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NO FREE SET OF STEAK KNIVES:

ONE LONG, UNFINISHED STRUGGLE TO BUILD EDUCATION COLLEGE FACULTY GOVERNANCE

Introduction

In this paper we argue that any effort to organize faculty may be affected by longstanding customs and cultures that inscribe real if unstated “appropriate” faculty behavior regarding academic freedom. These affect both administrator and faculty response to organizing advances in governance. The “rules” and standards of academic life are not to be taken for granted, nor the power of fear, inertia, learned helplessness, which will provide resistance. These are not new, and are only reinforced by the corporatization of the university. Organizing can be accomplished, but it is not for the impatient.

Beginnings

Early in April, 2012, faculty in our College of Education, met one of our three Dean candidates in open forum. Each of this paper’s authors were interested in hearing his philosophy of faculty governance, since after a six and a half year struggle, we had succeeded in forming a representative Council for the faculty in the College. The question came: “in light of the establishment of a College Council in the past year, would you comment how you can see yourself working with this group, and can you tell us about your philosophy of shared governance?” The answer is paraphrased here: “They have no power.” And, “I don’t know,” meaning he didn’t know if he could work with the group. “They seem to have started because of perceived problems in the College, and I think we can first work on those issues, before I would commit to cooperation.” It was interesting to hear this perspective, from an interviewee and relative stranger to the College. He was communicating a skeptical point of view, regarding this institution which was now established, and had the support of the sitting Dean. We wondered how he had developed this opinion about our effort. He had just come from his interview with the interim Dean and university administration.

In this paper we work to describe the star-crossed six-year process of establishing a common college governance model, in a College which operated with few College or department level policy documents. The two authors were active and instrumental in developing a new interdepartmental governance model, and had a front row seat in the drama than unfolded. Without many other dedicated and responsible faculty, working to change minds toward voice, and away from passivity and avoidance, the project would not have succeeded. This paper discusses issues attendant to strengthening governance in a College of education where an old “normal school” culture of conservative custodialism, in a conservative state,

worked against developing a more vigorous, if surely not radical mode of college governance. Yet with persistence, this effort was successful, if not perfect, and exists as the only such institution in a university of many colleges.

In the spring of 2009, in a move unprecedented in the history of Northern Arizona University (NAU), the faculty in the College of Education (CoE) voted overwhelmingly to adopt a faculty assembly (FA) model as the basis of shared governance in all aspects of the college's administration. The realization of the College Council/Assembly was a culmination of a long period of struggle by the college faculty to regain initiative in governance that had increasingly been either eroded, or existed in name only. The model is simple as any experienced reader will note, unremarkable except for its absence in a university which has long outgrown its frontier foundations. Each of our four departments will send three representatives, along with chairs of the personnel and curriculum committees, and two longest serving university senators, to meet and confer monthly on a shared agenda. Faculty chairs are members, as are the Dean and Associate Dean. The Chair of the College Council and the Dean may share the process of developing an agenda.

Beyond this representative body, the bylaws recognize all faculty and administrators as member of the full Faculty Assembly. Those all-college faculty meetings will be co-chaired and the agenda co-developed by the Council Chair and the Dean. It is a model which has been established and continues in operation in many universities. However, despite its conservative nature, it was resisted and remains largely marginalized by administration and many faculty. The lack of support is either active, with public or private comments that become part of the College grapevine, but more commonly, it is expressed by disengagement, absence. The College of Education administration were aided by faculty disorganization, distrust, reflexive loyalty to administration, which uniformly discouraged efforts at organization.

This article is a shared memory, reviewing files from the first six years of discourse regarding the role of faculty in our college governance. We document our successes and yet are frank about remaining issues. The College Council building effort was an educative process for all involved. It involved negotiating, learning about available models nationwide, communicating with colleagues at other institutions, and also building solidarity with faculty who took seriously our tradition, and indeed our universities' charge for faculty to be involved heavily in shared governance of the institution. New friendships and alliances were found and formed. Inevitably, however, there was friction. The most important impediment to the realization of this group, has been the resistance of the College and University administration. But faculty, used to a culture of obeisance to administration, a university whose faculty Senate leadership is ingrown and has become a "farm system" for positions in university administration.

For the first two to three years, administrators were either actively, or strongly passively resistant to the group. As it won more and more faculty support, and began to shift the culture of the college, administrators would, and do, acknowledge the "work of the Council," but there has been a persistent subtext: toleration of the Council's existence but little support for it. Admittedly this effort, to invigorate faculty governance at the college level came during a time when the university has experienced a steady erosion of the philosophy of shared governance, toward the "new managerialism" that has come to characterize the next generation of governance in higher education. The following tectonic shifts have increasingly isolated faculty from each other and from the engagement and social lubrication that comes with it:

1. The university president, who has been serving for over ten years, is enthusiastic about a corporate managerial model of university life and academics, to rival such entrepreneurial giants as University of Phoenix. Such institutions work without research faculty, have no tenure, or meaningful seniority. Their academic architecture, allows for a greater distance between the investment and the public education community.
2. The college has moved significantly toward faculty that are only engaged on-line, and seldom are found in their offices or in the halls. A large number of faculty are hired and supervised by

administrators without faculty oversight. Our “Extended Campuses” operate like a shadow university but without meaningful academic freedom or responsibility.

