June 2014, citing timing and his years of serving higher education. The board chair praised Ohle for presiding "over an ambitious agenda established by the Board," noting particularly successes in strategic planning, fundraising,

alumni relations, the college's relationship with Sweden, capital projects, and enrollment. The board also noted that Ohle had created six new endowed faculty chairs and established a Center for Servant Leadership.

No one but Jack Ohle and perhaps members of the board know what prompted his decision to retire. What is clear is that the ongoing matter of the conflict between the campus and the president was serving as an unhealthy distraction for the institution.

New York University

Members of the New York University (NYU) faculty have for years objected to President John Sexton's NYU 2031 plan to add six million square feet to the campus in Manhattan, in Brooklyn, and perhaps on Governor's Island.

Although at most institutions, decisions about facilities would be within the purview of the administration and board, the situation at NYU was complicated by the fact that the university owns and rents to faculty, at a subsidized rate, 2,100 apartments in the Washington Square neighborhood. Professor Jeff Goodwin described faculty sentiment as he saw it in a March 20, 2013 op-ed piece for the *New York Times*, "The War in Washington Square":

Dr. Sexton has consistently refused to address concerns about plans to expand N.Y.U. offices and dorms into the part of Greenwich Village south of Manhattan's Washington Square Park, where many of us live.

This expansion plan is known as N.Y.U. 2031, indicating the year in which all the building will be complete. The very name told us that we'd be living on a construction site for a couple of decades.

Not surprisingly, this did not go over very well with many faculty members. We were also concerned about where the money would come from to pay for this expansion, as no business plan for the project has been made public.

Many members of the faculty also objected to the Global Network University that NYU has established during Sexton's tenure by opening campuses in Abu Dhabi, Tel Aviv, Accra, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Florence, London, Madrid, Paris, Prague, and Shanghai. Opponents of the Global Network University argued that the motivation for it was financial, not academic, and that the various campuses were established without faculty approval. Goodwin also noted that many faculty members object to locating these new campuses in "countries where academic freedom, and free speech generally, are so parlous."

The NYU faculty also has been critical of Sexton's \$1.4 million salary in 2012–13 and the \$2.5 million bonus he will be given if he stays through 2015. Faculty members are equally unhappy about what they see as excessive compensation for other senior administrators, including a generous severance package for one of the senior administrators who reported directly to Sexton.

Although President Sexton has raised more than \$3 billion and added 121 new faculty lines to the College of Arts and Sciences, the Arts and Sciences faculty in March 2013 voted no confidence in him. The faculty in the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development; the Tisch Asia Program; and the Gallatin School of Individualized Study followed suit, as did the Union of Clerical, Administrative and Technical Staff. The Gallatin faculty explained their vote this way:

[The university's] path of expansion has sacrificed academic integrity by devaluing faculty oversight and fair employment conditions for all faculty, has sacrificed student diversity by choosing growth rather than increased financial aid, and has sacrificed good citizenship by foregoing collaborative relations with both faculty and neighbors. The fundamental reason that the university has been able to take this direction, we believe, is that a top-down management structure

and style discounted the voice of the faculty in setting priorities and making decisions. A lack of transparency in decision-making, and a failure to communicate, has compounded this fundamental problem of governance, and the result is an alienated faculty, large sectors of which are angry and demoralized. Rather than a community jointly engaged in resolving differences constructively, the university's leadership has produced polarization and rancor.

NYU faculty members have also held protests in Washington Square, enlisted celebrity support, and published a book, *While We Were Sleeping: NYU and the Destruction of New York*.

In contrast, the NYU board has been steadfast in its support of Sexton. For example, following the vote of no confidence from the Arts and Science faculty, the NYU board released a statement of resounding praise for Sexton's leadership that concluded with the following resolution:

We, the Board of Trustees, endorse the strategic direction of New York University and John Sexton's stewardship. The transformation of NYU from a strong regional university into a university that stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the world's most revered universities is a remarkable accomplishment that is a testament to the dedication of the deans and the faculty under the outstanding leadership of John Sexton.

