Advantages of the System of Shared Governance Proposed by the
Shared Governance Steering Committee

Prepared by the Faculty Members of the Shared Governance Steering Committee
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The current NJIT governance structure has several strengths. The university is small enough for people to interact directly. There are existing traditions of faculty governance and student governance. There is a committee structure in place that already embodies the principles of shared governance, and many committees perform their duties effectively and in a timely fashion.

However, there are a number of areas in which the governance system does not work as effectively as it should. Below is a numbered list of some of the problems with the current system of governance, with bulleted examples of these problems, followed by statements (in bold type) about how the proposed system of shared governance is expected to bring about improvements.

1. The organization and reporting structure among governance bodies are not always clear, direct, and transparent, and there is no mechanism for sharing information among governance bodies. For example,
    *   Faculty Council does not have a direct line of communication and direct contact with the Student Senate or the Committee on Academic Affairs (CAA).
    *   The Honors College does not have a clear reporting line to CAA or Faculty Council.
    The Faculty Senate (for faculty and academic matters) and the University Senate (for issues not covered by Faculty Senate) would serve as the central institutions of the governance system, overseeing standing committees that report to them, and reporting themselves directly to the President and the President's Senior Staff. The lines of reporting would be better articulated, and the reporting system and information flow would be both more structured and more direct. Open meetings and senate websites would ensure greater transparency.
2. Some constituencies on campus do not have any formal means of communicating with other groups or of participating in the governance process. For example,
    *   Staff and university lecturers have no representation in the governance structure.
    *   Although Student Senate and the Graduate Student Association each have a representative on CAA, these groups do not have direct access to Faculty Council, and they lack forums in which to discuss and directly affect their general concerns and initiatives.
    All constituencies – including faculty, administration, staff, university lecturers, undergraduate and graduate students, and alumni – would have a role to play in the Faculty Senate and/or the University Senate.
3. Issues that affect multiple constituencies are often difficult to handle effectively, largely because of deficiencies in communication and organization. For example
    *   Class scheduling involves faculty and instructional staff, students, administrators, and staff who are involved with implementing the class scheduling policies in the registrar's office and in academic departments. Yet there is currently no efficient way in which these groups can communicate about ways to formulate and implement class scheduling policies and procedures.

- Cheating and plagiarism constitute another major problem that is made worse because faculty, administrators, students, university lecturers, and staff do not have formal institutions for sharing their views, making policy, and devising effective procedures.

Issues that affect multiple constituencies would be dealt with by the Faculty Senate and/or the University Senate, as appropriate. In regard to broad-ranging issues such as class scheduling and cheating/plagiarism, both the Faculty Senate and University Senate would take up aspects of the problem, and the Joint Coordinating Committee would coordinate their actions.

4. Policy-making is usually "top-down," with the result that constituencies other than the administration often hear about important policy decisions after they have been made, rather than play a role in shaping policy. For example, the following policies with far-reaching academic (and other) implications have been implemented without being fully discussed and acted upon by the faculty or any other governance bodies below the level of senior administration:
   - Strategic academic plans for the university
   - Budgetary decisions relating to academics
   - Decisions about enrollment management, such as accepting students who have very low math SATs into engineering programs
   - The implementation of a new class-scheduling procedure, with major consequences for faculty and students
   - The formation of the university calendar, including the extent of coordination of class times, free periods, and exam schedules with Rutgers-Newark
   - Policies about the athletics program

   All major policies would be fully discussed in the Faculty Senate and/or the University Senate and would generate action by the appropriate senate(s) before being implemented. In the examples above, the first three would be handled by the Faculty Senate, the third would involve both senates, and the last two would be handled by the University Senate. In this way, the faculty and other constituencies in the university would be more involved in the decision-making process from start to finish.

5. Although many current committees embody the principles of shared governance, meet regularly, and work effectively, some others do not. Some have drifted away from their original mission. Some overlap or conflict with other committees or with other bodies on campus. Some do not meet regularly, or at all. Among committees that do meet regularly, there is a lack of uniformity in the way that reporting takes place (e.g., minute-keeping). For example,
   - The composition and role of the Committee on Academic Affairs have changed enormously over the years, and it no longer performs its original function as a policy-making committee composed of academic department chairpersons and deans, chaired by the Provost.
   - The Research Committee does not meet regularly and does not report to any governance body.
   - The Medical Education Committee has been frustrated in its efforts to establish an efficient mechanism for streamlining premedical advising because it does not report to a governance body with sufficient authority to make the system work.