3. The tenure track faculty have been “hollowed out.” When the Council was formed over half of faculty were tenure track. Now that number is roughly thirty percent, and new tenure track lines are not available to this College (That said, however, some of the most energetic and supportive faculty have been those without tenure or on tenure track, and many tenured professors, including those who provide verbal support, are disengaged, and seldom if ever show up to meetings of the full Assembly, nor stand for election to the Council).
4. The College administration has exploited accreditation to further remove the College and its faculty from control of the curriculum.
5. A large number of both tenured and tenure line faculty keep their offices in either Phoenix, Tucson, or some other extended campus location, appearing on campus rarely, if at all, beyond the open meeting of the academic year.

The College Council remains at a crucial cross-roads at this writing. It has survived various levels of resistance, including passive resistance of faculty opt-out, from those who cling to the previous vision of hierarchical control which rewards compliance and conformity to administrative initiatives.

The University Context

Founded in 1899 as a teacher training normal school, the 21,352 student-strong NAU is one of the three state universities in Arizona. The others are the Arizona State University (ASU) and the University of Arizona (UA). The university has no college with a robust college level governance unit. Philosophical support for shared governance has largely been promoted by the university-wide Senate. The Senate has been forced to respond to every College as each reacts to the rise of business ethos in the management of university affairs. The situation at NAU is similar to situations prevailing elsewhere in which university presidents are increasingly being referred to as chief executive officers (CEOs), accountability and efficiency have become the discourse informing management practices just as student-services programs have been rechristened as “customer-service.”¹ These maneuvers help fuel faculty moves to regain the governance initiatives in the form of a College Council. Yet, as a university which we argue, greatly outgrew its governance structure, and undeveloped governance was difficult to address, when corporatization rose quickly in the neoliberal climate, moving toward limits on faculty voice in administration, not robust expansion.

Impetus for the Faculty Assembly (FA)

We will use FA as a marker for the entire effort, which included a model where the entire College, the Assembly, shares with the Dean, responsibility to develop a College meeting agenda, and run the all-College meeting. It also includes a College Council, representatives meeting monthly, elected from each department, including ex-officio participation from Chairs of key personnel, and curriculum committees, a CoE senior university Senator, and the Dean and Associate Dean.

The genesis of the College Council movement can be traced to early 2006 when a steady stream of policy edicts and administrative fiat, increased accountability requirements pegged on uncertain efficiencies, coupled with declining tenure-track faculty lines, combined to create an adversarial relationship between the college administration and a broad spectrum of the faculty. They sent a clear message to the CoE faculty that the college administration, with the blessings of the central university administration, had paid obeisance to the language of shared governance while adopting of corporate managerialism. The university president was on record in praise of, and concerned with the presence of the private, largely on-line behemoth, the University of Phoenix. Large sectors of the university infrastructure, from food services to dorms have been “privatized.” Corporate efficiency models have been instituted with

vocationalization of programs and moved strongly in the direction of university partnerships with entities like Pearson Publishing for curriculum “packages” which bypass faculty scrutiny.

However, the immediate catalysts were administrative support for program reconfiguration and possible loss of faculty positions, attack on tenure coupled with the loss of academic autonomy due to recent NCATE teacher education accreditation. There was a groundswell of faculty discontent that was in the making due to new promotion and tenure criteria, and increasing leverage of distance learning on academic matters. We consider these immediate triggers in the following sections.

Loss of Academic Governance Control

Many College faculty members grew increasingly alarmed at the erosion of academic freedom, concerned with inherent and legal right to make fundamental decisions on academic matters as part of their academic freedom. As Wilson² aptly argues, no other issue in academia evokes widespread reaction from the faculty as one that touches on academic freedom. Thus, the summer 2009 decision by CoE college administration to sanction the transfer of the Secondary Education from the college to the content areas in other colleges without the adequate participation or consent the faculty was the immediate trigger for a faculty vote in support of the assembly model of institutional governance. However there was a significant resistance from faculty who were content with their personal and professional lives and willing to watch administrative change unfold. Their response was to retreat or to join administration, and gather whatever rewards were available to them in exchange for cooperation with administration and passive or active resistance to the College Assembly/Council.