Later, in response to the vote of the Gallatin School, board of trustees chair Martin Lipton, again expressing "full confidence" in Sexton and outlining Sexton's accomplishments, said:

We want the faculty of the Gallatin School, which has just completed its vote, to know why we view John's leadership with such confidence. Since John became President of NYU in 2002, the University has thrived

by almost any measure. Undergraduate applications are up 45 percent, freshman SAT scores have climbed, and financial aid has increased by 134%. NYU has moved upwards in national and international rankings, faculty recruitment and retention have been strong and successful, and initiatives have been started in new fields of study. The university's finances are stronger, fundraising has set records, long-range planning has been set in place, and important new investments have been made in academic facilities. And, uniquely among its peers, NYU has been redefining what a university is through the creation of its global network, which has allowed for unprecedented new educational and academic activities around the world for students and faculty alike.

For his part, in a May 2, 2013 letter to the faculty, Sexton noted the votes of several groups supporting him as well as those voting no confidence. He described his visits to various schools in an effort to listen and to answer questions. He acknowledged that under his leadership, NYU had "undertaken a lot of new, innovative initiatives in a short period of time, and regardless of how positive they are or prove to be, there could have been better communication and faculty involvement in them." Sexton ended his brief letter by saying that whatever the outcome of some remaining votes of no confidence, "I look forward to continuing to work together."

During the spring of 2013, a group of board members held a series of meetings with faculty and staff members, administrators and students. On August 14, 2013, the NYU board announced in a university-wide e-mail that John Sexton would retire in 2016 at the end of his contract. The board also announced that it would include faculty on the next presidential search committee; would create a new committee composed of trustees, administrators, and students and designed to improve communications

between the faculty and the board; and would end an unpopular program that provided university loans for secondary residences. Board chair Martin Lipton explained the latter move to the *New York Times* this way: “This is a matter of extreme importance to us. . . . No university can prosper if there’s disruption, if there’s unhappiness in the family.” Lipton further noted that a lack of faculty morale might negatively affect the university’s credit rating.

St. Louis University

In August 2012, St. Louis University (SLU) provost Manoj Patankar proposed that all tenured faculty members undergo a review every three years. The faculty saw such reviews as being the equivalent to eliminating tenure. Although Patankar eventually withdrew the proposal, the SLU faculty senate in October 2012 voted no confidence in Patankar and in longtime president Father Lawrence Biondi. Students joined the protest through an array of events, including a “march to the Board of Trustees,” which they announced on a Facebook page, “SLU Students for No Confidence.” Patankar resigned in December.

Biondi is credited during his twenty-five-year tenure with, like Sexton, having transformed the university he led in positive ways. For example, during the Biondi presidency, SLU doubled the size of the student body and that of the campus. Father Biondi also received praise for contributing to the revitalization of the neighborhood around the campus and dramatically improving the university’s financial situation.

Even after Patankar’s resignation, the faculty and students continued to call for Biondi’s resignation. For example, the faculty presented the board with a sixteen-page report arguing that the president should be fired for “unprofessional conduct,” “failure to adequately support academics,” and “mishandling of university finances.” Specifically, the faculty accused Biondi of not appropriately involving faculty members in decisions to restructure the

College of Education and Public Service and to close the graduate school. The student protests continued.

The board next created its own problems with the campus. After a meeting at which the board and faculty leaders agreed to greater cooperation and communication, the faculty became disenchanted that the board had not acted in good faith. Specifically, a trustee leaked to the student protestors a memo the board chair sent to the trustees announcing that the board had retained a crisis communications firm to deal with the conflict. Of as much concern to the campus, in this memo the board chair both called for unanimous support of Father Biondi and also asked board members to refrain from talking with either faculty members or the media. Many members of the faculty were angered by the memo.

In May 2013 Father Biondi announced that he would retire but would remain in office until the board appointed a new president.

Emory University

Emory may be the most prominent example of an institution that has eliminated academic programs that once would have been considered central to its mission. Despite Emory's endowment of \$5.36 billion, which most institutions would envy, Dean of the College Robin Foreman—reportedly without consultation with the faculty—in September 2012 announced to the faculty that Emory was closing its Division of Educational Studies, its Department of Physical Education, its Department of Visual Arts, and its journalism program. Foreman also announced that Emory would downsize the Institute of Liberal Arts and would suspend its graduate programs in economics and Spanish. The university would offer positions elsewhere at the institution to eighteen tenured faculty members, not renew contracts for three untenured assistant professors and nineteen lecturers, and eliminate approximately twenty staff positions over the next five years.

Although Emory is experiencing a budgetary deficit, Dean Foreman asserted that these changes were not prompted by the deficit but rather that they were designed to free resources to improve

academic excellence by reallocating resources to new initiatives and areas of strength.

