Working Efficiently on the Senate While Still Maintaining the Principles Shared Governance

Prominent among the concerns expressed in the Senate's President and Executive Team Evaluation surveys over the past several years have been concerns about (at least a perception of) top-down decision making, lack of transparency, and consequently, the failure of shared governance. The Senate cannot be a credible critic of the administration if it does no better in these respects itself.

During his April 23, 2014 Senate presentation on shared governance, President Mroz displayed a slide on four, shared-governance scenarios and recommended scenario 4 (both the Administration and the Senate highly engaged):

> "This really sets a tone for going forward. . . . If everybody's got high engagement, both the administration and the Senate, you've got a Senate and an administration that collaborate really well together. Does that mean that everybody gets what they want all the time? No, it doesn't. It means that they collaborate, and, hopefully, there's some understanding why things are the way they are.

> "There's really only a couple of places to be here, because the Board will fire the administration if we are not engaged. . . so the rest of the these governing scenarios are really up to you and the new [Senate] president coming in as to what happens in the coming year."

This is a challenge to the Senate and one that will require support from the administration in terms of both time and information.

At the same time, representative democracy (of which the Senate is an example) differs from direct democracy in that not every person has to be involved in every decision.

Here are some suggestions on improving the efficiency of Senate business without compromising the basic principles of representative democracy:

A. Use Time Between Senate Meetings to Make Meetings Themselves More Efficient

If senators or their alternates do not attend Senate meetings, the Senate may fail to make a quorum (which has happened) and, thus, be unable to conduct Senate business. Biweekly meetings lasting two hours or more may provide a disincentive for attending.

Hence, the advantages of "blended learning" or "flipped classrooms"—in which some work is done outside of class in order to help make classroom time more productive—might also be relevant to Senate meetings.

For example, email messages provide an easy and readily accessible means of ensuring transparency (and hence, accountability) about decision-making processes. In addition, unlike sitting in a meeting, people can choose when and where to access email messages and even whether to access these messages at all.

Senate-related email might be managed by checking the "From" and "Subject" lines and deciding what you should read (or at least browse) and what you can safely ignore.

B. Distribute the Senate's Workload

1. Most of the items on the Senate's agenda might be placed into one of the following categories:

   a. Things that the Senate president can do him- or herself with the advice and consent of the Executive Committee.

   b. Things that might be developed as Senate proposals by the Executive Committee, some of which the Senate president might be expected to draft with the advice and consent of the Executive Committee.

c. Things that might be referred to various standing committees, some of which the Senate president might be expected to draft with the advice and consent of the Executive Committee and the appropriate standing committees.

d. Things that we might agree should not be pursued.

2. As we have alternates for senators, amend the Senate's Bylaws to create alternates for committee chairs to help share the responsibility, for example, for reporting to the Senate and participating in meetings of the Executive Committee.

C. Reducing Expectations for Alternates

1. Make clear that, although always welcome, alternates need only attend Senate meetings in the absence of their senator.

2. Amend the Bylaws to indicate that, although always welcome, alternates *required* to serve on standing committees.

D. Time Savers for Particular Committees (including the Fringe Benefits Committee, which still needs a chair), Officers, and Administrative Assistant

1. With passage of Proposal 32-14, the Senate can ask an external healthcare consultant to research questions.

2. At least for this year, the Senate president will assume the chair of Fringe Benefits Committee's responsibilities for service on the Benefits Liaison Group and the Michigan Tech Community Wellness Committee.

3. The Deans' Council will use the Senate's proposal template for curricular proposals (which last year accounted for 17 of the 35 new proposals introduced to the Senate).

4. The Administrative Policy Committee may be relieved of some or all of its responsibilities for generating and conducting the annual President and Executive Team Evaluation Survey.

5. The Finance Committee, now combined with the Institutional Planning Committee, could compile its financial report only every other year, and in the off year, develop proposals based on the previous year's report.

6. Consistent with *Robert's Rules of Order,* the Senate secretary will keep minutes as a record of what was done, not what was said. Minutes will be time-indexed to the streaming-video record of the meeting.

7. Secure work-study help for the Senate's Administrative Assistant.

E. Be Cautious of Creating Time-Sinks Ourselves

For example, (a) the Senate's proposed role in annual evaluations of department chairs and academic deans and (b) the Senate's role in ensuring that all Senate, Administration, and Board of Control policies and procedures are consistent.

F. More Efficient Use of Meeting Time

1. When a Senate proposal is being presented by the chair of the relevant Senate standing committee, the presiding officer (Senate president) may delegate (some) responsibility for fielding questions to that person.

2. When a proposal is first introduced, before a motion to approve is made, there might be brief but broad discussion of the proposal. Then, once a motion to adopt the proposal has been made and seconded, discussion and debate is confined to senators and alternates, except for points of information and clarification by non-members.

3. When appropriate, address multiple issues in a single proposal, as with proposals for amending the Senate's Constitution and Bylaws.

4. Consider the possibility of having both a discussion agenda and a consensus agenda, as does Michigan Tech's Board of Control.

F. Other Time Savers

1. Reorganize such that the Senate can function with fewer and smaller standing committees (consider recent additions and consolidations and the difficulty of recruiting committee chairs).