Three issues were germane to faculty discomfort with the program reconfigurations. First, the college administration, and department chairs, signed off the transfers thereby undermining the role of full-time faculty in academic matters. Second, the rationale provided for these moves was couched in the evolving national rhetoric questioning the importance of teacher educational programs in improving academic achievement in schools. Third, the CoE faculty felt slighted that the time, energy and resources spent on crafting an NCATE conceptual framework that identified the key dispositions that a teacher candidate from NAU should possess were being jettisoned. Simply put, the Secondary Education faculty were facing program dissolution without meaningful input, but had no venue to dissent. The FA model of governance was viewed as the best strategy to regain the initiative in academic decision making that the faculty had progressively lost.

New Promotion & Tenure Criteria

Second only to program reconfiguration, no other issue has been most responsible for the rancor between the faculty and the administration than the 2006 CoE promotion and tenure (P&T) criteria. So divisive was the subject that the faculty was divided equally into two camps, those for and those against the new criteria. It passed with a paltry 3 vote majority in a 60% turnout vote. The high octane decibels elicited by the new P&T criteria have continued to reverberate in the CoE echo chamber to this day.

Central to the new P&T criteria was the desire by both the university and college administrations for enhanced faculty accountability requirements. Promotion and tenure requirements for all faculty categories were made more rigorous. As captured in a study on enhancing faculty productivity by senior professors in the college, the central goals of the new P&T criteria were underpinned by the need to support the scholarship activities of the faculty members; to increase the college’s national reputation in area of scholarship; and to increase the grant productivity in the college³. In addition, faculty were forced to adopt a narrow view of research, which had little flexibility or discipline-specific responsiveness⁴. Ironically, in instituting accountability measures that have focused on increased scholarly productivity, governance was done by “custom” and there was no formal venue outside separate department meetings, or the “Dean’s” meeting, whose agenda was developed without meaningful faculty input. There was

simply nowhere to address faculty concerns around thinning tenure density, short annual contracts for the contingent faculty whose numbers were swelling, and low pay. While adjunct faculty were expected to bring valuable school-based knowledge to teacher candidates, and to strengthen the partnership between CoE and local schools, these contingent faculty were unsure about their academic freedom, where short contracts and completion created insecurity and fear. The new promotion criteria ignored this important dynamic. It also omitted a “grandfather” provision to allow such faculty to be assessed under the old system. Proposed *Scholarship Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure* developed with scant faculty input, and were also put to a vote hastily. A faculty vote was called by the Dean, and with minor participation, much abstention and non-participation, the guidelines were put into place. Thus, our conditions of work were dramatically altered, without meaningful faculty discussion. As one faculty member opined:

Many faculty have different responsibilities which enables the college to function in a complex manner. The reward system does not fit what they were asked to do; it (criteria) is just a hierarchy of research artifacts. It is administrator-driven. Administrators have confused rigidity with rigor when it comes to faculty evaluation. We have gone to a very old traditional system.⁵

The NCATE Trojan Horse

The 2000 adoption of National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) new standards on teacher education unleashed a flurry of accreditation activities in colleges of teacher education in the USA. NAU teacher education program was among those that sought NCATE accreditation following the adoption of these new standards. In the Spring of 2006, the university administration decided to work toward NCATE accreditation of its teacher education program because “we see this as a wonderful opportunity to promote the programs in our university that prepare teachers and other educators”, as one senior administrator put it⁶.

Generally, implementation of an NCATE accreditation plan leads to two contrasting college experiences. On the one hand of the spectrum is the positive, useful and fulfilling experience which many colleges experience. In our case NCATE Accreditation took place without faculty input. On the other hand accreditation is characterized by technical and prescriptive requirements, time and resource strain, and narrow assessment bands. Faculty are warned to be involved when academic freedom is constrained by increased structural surveillance and control of curriculum and instruction

The troubled accreditation process was a powerful stimulus for faculty to organize the Council and Assembly. Faculty concerns centered on the inordinate amount of time and resources expended on the process of aligning the college’s program to NCATE requirements. Not only have new support personnel been hired (assistant dean, technology analyst and assistant chairs) but also money has been expended on acquisition of new software and training faculty for the new accountability requirements. In addition, students were required to subscribe for a fee to the new assessment tracking software. Our faculty Council study team took faculty complaints about this to colleagues at Florida International University, who showed us a model of NCATE process which went *through*, not around their elected faculty Assembly. This further encouraged us that we might forestall academic freedom struggles in the future by moving toward an Assembly/Council, even if it was too late to do this for the NCATE founding process.

Faculty believed that the quest for standardized assessment artifacts as mandated by NCATE was have been detrimental to faculty innovation and creativity that has been instrumental in making NAU teacher education program consistently the best in Arizona. Faculty Assembly, it was felt, would provide an avenue for faculty to salvage this initiative in academic programming.

The Study Group and Pilot Council

Following these developments, faculty, including the authors, moved ahead to adopt a pilot project College Council. We called the group the College Assembly Study Team (CAST) and conducted a faculty vote, which was successful, for its founding. One of us, Laura Sujo-Montes, was elected the Chair.