Although faculty and students vigorously protested both the decision and the process, in April 2013 the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences rejected a vote of no confidence in Emory's president, James W. Wagner. The trigger for the vote was reportedly the president's unfortunate statement in the university's alumni magazine that the so-called three-fifths compromise "in which Northern and Southern politicians creating the U.S. Constitution agreed to count each slave in the South as three-fifths of a person for purposes of taxation and Congressional representation" was a model for compromise. But it was also the case that many in the minority that voted no confidence were deeply unhappy about the decision that the Emory administration had made to close the academic programs noted earlier and the way that the administration had come to the decision to do so.

Marshall University

Faced with a reduction in state support, Marshall University's president, Stephen Kopp, directed that all money in departmental accounts be moved into a centralized account. The impact of the decision was that departments could no longer carry funds over into the next fiscal year. The faculty protested that they had not been consulted. Although Kopp rescinded the decision, the Marshall faculty nevertheless in May 2013 voted no confidence. The board immediately reaffirmed its support for Kopp's leadership but encouraged him to work with the faculty to restore trust. Specifically, the board's statement read:

Dr. Kopp has succeeded in achieving the goals set by the Board of Governors for Marshall University and he has exceeded the board's performance expectations in numerous areas. The board also believes that he is the right person to keep our great university moving in the right direction.

The university then created an ad hoc committee of members of the campus community to work with the administration to achieve a balanced budget, which the board has now approved. Although the faculty representative on the committee praised the process, he has also called for a permanent budget working group and more transparency going forward.

Some faculty members have taken the conflict to another level: the same week that the budget was approved, the American Federation of Teachers and two Marshall faculty members sued the university, seeking more detailed information about the budget and particularly about departmental budgets. Although private universities are required to make public their audited financial statements, they are not required to make available departmental budgets. The press coverage of this conflict has been extensive.

Florida Atlantic University

A series of events over a fourteen-month period, some of the administration's making and some the result of sheer bad luck, plagued the 40,000-student institution Florida Atlantic University (FAU), whose main campus is in Boca Raton, Florida. During this time, members of the faculty and students conducted a series of public protests and social media campaigns designed to oust President Mary Jane Saunders. Saunders's opponents claimed that she was high-handed, made academic decisions without faculty participation, did not support academic freedom, showed disregard for students, and harmed the institution's reputation. The board originally supported Saunders, but a crescendo of unpopular events and persistent press coverage led the trustees, all appointed by the governor, in an open session to question her leadership in April 2013 and Saunders a week later to resign her presidency.

The key events and the protests they inspired are described here.

In March 2012, the Florida legislature cut \$24.5 million out of the Florida Atlantic University budget. The provost created a website on which faculty could post suggestions about where to cut.

President Saunders then constituted an administrative task force to make the decisions, which included among other things closing two satellite campuses and eliminating more than 1,000 summer school courses, one-third of the total previously offered. The decision was made solely on the numbers: all undergraduate summer school courses were eliminated that in the previous year had enrolled fewer than 24 students, and all graduate summer school courses were eliminated that had enrolled fewer than 12 students.

The faculty and students held public protests, noting that some of the eliminated lab and studio courses required low enrollments and that others were mandated by accreditation agencies. An online petition opposing the cuts attracted 750 signatures. Students mounted a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/SAVEFAUFTL>) protesting the cuts. The president of the faculty union argued that the university was “using a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach to summer cuts” and did not take into account student needs or the advice of the faculty. Nevertheless, FAU closed the satellite campuses and restored only a few of the summer school courses.

In February 2013, FAU accepted a naming gift of \$6 million for its new stadium from the GEO Group, to be paid over twelve years. Although decisions about naming gifts are traditionally matters for the governing board, campus groups at FAU protested the gift because GEO, which owns privatized prisons, had come under attack for mistreating prisoners. At an open meeting, the president and FAU board chair Anthony Barbar defended the gift, with Saunders calling it “a done deal.” The Fort Lauderdale *Sun Sentinel* and the *Palm Beach Post* both covered the story in great detail, running pieces critical of Saunders. Students created a Twitter hashtag that played on the fact that the university mascot is an owl: #StopOwlcatraz.

The situation escalated to a new level when Saunders fled a group of student protestors on the Jupiter campus who wanted to talk with her about the gift. Saunders was taken by six campus

security officers to her car, with the students in pursuit. As the president sped away, the side view mirror of her car hit the arm of one of the students, leaving a visible bruise.