2. In addition to proposed compensation for the Senate's vice president and proposed release time for committee chairs, propose some equivalent of compensation time (comp time) for professional staff senators and alternates when they attend.

Senate President's Report
Meeting 551, September 24, 2014

1. E-Cigarette Policy

Brief Senate presentation (speakers for?), followed by co-sponsored public forum, and then a vote by Senate Constituents (Elections Committee).

2. Filling Positions for Liaisons, etc.

- Brian Barkdoll to serve as Senate's liaison to Graduate Faculty Council.

- Professional Staff Policy Committee to recommend liaison to Staff Council.

- IT Committee to recommend Senate representative to the Provost's IT Governance Group.

- Need uniform procedure for electing or appointing Senate representatives to university-wide committees: Proposal to be drafted by the Executive Committee.

3. Unfilled Senator and Alternate Positions

- Alternate for ME-EM

- Senator and alternate for Academic Services A

- Alternate for Academic Services B

- Alternate for Academic Services C

- Senator for Enrollment

4. Unfilled Standing Committee Chair Positions

- Fringe Benefits Committee

- Administrative Policy Committee

5. Outside Consultant on Design and Implementation of the Senate's 2014-2015 President and Executive Team Evaluation Survey

Senate Procedure 503.1.1 specifies that, "The evaluation will be conducted during the spring semester and will be supervised by the Senate Administrative Policy Committee."

Last spring, President Mroz suggested that it might be useful to solicit professional advice on survey design.

American Evaluation Association's web site http://www.eval.org lists 30 consultants in Michigan.

September 20 proposal to President Mroz: Senate to solicit cost estimate from The Curtis Center Program Evaluation Group at the University of Michigan for reviewing and advising on the Senate's 40-question, 2013-2014 survey.

6. Michigan Tech Fund 2014-2015 Campus Campaign launched this week (see your campus mail or visit http://www.mtu.edu/giving/ways-to-give/annual-gift/campaign/) The number for the **University Senate's new Tech Fund account is 3298.**

7. Prune Former Employees from RateMyProfessors Database for Michigan Tech: Provost or President to Human Resources to Center for Teaching and Learning to RMP

Last spring, 47% of the people listed for the School of Business and Economics and 67% of the people listed for the Department of Humanities were no longer employed at Michigan Tech.

8. Faculty-Staff Club Proposal Moving Ahead: Senator Stefaan DeWinter and Assistant Vice President for Administration Theresa Coleman-Kaiser

9. Increase in TechFit Benefit: Senate to Community Wellness Committee to President Mroz.

10. Wellness Programs Participation Survey (via Google)

In a 2010 study, Harvard scholars Katherine Baicker, David Cutler, and Zirhui Song analyzed 32, peer-reviewed studies of the effects of institutional wellness programs and concluded,

> We find that medical costs fall about $3.27 for every dollar spent on wellness programs, and absentee day costs fall by about $2.73 for every dollar spent. This average return on investment suggests that the wider adoption of such programs could prove beneficial for budgets and productivity as well as health outcomes. — "Workplace Wellness Programs Can Generate Savings," *Health Affairs* 29.2 (2010): 304-311 http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/29/2/304

During the 2013 calendar year while 64% of Michigan Tech employees participated in the TechFit program using some portion of the $150 benefit, only 51% of employees took full advantage of this program.

11. Who Is and Who Is Not a Senate Constituent?

Section I.M.2.a of the Senate's Bylaws reads as follows:

"Any Dean or equivalent Director (as determined by the Executive Committee) who reports directly to any of the following: President; Provost; any Vice Provost; any Vice President; Board of Control."

Given the growth and reorganization of the administration and many new hires and internal promotions over the past decade, the Senate's current constituents list appears to be noncompliant with the constituency as specified in the Senate's Bylaws.

The reporting structure on the University's August 7, 2014 organizational chart seems to suggest that 49 senior administrators should not be constituent of the Senate constituents because they are either part of the Executive Team of they report directly to the President, the Provost, a Vice Provost, a Vice President, or the Board of Control. Nevertheless, 31 of these administrators are currently enrolled as Senate constituents.

Should the Senate amend or enforce its Bylaws?

12. Request/Question on Comp Time: Hourly workers can receive compensation time (comp time) in lieu of overtime pay for additional hours spent on their work. Can exempt staff receive some analogous compensation for time spent in Senate meetings?

13. Request from the Center for Teaching and Learning to Provide Feedback on Online Evaluation of Teaching

14. Request to Revise the Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty Handbook to Address the Status of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty.

15. Request to Review and, if Appropriate, Revise Michigan Tech's Policy on Excused Absences.

16. Two Board of Control Members will Complete Their Terms on December 31

Section 390.352.2.1 of the Michigan Tech enabling legislation in the 1963 Michigan Constitution indicates that members of Michigan Tech's Board of Control "shall be appointed by the governor, by and with the advice and consent of the [Michigan] senate."

The terms of two Board members—Lenora Ashford and Stephen Hicks—expire on December 31. Application forms can be found at
http://www.michigan.gov/snyder/0,4668,7-277-57738---,00.html

17. Next Senate Meeting: Chief Housing Officer and Director Travis Pierce on the Portage Lift Bridge Rehabilitation Project (about 7 minutes): 18-month project with inevitable disruptions