At our first meeting one of us, Dr. Senese, was given the task of researching other Colleges of Education with a Faculty Assembly and or College Council representing faculty. Many such institutions emerged, giving us confidence that this model was rather more the norm than the exception. University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Indiana State University, and especially Florida International and Arizona State Universities served as models. We met with our colleagues at ASU to discuss their model. We corresponded with Dr. Rey Gomez, who was a governance pioneer at ASU and mentor to one our most respected senior faculty supporters. His premature passing during our building process was a sad moment for us all. In the meantime, we met with faculty to present our ideas to each of the four departments in the College. We presented the idea and an early draft of Bylaws, adopted from Arizona State Univ. College of Education. After considering other models, it made sense to work with these, since they were ratified under the Arizona Board of Regents authority.

Very early in the process we worked to connect our College group with the established university Faculty Senate. We were surprised that our idea was met with skepticism, and resistance, or silence throughout the effort to organize. We even made our two senior sitting Senators ex-officio members of the College Council that we developed. Yet two presidents of the Senate were explicit in their opposition. Indeed, many faculty were encouraged to organize on the College level due to the perception that the Senate was mostly “service seat time” for faculty and a career platform for ambitious faculty who many saw make their way into university administration dependent on the extent to which they were successful at representing the President and Provost’s interests, and “managing” issues and restive faculty. At one point a Senate president and a vice-president met with one of us to actively warn us of negative consequences if a scheduled vote for establishment of our Council, were to go forward.

Suffice it to say the convergence of organizational forms at ASU and NAU as exemplified in the FA model is the logical outcome of the severe stresses that faculty at both Arizona institutions have experienced. This institutional isomorphism⁷ has been driven by normative pressures found in the academic profession. The existence of a faculty association for the three Arizona universities provided the legitimacy for this inter-organizational faculty model of governance. Indeed, during the period of our college council formation the College of Education at ASU was “reformed” to follow a larger privatization model, and dozens of faculty either left, were reassigned, or were let go.

In all, many faculty were ready then, to explore the FA governance model. They were seeing the contrast between the “Potemkin Village” presented to the public— quality faculty, great student-professor ratio, personal attention, and high faculty involvement— vs. “The Leviathan” of extended campus dominance, and faculty input being slowly replaced by emphasis on professional managers making decisions rather than tested scholars, and continuing violation of standards of peer review at the department level.

A Free Set of Steak Knives: Initial Experimentation with FA Model

In Fall of 2006 a core group of CoE faculty participated in some informal, over-coffee gatherings focusing on issues that university faculty rarely have time to engage in. It was realized that the faculty, like K-12 teachers, felt disempowered and wanted to have a larger say in college governance. The idea of a FA and having a faculty representative body that would be invited to take part in the college decision-making process started to take shape. We even attempted to keep the conversation light with a free steak knife set offer. The college had become quite a tense terrain and we tried to ease the tension a bit. The following is a close paraphrase of the notice that went out:

Colleagues and friends,

After a couple of week's discussion, meeting with our faculty and our friends in the Faculty Senate, with the blessing of the university senate leadership and the wise counsel of our College of Education COE Senate leadership, we had the beginnings of a group to study the idea of a Faculty Assembly form of government, along the lines of our sibling universities in the State, and nationwide, we asked the Dean for a short time, in which we would ask if anyone thinks the FA model should not go forward. To have a good study, we need everyone who cares one way or another to add their thoughts. We would also ask the Dean to respond, hopefully with support, if not for the idea at this point, for the good faith of the faculty.

We want nothing more than the same respect and consideration as faculty at other mature universities doing important work. We have also kept our Provost apprised of this exploration. We are sure, as a major sponsor of the American Democracy Project she will be in support of the spirit of this effort on a campus, where democracy for students can only but be inspired by democracy among faculty. To encourage participation, there will be a lottery: if you jump in to join our Assembly Study Team, you then will be included in a lottery for a set of steak knives! These knives are by Haeckel, are built from the finest German steel and will be a beautiful complement to any decor.....

Throughout the rest of the Spring 2007 semester and the beginning of the Fall 2008 semester, meetings were held and it was agreed to talk with other faculty members about the idea of faculty governance along with the FA model. It was frustrating to have different faculty members show to CAST meetings, although there was always a core of 4-6 people who were constantly present. By the spring 2008, we had obtained a space in the "faculty meeting" agenda to present our idea of the FA idea to the rest of the faculty. Many questions came out of that meeting. For instance, some faculty asked if the presenters could address the philosophy of faculty/staff governance; if there were rules that would help avoid friction if the Dean did not accept recommendations; if the college assembly was packaged as an advisory body because that was the only option or if it was for some other reason. Thus, both excitement and skepticism about the idea informed the college climate. After more conversations and meetings, we asked faculty to vote for the idea of having a College Council to explore the feasibility of having a Faculty Assembly. Around 56 (45%) faculty participated in the vote with: 37 in favor; and 19 opposed. Though the faculty had essentially endorsed the formation of a College Council as the first step in getting to a full-fledged FA, there were some who questioned the validity of the results as they did not include a majority of votes.