The event led to more headlines. FAU's handling of the story in fact kept it alive. For example, when Saunders and Barbar said publicly that they thought the protesting students owed Saunders an apology, the press wrote about that. When the dean of students at the Jupiter campus then announced he was investigating the actions of the students who had made a statement to the police after the episode for possible violations of the student code of conduct, the American Civil Liberties Union weighed in, defending the students, who by now were being called "the Jupiter 7," and charging the university with intimidating them and retaliating against them for their complaint against the president. Again there was extensive press coverage, as there was when the university ended its investigation, with the associate vice president and dean of students writing the students, "while the University will not be initiating any disciplinary proceedings as a result of this incident, we hope that you can appreciate the impact that the incident had on President Saunders." The student who was hit by Saunders's mirror then publicly announced that she planned to sue Saunders. Her father then issued a statement to the press calling for President Saunders to apologize to his daughter.

During this period, FAU also received national press attention because FAU communications professor James Tracy suggested in January 2013 that the massacre at Sandy Hook "never took place—at least in the way law enforcement authorities and the nation's news media have described it" and then in April raised doubts about the reliability of press accounts of the shootings at the Boston Marathon. Because Tracy posted his comments on a personal blog and not the university's website, FAU did not take disciplinary action against him but did denounce his statements.

In March 2013, FAU instructor Dr. Deandre Poole attracted national criticism from some national political and religious leaders

after one of his students complained to the press that Poole had asked students to write the name Jesus on a sheet of paper and then step on it. The purpose of the exercise, which had been used in communications courses for decades, was to show the power of language, and indeed most students immediately refused to step on the paper. FAU issued a statement denouncing the exercise, apologizing to those who were offended, declaring that the exercise would never again be used on campus, and putting Poole on administrative leave, asking him to stay away from the campus for reasons of his safety.

The FAU faculty senate criticized Saunders for not defending academic freedom, for making decisions about Poole without consulting with faculty members who might have helped explain the context of the exercise, and for promising that the exercise would not be used again.

By now, Saunders had no reservoir of goodwill. Police were reportedly stationed both in and outside her office. She was accompanied on campus by a bodyguard. Battered by the press coverage, GEO withdrew the gift. The FAU trustees in an open meeting chastised Saunders for the administration's failure to handle effectively what had become public relations problems. Scott Travis, in an April 16, 2013 *Sun-Sentinel* (Fort Lauderdale, Florida) piece, "FAU Trustees Criticize President's Handling of Incidents" described the events this way: "Florida Atlantic University's poor handling of recent events has threatened campus safety, hurt the school's image and resulted in the loss of a \$6 million gift, members of the Board of Trustees said on Tuesday."

In the aftermath of board meeting, President Saunders resigned, citing the press coverage as one of the reasons. Her statement read:

The issues and the fiercely negative media coverage have forced me to reassess my position as the president of FAU. I must make choices that are the best for the university, me and my family. My hope is that in

the future, news stories and public discussions about FAU will return to the accomplishments of our faculty, students and staff across all of our campuses.

Because Florida's sunshine laws keep little private, the announcement of Saunders's resignation was immediately followed by stories about how for the next several years she would serve as a tenured professor in the College of Science at a salary of \$276,000 (80 percent of her base presidential salary of \$345,000). Her responsibility will be to assess the feasibility of developing a physician's assistant program at FAU.

Soon after Saunders's resignation, FAU's provost and others in academic affairs also resigned. The university rehired Deandre Poole for next year and has begun a national search for a new president.

The State University of New York at Albany

In October 2010, the State University of New York at Albany (SUNY-Albany) administration announced, without extensive consultation with the faculty, that it was phasing out language programs in French, Italian, Russian, and classics as well as the theatre department. The only foreign language that the university planned to offer going forward was Spanish. As Scott Jaschik noted in his October 4, 2010 *Inside Higher Ed* piece, "Disappearing Languages at Albany," "the language decision runs counter to the university's motto: 'the world within reach.'" The university also indicated it was cutting in half the number of journalism courses and transferring the one remaining faculty member in Judaic studies to the history department.