   The new governance system would reevaluate and reform existing standing committees, eliminating some (such as CAA), consolidating or reforming others, and leaving some much as they are now. The Faculty Senate and the University Senate would enforce regularity of meetings and reporting procedures of the standing committees that report to them. The senates would give the committees greater authority and increased respect across the university.

6. Because it exists as an arm of the faculty as a whole rather than as a decision-making body in its own right, Faculty Council lacks authority to maintain standing committees containing individuals from different constituencies, as well as authority to make academic decisions on its own. It also has very limited support services and resources. For example,
   - When investigating issues such as the policy on class scheduling and the procedure for evaluating administrators, Faculty Council has had to make requests to appropriate offices for information and resources, and it can do no more than make recommendations to the full faculty or the administration in order to take action.
   - Faculty Council does not review or evaluate proposals for new programs or new academic policies. It merely puts these on the agenda for consideration by the faculty as a whole.
   - Faculty Council must recommend changes in the Faculty Handbook to the full faculty.

   Faculty Council would cease to exist. The functions formerly performed by Faculty Council would be assumed by the Faculty Senate, which would have decision-making authority in its own right. Unlike Faculty Council, the Faculty Senate would maintain standing committees composed of members from multiple constituencies. The Faculty Senate would have appropriate support and resources for performing its duties, including adequate space, support personnel, funds, and course load reductions.

7. The Faculty Meeting, held at least twice each semester, is too cumbersome an institution to handle many of the everyday management responsibilities that currently come before it. In recent years, attendance at Faculty Meetings has dwindled, and it is often difficult to achieve and maintain a quorum – even when the quorum is set very low and the issues under discussion are extremely important. For example,
   - Every new degree program, every change in the overall distribution of the GUR, every change in the name of an academic department, every change in the mode of administering instructor evaluations, etc., must be approved at a Faculty Meeting.
   - The business conducted at Faculty Meetings sometimes occurs without a quorum present.

   Faculty Meetings would normally occur once each semester rather than twice. They would no longer deal with "ordinary" business, such as consideration and approval of new degree programs and department name changes, changes to the GUR, most changes to the Faculty Handbook, and procedures for administering instructor evaluations – all of which would be handled by the Faculty Senate. The main business of Faculty Meetings would be to decide whether or not to approve "extraordinary" matters relating to the faculty and/or academics, such as the proposed formation or dissolution of a college, school, or academic department or a proposed change in promotion and tenure policy. Otherwise, Faculty Meetings would be held for the purpose of information-sharing and discussion among the faculty and between the faculty and the administration.

8. The Board of Trustees has final *authority* for governance of the university. But in the current governance structure, it also has final *approval* over certain types of faculty and academic affairs that might be handled more effectively if the right of approval were delegated by the Board of Trustees to the faculty and the administration. For example,
   - All changes to the Faculty Handbook currently need to be approved by the Board of Trustees, even if the faculty and administration are in agreement about them.

   The Board of Trustees would be asked to delegate the authority for final approval of certain kinds of business, such as changes to the Faculty Handbook, to the faculty (i.e., either the Faculty Senate or, for matters of grave importance, the faculty as a whole), with the approval of the President.

9. Unlike some other universities that take shared governance seriously (such as Rutgers University, where faculty and students sit as non-voting members on both the Board of Governors and the Board of Trustees, and three students sit on the Board of Trustees as voting members), NJIT has no channel of communication between the Board of Trustees and faculty, students, or the governance bodies that represent them. The resulting lack of transparency and information flow between the Board of Trustees and the main constituencies of the university below the level of the President and senior administration is inconsistent with the principles of shared governance and may sometimes breed misunderstanding. Although the voting membership of the NJIT Board of Trustees is determined by state law, the law does not preclude a wide range of alternative means to address this problem.

   - The Board of Trustee's decision to mandate the implementation of a new system of shared governance by the end of 2011 was made without consultation with the faculty or other constituencies in the university below the level of the President and senior administration. As a result, the decision was initially greeted by Faculty Council with skepticism, which could have been alleviated if Faculty Council had been aware of, and constructively involved in, the decision-making process.

   Avenues would be explored for establishing a direct line of communication between the Board of Trustees and the new senates or their Executive Committees. Possible formats would include establishment of non-voting memberships or observerships on the Board of Trustees for one or two faculty and student senators, and regular meetings and/or gatherings between the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committees of the Faculty Senate and University Senate (e.g., participation of the Executive Committees of the senates at breakfast or lunch on the day of an annual Board meeting, for the purpose of information sharing and problem solving).