In Fall 2008, the study group changed its name to Faculty Assembly Formation Committee (FAFC). Officials were to be elected from the faculty in the four departments as well as those from faculty from statewide sites to form the College Council of FAFC. The council would be the representative body of all college units to the FA. Surprisingly, but not totally expected, turf wars with the college administration ensued as the administration opposed the incorporation of existing standing committees into the new council. The administration did not entirely recognize the College Council as a governing body with representatives committees; committees work at the college continued with "business as usual."

During the fall 2008 and spring 2009, FAFC continued to meet regularly and to work on preparing the bylaws that would govern the faculty assembly. FAFC also took charge of conducting the faculty meetings. The agenda was set by members of the council and the dean but the meetings were facilitated by a member of the College Council. It was a small but significant victory to have faculty meetings actually being led actually by the faculty. As we worked to clarify the role and composition of the College Council, we approached the end of the school year; it was time to vote to go full board with a full faculty assembly and college council, or to abandon the idea. In May 2008, the dean of the college sent the following communication to the college via email: "... the results of the vote to pilot a Faculty Assembly, College Council next academic year. There were 124 eligible voters. Of these, 53 voted yes, 18 voted no,

and 4 abstained. The pilot council, therefore, was approved. The next step will be to seat the council members, as indicated in the documents discussed at our last faculty meeting.”

After two years of planning, we had achieved a milestone in the arduous journey towards full participation in college governance – or at least that is what we thought. In the next section, we shall provide detailed insights into the various roadblocks that we had to surmount as committed faculty navigated the narrow path towards participation in shared governance.

The Road Less Travelled

The journey towards the evolution of FA model of governance has not been without pitfalls, some anticipated but others quite unexpected. However, the commitment to the principles of shared governance by a large majority of the college faculty allowed us to weather the perilous condition and skillfully drive home the message that faculty participation in shared governance was not a choice but an essential ingredient in democratic decision-making in higher education. In this section, we will identify several events and responses to faculty action that resonate with larger concerns regionally and nationally where faculty members confront new challenges to their traditional roles as partners in the governance of academic institutions.

While it was evident that not all faculty in the college had bought into the idea of FA as a model of shared governance, it was not expected that this minority would sabotage the idea, or at least try to. For them, the idea of a new governance model in which the faculty would have greater say in decision making, without too much deference to custom and administrative fiat, manifested disloyalty to the administration. An early strategy of choice in trying to defeat the concept was to frustrate the exchange of ideas by efforts to blunt the use of the institutional email system as a sounding board for thoughts, and as a means of organizing meetings. Soon after faculty voted to explore the possibility of establishing a new model of governance, some faculty objected to even receiving email on the topic. The complaints, rather than faculty use of email as a part of academic freedom, were supported. Faculty were cautioned regarding appropriate use of email, and for a time the listserv was disabled. It was becoming clearer all the time that cooperating with the FA study group was being portrayed as disloyalty, not as an effort to increase robust faculty governance.

In the following sections we provide insights into the additional challenges that we encountered as we constituted the new governance model.

Staff Resistance

We made an early effort to create bylaws for governance which would involve the administrative staff. We saw a useful model at New Mexico State University, where one of us had done graduate work. We believed that our mutual interests and our belief in transparency made this important. We received support from key staff, and they held a vote to be included in deliberations. However, key staff members resented our organization, and distrusted our motives. We were met with great resistance by some at a meeting where we were invited to discuss the bylaws. Certain staff were also instrumental in curtailing our use of the College listserv, citing unwanted communication. Despite written support from several staff members, those who complained were supported by administration. The staff itself was divided.

Some believed they were being asked in just to do clerical work. Other said, not so publically, that most reported directly to administration, and that their participation would look too much like disloyalty, and jeopardize there year to year employment. This was another instance where we heard of administrative resistance, and where participation by anyone was seen as a litmus test for loyalty to administration.