As Jaschik also reported, Albany president George M. Philip attributed the cuts to the fact that state funds to administrative units on the campus had been cut by 22.4 percent and to the academic programs by 16 percent. He noted that the state legislature refused to give the campus authority over tuition and to release the institution from costly regulatory requirements. He further argued that the decision had been "based on an extensive

consultative process” and low enrollments in the affected programs.

The response to these cuts was immediate and fulsome. There were protests from the faculty, students, and alumni. Members of the foreign language departments at Stanford wrote Philip to suggest the importance of foreign languages and alternatives to the decision. Eventually, the university decided to retain French, Russian, and theatre as minors rather than majors, something that did not go far enough to please those protesting the decision.

Kean University

In the spring of 2010, also citing financial problems because of reduced appropriations from the state of New Jersey, Kean University reorganized the academic programs but without the involvement of those academic programs. Specifically, Kean dissolved its academic departments and eliminated the position of department chair in favor of schools with executive directors appointed by the president. The Kean faculty and staff vehemently opposed the plan, which the board nevertheless approved. The university had previously eliminated the departments of philosophy and social work, and other departments such as graphic communications and educational psychology were slated for elimination because of low enrollments.

Members of the Kean campus community have since then protested this and other actions, calling for the firing of the Kean president, Dawood Farahi. For example, students have organized “Occupy Kean,” a group that has organized protests on campus, including a student “walkout” from class. The board has been steadfast in support of Farahi, even when it became public that he had falsified his resume.

Recommendations for Presidents

Trustees, senior administrators, faculty, and staff, to varying degrees depending on the circumstances, all have critical roles to play in the functioning of a college or university. Nevertheless, my experience

tells me that presidents more than anyone else determine the nature of and pace of change on a campus.

It is also clear to me that the pressures on and expectations for presidents in recent years have expanded significantly. At the same time, presidents need to continue to fulfill all the traditional responsibilities of their position. As a result, the sheer scope of presidential responsibilities is daunting.

Although good presidents have always navigated well the new challenges their institutions are facing, today these challenges are often unusually complicated. For example, presidents now need to address the rising protests against ever-increased tuition at a time when many institutions are experiencing diminished resources. Presidents need to understand and provide leadership on the use of new technologies for teaching and learning. Some need to provide leadership in determining how best to educate new nontraditional populations of students. Presidents often need to identify and then establish new revenue streams. Many need to deal with public officials and their local community. But most of all, presidents need to bring about change in ways that satisfy their boards and, at the very least, gain the understanding and acceptance of their faculty colleagues and in some circumstances the students, the staff, the alumni, the community, and elected officials.

At the same time, presidents need to fulfill a wide array of more traditional responsibilities. A president needs to develop a strategic vision for the campus that is grounded in the institution's mission, that is informed by data and financially sound, and that has been developed collaboratively with the campus, the board, alumni, prospective donors, and sometimes the local community. To be successful, presidents must inspire these same constituencies to embrace the vision and the goals that derive from it. Presidents need to provide leadership to their senior administrative team and essentially direct and oversee the institution's operations. Presidents are charged with recommending policies, the operating budget, the institution's strategic priorities, and tenure and

promotion decisions to the board. A president needs to raise money (preferably lots of it) and be an articulate spokesperson for the institution both internally and externally. Good presidents also encourage creativity and foster teamwork.

What follows are some specific recommendations for presidents that will, I hope, enable them in positive ways to influence the tone and the nature of discourse on each campus about governance and the level of collaboration and communication among the various constituents, including students, alumni, elected officials, and the local community as well. In chapter 8, I will offer some specific examples of presidents who have been successful in these ways.

Recommendation 1: Presidents Need to Listen Throughout Their Tenure

During presidential searches, I am pretty confident, most candidates describe their intention to spend a good part of their first year on campus listening to all the constituencies and learning about the campus and its strengths, challenges, and opportunities. The best presidents, I believe, in fact spend time this way not only in their first year but also actively throughout their presidencies. The best presidents also take into account what they've heard and acknowledge when they've been influenced by their conversations with members of the campus community.

Recommendation 2: Presidents Need to Encourage Dissent and Be Open to Other Views

College and university presidents often have an enormous amount of power or at least are perceived to have that power. That power derives from a number of factors. Members of the senior administration typically serve at their pleasure. Members of the faculty generally need a positive recommendation from the president for tenure and promotion. Presidents also ultimately control how resources on their campuses are allocated, including funding for programs and faculty lines, equipment, and facilities. I remember

once asking a president who served on the university's space committee. He pounded his fist on the table and then smiled at me as he said, "I am the space committee." And he was.