The attempt to delegitimize the use of college listserv to deliberate on the new governance model was disappointing since the college administration neither explicitly discouraged nor encouraged it. Without the explicit support of the administration, the legitimately constituted study group simply encouraged the use of the “delete button” by the dissenting faculty: The following closely paraphrases our response:

Some staff are asking to be removed from the FAFC informational updates. Or to have the Staff listserv removed from the mailings. I think for me to have to edit the staff or college listserv is unnecessarily punitive, given the official nature of this as a legitimate COE issue, and goes against the spirit of a good faith initiative, which received no opposition in a meeting of the full faculty. I'd hope that you maybe could just click delete, like we do for our many, many spam messages. You may not have time for these, or find them unwelcome, but other staff, I think deserve the opportunity to see what is under discussion. Change, even the potential for change, can be unsettling, but nothing will go forward without the fullest possible input, and a vote of the parties affected.⁸

Dissenting faculty were also influential in the decision by college staff to decline participation in the assembly activities. Indeed some staff were solidly behind the idea, and wanted to be included, but that others were distrustful or afraid, issues which were further reinforced by dissenting faculty characterization of the whole project as disloyalty to the administration. Staff were constantly reminded by dissenting faculty that they did not have the same protections as faculty did. Several of originators of the assembly idea followed up on an invitation to present the idea to staff during a retreat they were holding at the end of Spring 2007. At that meeting, the divisions and the distrust emerged. Some could not believe we wanted them there, except as “gofers.” They did not have faith that faculty could undo what was perceived as condescension by too many staff. The meeting was a divisive disaster. At some point during 2008 it was decided not to include staff partly because there was no Board of Regents (the directing body of the state universities) language providing for staff input in decision-making, and the discourse was becoming too toxic. Faculty continued to meet as a group from that point on, with the promise, and it was a sincere one, to include staff at a later date. This was another instance where we heard of administration’s resistance.

The Administration Speed Bump

The study group presented the Provost and the Dean with a copy of the developing By-laws. By that time the group was following the template of our sibling institution in the state-Arizona State University. The study group kept in contact with several of their faculty representatives and learned a great deal about the process. However, while we were not ever overtly discouraged by central administration, we were never recognized nor encouraged. A number of influential faculty members were making an issue of the use of university email for communication, and actively talking down the effort to both the college and central university administration. In an attempt to secure central administration’s support, the following message closely paraphrases what was sent to the Provost:

There is a growing group of hardworking, productive COE faculty who are truly excited about the challenge presented in education today, and here in the College, but also concerned. We are pushing, begging, pleading, demanding, griping and whining strongly for more involvement and transparency in all College and university functions: personnel, budgets, operations, grants, scholarship, teaching support. Yes it's true— we want to WORK HARDER. Seriously, at stake is a vision of higher education. We'd like to see a more university style culture nurtured here, one that is linked to our inheritance: an older model of Normal School governance which is our legacy, and not only in COE but because that is our natal nest, all of NAU. It breaks along two lines as follows with this question: Are you and the President in support of a more "professionalized" vision of college administration, and less good old fashioned, hammer it out with faculty, by faculty

*style higher education administration? We'd love a conversation on that. In our view, ironically the movement to "professionalize" higher education administration is in fact an old model of clerical control of universities, more "administration knows best." Could we have an open forum to discuss this?*⁹

The Provost, however, did not take the opportunity to meet and dialogue with the faculty over the vision for higher education in general and NAU and CoE in particular.

The Provost was not officially in opposition to the idea. She also had one of her staff review and comment on places where the bylaws might conflict with University constitution and Conditions of Faculty Service. The document was edited based on these comments, and truthfully, it led to a better document. She offered to speak to the faculty, but there had been significant dissention, and still no official recognition by the Dean. So we had no official standing to make an invitation. The absence of outright support by both college and university administration gave legitimacy to claims by dissenting faculty that the work of the faculty assembly study group was "subversive" in intent.

The Senate Roadblock

The Faculty Senate model, though an important part of the university, was an established body, with its own customs, and its own turf. We were initially surprised to discover just how disruptive their leadership would be to College level towards faculty efforts to enhance shared governance. Faculty at CoE felt that the Senate could be improved by a more vigorous connection to what we were doing as too often it seemed divorced from what was going on in the colleges. To remedy this, the FA study group developed a model where the two senior sitting Senators would be automatic members of the College Council and that communication would be porous between the groups, between the FA and the university faculty senate.

However, the university Senate was not comfortable with the new governance model envisaged by the college faculty. In September 2008, the sitting and past-president of the university Senate would meet with one of the originators of the FA model to discourage our moving ahead with a vote to establish the study group. We had heard earlier, in 2007, that the Senate president was alarmed by our movement. We heard rumors that there was worry our idea would "spread" to other colleges, extending faculty governance in ways that might not be as well controlled as by the University Senate, where the Provost and President were an official presence, and where so many officers eased their way into lucrative career building positions after their service in the senate.