Because of the president's power (and often her or his prestige), members of the campus community frequently are hesitant to disagree with a presidential opinion or decision, at least openly. Effective presidents therefore proactively encourage dissent. They also take into account and address the arguments of their critics.

A very effective president I know had been encouraged by the members of his cabinet to make a decision that had to do with food on campus. The benefit of the decision was financial. The president announced the decision. The students reacted negatively. Some student leaders wrote the president, expressing why they opposed the decision. The president found their argument compelling and so wrote an e-mail to the campus, announcing that he was reversing the decision based on persuasive arguments from students. By doing so, he made it clear to the entire campus that he was interested in and willing to learn from alternative points of view. He also earned great respect for admitting that he had made a mistake.

Recommendation 3: Presidents Need to Understand "the Vision Thing"

As I noted earlier, the best presidents, after taking account what they have learned from and about the campus, develop and articulate an inspiring vision for the institution going forward. They are also responsible for ensuring that all constituencies understand both that vision and the institution's mission.

The University of St. Joseph

The University of St. Joseph (USJ or St. Joe's, formerly St. Joseph College) in West Hartford, Connecticut, for example, recently introduced a new doctoral pharmacy program. Located in attractive space in downtown Hartford, the three-year program for its

first class enrolled 67 students, for its second class 80 students, and for its third class 90 students. The program is on track going forward to enroll 100 students for each class. All students are full-payers. The tuition is almost \$40,000 per year. The students come from all over the country.

The story is one of presidential vision, a sense of urgency on the campus to address significant enrollment and budgetary problems, and a willingness on the part of the faculty to collaborate.

Pamela T. Reid became president of the University of St. Joseph in January 2008. The university, which defines itself as being “enhanced by the Catholic intellectual tradition and the values of its founding Sisters of Mercy,” is a woman’s college for undergraduates and an institution that serves men and women completing bachelor’s degrees in its program for adult learners and in its graduate and continuing education programs.

The university website provides the following information about Reid’s background:

Pam Reid holds a B.S. from Howard University, an M.A. from Temple University and a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. She has more than three decades of faculty experience in psychology, education, and women’s studies at diverse institutions, and has held administrative roles at the City University of New York Graduate School, the University of Michigan, and Roosevelt.

Almost immediately Reid recognized the possibilities for a doctoral program in pharmacy. She first tested the ideas with several highly respected faculty members, including a retired and highly respected faculty member, a nun who had been a professor of chemistry. Those with whom she consulted liked the idea. She then discussed it with her cabinet, which similarly encouraged her to move forward. Finally, she met with the faculty and staff in a community meeting to lay out her ideas for the institution.

She told her new colleagues that although conventional wisdom had it that “new Presidents shouldn’t have new ideas for nine months, I’m from New York and I listen really fast.”

Reid made a presentation that focused first on St. Joe’s current situation. She described the institution’s mission, emphasizing that community service was part of St. Joe’s mission and integral to a number of its majors. She noted St. Joe’s historical strength in the sciences, especially in biology and chemistry, both of which had already created online programs. She talked about the institution’s strong reputation in counseling, nursing, and nutrition. She discussed the importance of building on the college’s strengths and taking advantage of its standing in the health care community and its relationships with area hospitals. She also shared national reports on the need for pharmacists and explained that the only pharmacy school in the state was at the University of Connecticut and that regionally there were only a few private universities in Massachusetts that offered a pharmacy program.

The group achieved consensus that the institution should move forward with the pharmacy program. Reid then commissioned a feasibility study at the request of the board, a study that a trustee funded. She talked to the president at a competitor institution, explaining that St. Joe’s would be offering a different model. She learned that there was support within the local community and decided to rent space in downtown Hartford for the program.

Although many on campus were concerned that the institution was going to have to invest resources in establishing the program by hiring faculty, purchasing equipment, and renovating space, Reid argued that over time there would be a large return on these investments. The graduate council approved the program.

The faculty also endorsed introducing off-site graduate classes in education throughout the state, tripling the size of the graduate program in education. The undergraduate enrollment has also grown.