Needless to state, the FA study group was in frequent contact with university senate leadership, and copied them on almost all updates and changes. While still skeptical, the study group thought the Senate's new leadership was more in sync than the previous year, especially when a key issue for them was developing communication between Senate and the Colleges. The study group moved ahead envisioning a Senate partnership, but was shocked to receive the following response where the Senate President was,

*... sorry to see the direction that things have gone with a vote to establish a council in COE under the guise of an assembly. This was not what the Senate envisioned when it created ad hoc committees last Spring term to serve as vehicles to facilitate the establishment of college assemblies. As per earlier discussions, the Senate has an interest in helping each college begin to create a forum (a college assembly) where all faculty in the college could meet and begin to discuss issues of interest that could then move to the Senate. Assemblies could also be a locus for cooperative and productive discussion with the college dean as needed. The Senate did not vote to establish governance structures within the colleges.*¹⁰

In fact the Senate executive council blocked an effort to put this discussion on the agenda, and there was no chance for the membership to be actively involved in this discussion. The lack of true support of Senate leadership was important, but not a deal breaker. It reinforced doubts about that institution, which consequently reinvigorated efforts by committed CoE faculty to organize in this new effort in institutional governance. All suspicions about the cooptation of the whole Senate foundation were only reinforced by this letter.

During 2008-09 academic year a group, which resembled the College Council, was formed by the Dean and existed, ad hoc, for the entire academic year. It was called an Executive Council, and was to be a bridge to the College Council under development. Predictably, without bylaws, and a specific set of charges, the group was largely moribund, but it was a good signal that the culture of the College was changing to accommodate a new model.

As the Dean's "executive council" moved ahead, in a parallel universe, we had elected our first "president." to head a bylaws committee for the college council. She was a contingent faculty member, and we were all glad that adjunct and contingent faculty participation might be strengthened and become robust and consistent. She was the first of several of the contingent faculty who outdid many of their tenured colleagues in commitment and service to the college. In December of 2008, under her leadership, we presented the first complete draft of bylaws to the faculty, outlining representation, and duties. This draft was followed by dozens more, leading to the current accepted bylaws document. One symptom of a college governed by "custom" was the complete absence of bylaws for the four departments and the College. Policies for all crucial College activities, from admissions, to P&T, to personnel, were scattered randomly, some emanating from the university conditions of faculty service, some from the university *Faculty Handbook*. During the six years we worked, College administration did move toward regularizing standard college policy, with the development of a website, with attachments for standing committee charges, etc. We believe this was stimulated by our fundamental critique, that the College of Education had not moved beyond the parochial governance structure of a pre-war Normal College with a couple thousand students. Perhaps our altitude, at 7000 feet, was the problem, with too little oxygen for rational governance.

In the Spring of 2009 the Council/Assembly model was presented to the full faculty at the regular faculty meeting. After discussion, and a vote (59 / 33) faculty agreed to run a "pilot" college council in the 2009-10 academic year. Our pilot year president was elected, a full professor. The year was successful, yet resistance remained, yet not enough to prevail in a College vote. In late 2010 the College voted to accept the bylaws, which by then were in their 36th iteration! The Faculty Assembly and its representative College Council were a reality.

Concluding Remarks: with Notes from the New Public Education

Many of us who used to speak enthusiastically to our students about teaching as a career, have watched developing shift to a vision of teaching as "at-will" middle management employment, with the following trends: 1. The hegemony of standardized testing, driving scripted curricula. 2. The uses of school and teacher evaluation tied to public school test scores, including draconian staff replacement strategies and political take-overs of schools and school districts. 3. The rise of the government and foundation-funded teacher training post-baccalaureate "boot-camp" Teach for America. 4. In state after state, meaningful systems of seniority, along with tenure, began to deteriorate. 5. Perhaps most importantly, as economic crisis developed, increasing tendency to deflect attention from corporate responsibility for corruption, and business cycle downturn, to teachers, teaching and education. With state budget shortfalls, education budgets at every level began their decline. And publically funded Charter schools, with their semi-private governing boards, ubiquitous "waiting lists" were draining schools of an anxious middle class, eager to mobilize any form of a high value status marker for their children, leaving the public school to more and more students without the social capital to negotiate such a move.

We saw continued shifts away from teacher professional autonomy and control, along with meaningful faculty governance in programming and curriculum. The seamless connection between both Republican and Democratic administration policies was also a clear message of the hegemonic nature of the dominant ideology of privatization. In each of these changes, reflects an integrated shift away from public education as a democratically controlled profession in the commonwealth.

Thus was the stage set for a similar harmonious disintegration at the College level, and we believe is part of the resistance which manifested itself in our effort to organize. Most important here is how the public structures of the public university have followed the privatization shift. The ideological shifts have mobilized managerial privatization shift, yet the semantics of professorial democracy, remain the same. Administrators continue the discourse of academic life as this guild of scholars while the ranks of professional administrative managers swell. Yet the policy pressures and the ideological climate of privatization and managerialism are consistently disharmonious.

Perhaps we can understand why College and university administration have vacillated among open active resistance to the idea, passive resistance, and tacit acceptance of its existence. Support and enthusiasm are and have been missing. We have never seen administration come out publically in opposition. At no time during our six-year struggle did we receive communication from administration to faculty that this model, met not only approval, but that administration encouraged faculty and administration to participate for the good of the College. Indeed this kind of encouragement would be directly in line with language in state law and Board of Regents requirements for robust shared governance. But these were put in place in a different time, before the privatization revolution, and the corporate university paradigm shift. Also a Normal School culture, and its deep-seated passivity, meant that this legal authorization was off the radar at the College of Education.

Normal School Culture and the New Managed University

Indeed, many of us believed that the legacy of the Normal School, with its ambiguous relationship to the university, was to blame for the ongoing resistance. Many of our colleagues were former administrators, counselors, and/or elementary and secondary school teachers who brought with them the ideological powerlessness that pervades public school teaching, particularly in our state, with a long history of authoritarian governance, anti-unionism, and patronizing leadership models. The tradition of academic freedom was foreign to many. Indeed, the university administration may have been surprised that this complex, theoretically and practically energetic move toward governance emerged from the College of Education, often considered to be the intellectual “poor relative” of the university, where the defenses of academic freedom often come from supposedly more “sophisticated” College faculty. The old college culture died hard, and at this writing, there is still tension and passive resistance to some degree. However, we are guardedly optimistic that the model will take root, and be an effective force for rational College and University policy making. For alongside this Normal School culture there has been an equally important tradition where public school educators, and educators of teachers have been leaders in support of democracy in education, most notably in the tradition of intellectual forebear John Dewey, a co-founder of AAUP.

As resource constraints have continued to plague American higher education, universities and colleges have found themselves governed under corporate principles in which administrators dominate the decision making regimen. This article has provide an overview of the process a group of committed faculty in the CoE at NAU, decided to change the course of action and restore faculty voice in institutional governance. Both internal and external factors provided the dual impetus that catalyzed the move by faculty— attack on tenure, program reconfiguration, new tenure and promotion criteria, a haphazard implementation of NCATE accreditation process coupled with the presence of FA governance model at our sister institution. However, the FA model of governance did not receive total support by the faculty. Even today an

influential minority, still characterize the new direction in college governance as evidence of disloyalty to the administration. Apathy or passive resistance is still a problem.

However, many faculty worked diligently, and in a negative or at best neutral climate, have been seriously involved with the process. Without the patience, and hard work of so many we would have nothing to show for the six years of effort. We have had four Presidents, and have met formally for four years now. Committed faculty are a little bruised from the struggles to support faculty governance and peer review, yet we contemplate ways in which our struggle and problems are part of a larger devaluation of educator autonomy, and the rise of privatization, and private management philosophies replacing democratic governance at every level of education.

NOTES

SEE Gerber, Larry. "Professionalization as the Basis for Academic Freedom and Faculty Governance." 2010 AAUP Journal of Academic Freedom Volume One 2. p. 8

¹ See Simmons, T. (2009, March 27). "After 40 years, has the grand experiment failed?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, B26, (March 27, 2009); and Maguire, D. C. "Seeking the Path to Adjunct Justice at Marquette University", *Thought & Action*, 41 (Fall 2008), 47 – 55.

² Wilson, J. K. *Political Correctness: Academic Freedom and its Enemies*. Boulder, CO., Paradigm, 2010.

³ Denzine, G., Kain, D. & Martin, W. "Making a Commitment to the Scholarship of Faculty in a College of Education: A Case Study of a Single Institution", *Journal of the Professoriate*, 1, 2 (2006), 69 -87.

⁴ Denzine, G., Kain, D. & Martin, W. 2006, 81.

⁵ Conversation with CoE faculty Member hired for her expertise and experience in K-12 on 5/4/2010 in her office.

⁶ "NCATE Timeline Adopted" *Northern Arizona NCATE Update*, (Fall 2006). Retrieved from [http://coe.nau.edu/aci/resources/ncate_newsletters/NCATEUpdate\(August06\).pdf](http://coe.nau.edu/aci/resources/ncate_newsletters/NCATEUpdate(August06).pdf) Retrieved 5/3/10.

⁷ In their seminal work, DiMaggio and Powell discuss how a variety of forces contribute to institutional isomorphism where institutions come to resemble each other. See DiMaggio, P. & Powell, W. "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields", *American Sociological Review*, 48 (1983), 147 – 160.

⁸ One of the FA founder member's email communication to the college faculty.

⁹ An FA founding member's email invitation to NAU provost, 2/23/2007.

¹⁰ NAU Faculty Senate's email to one of the founding members of FA.

(Arizona Revised Statutes) 15-1601 guarantees that university faculty "...shall share responsibility for academic and educational activities and matters related to faculty personnel,... participate in the governance of their respective universities..."

NAU Conditions of Faculty Service 6-201 "The faculties of the respective universities have a correlative duty to share in the responsibilities and obligations of governance and administration."

AFFILIATIONS

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