Carroll College

Carroll College's new president, Thomas Evans, similarly gave the lie to the notion that every president needs to wait a year to articulate a vision. During the search process, the search committee of this Catholic college in Helena, Montana, was clear that it wanted to hire a president who could articulate an inspiring vision for the college going forward and then mobilize the campus and trustees to act on it. The search prospectus put it this way:

Carroll is looking to its next president to articulate a vision for advancing the College based on conversations with the campus community and the board about Carroll's strategic imperatives, as well as a thorough assessment of the College's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. The president will also bring a set of experiences and market perspectives that will help to inform analyses of strategic alternatives and environmental scans and benchmarking about what is happening at peer and aspirant institutions.

Evans previously had been the associate vice president for professional education and global initiatives at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas. He majored in Japanese and minored in theology at Georgetown University and earned a master's degree in Asian studies and a doctorate in educational administration from the University of Texas-Austin.

From the time he was appointed president in December 2011 and took office in June 2012, Evans spent as much time as he could on the Carroll campus, listening to everyone with whom he met. Everyone with whom he talked said that they were eager to hear his vision for the future. At a summer faculty retreat, the refrain was that the faculty was tired of talking and of planning that resulted in no action. The faculty simply wanted "to get on with it."

By the end of the summer, Evans recognized that there was a great deal of agreement on the campus about what was important and what was not. After the faculty retreat, he crafted a several-page paper outlining his own thoughts about where the college should go. He discussed this draft first with the faculty, then with the staff, and then with the students, generating lots of enthusiasm. In the fall, he laid out for the board this vision that had quickly earned the support of the campus. The trustees enthusiastically endorsed this approach.

Recommendation 4: Presidents Should Be Transparent and Clear

To the extent possible, presidents should communicate honestly and fully with the campus about the decisions that they are making and the reasons for those decisions. The exceptions of course are personnel matters and matters that really do require privacy. But even in these cases, presidents can try to explain what privacy laws and institutional policies mandate.

In one particularly contentious personnel decision involving a popular member of the student affairs staff who had been let go for cause, the student body president alerted the president that the student senate was about to censure her for the decision. The president asked if the student body officers could meet with her, the dean of students, and the college attorney first. They agreed. They all gathered later that day at the president's on-campus residence for several hours. Over refreshments, the attorney answered all of the students' excellent questions about privacy laws and confidentiality related to personnel matters. These students came to understand why the administration could not explain what had happened. The students that evening shared what they had learned with the student senate and recommended against a censure vote. The senate agreed. Not only was a crisis averted, but also from that point on the student leaders and members of the administration actively sought to resolve problems in a collaborative manner.

There are also times when a president may need the support of his or her board. In one such case, a president had let go a very popular faculty member, again for cause. Not only were some students distraught, a number of parents became involved. Eventually, the board chair and president agreed that the board chair needed to address the issue with the angry parents. He did so by writing a brief letter explaining that although he, like the president, was not at liberty to disclose the details of what was a confidential matter, he did want these parents to know that prior to acting in this matter, the president had consulted with the appropriate board committee, which had strongly endorsed the president's proposed action. That letter may not have made the parents happy, but it did stop them from continuing to berate the president.

I also know of several presidents who worry that although they strive to communicate fully and frequently, their messages are often ignored. One president, stung that the students accused him of a failure to communicate, met with the student government to discuss what he could do to communicate with them more effectively. The students were not able to help him, telling him that they didn't read e-mail coming from the university and resented text messages from the administration. (He did encourage them to read the texts, explaining that the administration only sent texts in the event of an emergency.) Few of them read the student newspaper. Few of them checked the university's Facebook page.

My advice here is to develop an internal communication strategy that employs as many approaches as possible. I also have come to believe that overcommunicating is far superior to communicating too little.

Recommendation 5: Presidents Need to Differentiate Between the Urgent and the Normal

Despite my comments throughout about the urgency of some matters, there are also many questions that come before the faculty that can rely on and even benefit from extended deliberation. Presidents

thus would be wise to push for immediate action only when they deem it essential. They also need to explain to the faculty the reasons particular decisions do in fact require immediate action and the timetable by which decisions must be made and actions taken.

Recommendation 6: Presidents Need to Be Clear About Process, Responsibilities, and Financial Decisions

It is good practice for presidents, as they introduce a subject for faculty consideration, to be clear about the process that will be followed, including how they intend to involve the faculty in the decision. As significantly, presidents need to clarify who will have responsibility for the decision and the ensuing actions. I suggest that they do so in meetings with the faculty and also in writing.

For example, if presidents are announcing a search for a new vice president, they would be wise to clarify how members of the committee will be selected and to emphasize that the committee's role is advisory to the president rather than being a decision-making one. If presidents want to discuss with the faculty a policy that they will recommend to the board for its action, they need to explain to the faculty that they want to understand faculty perspectives on the matter before coming to a recommendation, which the board might or might not accept. Finally, presidents need to communicate the financial elements of decisions, including why the decisions need to be made, where—if appropriate—the resources to fund these decisions will come from, and the probable financial implications of those decisions.

A Personal Example

At the beginning of my second year at Puget Sound, I began what became an annual “fall faculty conversation” in which the faculty and I met for four hours (with appropriate breaks for food) to discuss matters of institutional importance. These were not formal faculty meetings, so no votes were taken, nor did we use *Robert's Rules of Order*. Rather we talked. At this particular gathering,

I shared with my colleagues what they had consistently told me were two of their major concerns when I met with each department throughout my first year. They had explained that because we had a bimodal distribution of students, it was hard to know how to pitch their classes. Second, faculty members feared that they were ignoring the better-prepared and more-motivated students in order to reach the students who were not well prepared or motivated. Faculty members believed that as a result a disproportionate number of our most academically talented students were transferring because they were bored.

In light of these observations, I asked a member of the staff to analyze the pertinent data. His report proved that the faculty was right on both counts. We did have a bimodal distribution of students, and a disproportionate number of our better students were transferring. We also looked at the experience of what we thought of in shorthand as “the last hundred students we would have admitted” (based on a formula of SAT scores and grades). These students, it turned out, accounted for one-third of all disciplinary problems in the institution, and one-third of them had left the university by the end of their first year, mainly for either disciplinary or academic reasons. We did a similar analysis for transfer students and learned that a disproportionate number of those students were leaving because of academic difficulties. We concluded that we had been admitting students who were not capable of doing the work and that admitting them (with many of them taking out loans) was unfair to them.

In the interest of addressing this situation, I told the faculty I was contemplating recommending to the board that we reduce the size of the first-year class from 700 to 650 and transfers from 160 to 80. I noted that we had not once in ten years met the goal of enrolling 700 students. I also laid out the budgetary implications of this reduction in the size of the student body in the interest of quality and fairness. I said at the outset that this was not a matter on which faculty members had a vote, but that I very much wanted to know what they thought.

We talked about this for several hours. The group came to an almost unanimous consensus that we should go forward. We did so. The results fairly quickly were better than even I had hoped in terms of student quality. Retention also improved significantly.

Had I unilaterally made this recommendation to the board without either the analysis or the consultation with the faculty, I am confident that there would have been an outcry. Instead, the faculty was invested in the decision and also came up with a series of new and creative programs that I'll describe in the following paragraphs.

Recommendation 7: Presidents Need to Encourage Creativity and Innovation

This particular decision about enrollment at Puget Sound had another unanticipated consequence. Prompted by the focus on retention, a number of my colleagues came up with new programs intended to retain more students, including those who were high achievers. For example, the chair of romance languages established a very successful language house in which majors lived together. Other faculty members agreed to teach first-year seminars for students who lived in the same section of a residence hall, adding an array of cocurricular experiences to the class (such as going to movies or concerts together). Several faculty members agreed to take on the project of advising especially promising students as early as their first year about what they needed to do to be competitive for graduate school and for such fellowships as Fulbrights, Watsons, and Goldwaters (and our numbers soared). New interdisciplinary courses and programs blossomed.

Recommendation 8: Presidents Should Serve as Models for Their Campuses

Effective presidents create a context that fosters not only creativity but also collaboration and communication. They model institutional thinking and require their senior staff to do the same. In many ways, they are teachers, explaining to all constituencies

where their institution fits within the landscape of higher education and how all constituencies must commit to the health and well-being of the entire institution and not just to their own program or set of interests.

Recommendation 9: Presidents Must Exhibit Integrity and Seek to Engender Trust

Exemplary presidents don't compromise doing what they believe is right in order to curry favor with others. These presidents develop reputations for being truth tellers rather than people who cater to their audience. They seek respect, not popularity.

Although many contentious moments about governance on college campuses, like those described earlier in this chapter, tend to be precipitated by presidential actions or management style, it is also the case that members of the faculty can provoke and, in some instances, can resolve the problems. The next chapter will discuss examples of how faculty, for motives of their own, can shatter or advance shared governance.

