

**Shared Governance at Central Washington University
Aligning Priorities to Advance the University's Vision and Mission
BOT Approval – May 16, 2025**

Preamble

Shared governance is a cornerstone of a thriving university, founded on relationships, respect, responsibility, and transparency. Though sometimes misunderstood as requiring unanimous consensus, full access to all information, or full participation in all decisions, its true strength lies in honoring the expertise of others, joining in collaboration around important issues, and operating through trust.

In a healthy shared governance environment, constituents have opportunities to contribute to decision-making within their roles and expertise while recognizing that all decisions may not align with every perspective. Transparency builds trust, equity ensures fairness, and expertise drives sound decisions.

This document outlines Central Washington University's aspirational vision for shared governance. By sharing information, fostering collaboration, and encouraging meaningful participation, we create an environment where constituencies contribute to the university's success. Through the description of authority and responsibility and the commitments outlined below, we are dedicated to fostering a system that drives innovation and ensures a thriving and sustainable future.

I. Shared Governance Definition

Shared Governance is the system by which various groups participate in the decision-making processes at Central Washington University (CWU). Each group participates in different activities in various ways, depending on their roles, authority, expertise, and scope of responsibility; honoring those roles and authority is critical to healthy shared governance. Shared governance allows for all constituents to work together to address the opportunities and challenges the university faces. Ultimately, shared governance creates an environment that allows the university to align priorities, communicate transparently, and foster innovation in order to advance the university's vision, mission, values, and strategic goals.

II. Shared Governance Constituencies

The Board of Trustees (Board), administration, faculty, staff, and students all contribute to the shared governance of the institution. Other than the Board and the President, participation by these constituents is typically facilitated through one or more of their representative bodies, depending on the nature of the governance activity. These bodies include:

- The Executive Leadership Team
- Deans' Council
- The Academic Department Chairs Organization

- The Faculty Senate
- United Faculty of Central
- Exempt Employee Association
- Classified Employee Council
- Public School Employees (Classified Staff Union)
- Washington Federation of State Employees
- Teamsters
- Associated Students of Central Washington University Board of Directors

III. Shared Governance Authority and Responsibilities

Each shared governance group plays a distinct role and has differing levels and kinds of authority, as determined by the role and responsibility of that group. Honoring the authority of other groups is essential to healthy shared governance.

Three different levels or kinds of authority exist in the shared governance decision-making process. These levels of authority derive from the responsibility that a shared governance group has over a particular area.

Final Authority: A group has the authority to make unilateral decisions. At a minimum, other shared governance groups who are impacted by the decision should be informed of the action or consulted in a pro forma fashion.

Primary Authority: A group has authority for an area but other groups have an opportunity to participate meaningfully in the decision-making process. If there is disagreement between the groups, the group that has primary authority normally prevails. Final authority supersedes primary authority.

Joint Authority: Two or more shared governance groups exercise equal influence in an area. These groups must collaborate closely in the decision-making process. If an area is subject to collective bargaining between a union and the administration or Board, the level of union participation should presumably be “joint authority.” Final authority supersedes joint authority.

In all cases, including cases where the Board has final authority, shared governance at CWU includes an expectation of transparent communication and meaningful participation. Because of the unique expertise that faculty hold at a university, consultation with faculty in areas that relate to the educational and scholarly mission of the university is essential. The roles, responsibilities, and authority of the major groups of shared governance are outlined below.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees for Central Washington University is the only shared governance group with final authority. As the state designated body overseeing the university, the Board has the final authority over the university, and delegates authority to the President in the operations of the university. The Board has final authority for hiring and

evaluating the President, as well as for approving the vision, mission, values, and strategic goals and new degree programs and academic majors. Additionally, the Board has final authority over the university's budget. The Board will determine and communicate appropriate methods for participation of faculty, staff, and students in the areas of decision-making where they formally and directly exercise their authority, including especially the hiring and evaluation of the president.

The President and Executive Level Administration

The President of Central Washington University has primary authority over the operations of the university, delegated from the Board of Trustees. The President's authority includes oversight of facilities, finances, budgets, and information technology; the creation and implementation of vision, mission, values, and strategic goals; oversight of accreditation and adherence to state and federal policies; the hiring and evaluation of executive level leaders, including vice presidents and deans; guiding the composition of academic and non-academic programs to shape the institution's overall portfolio to align with its mission; fostering and initiating innovation and renovation of academic and other programs; oversight of student engagement and success, including admissions and financial aid policies; oversight of athletics, fundraising, alumni, and safety and security; and advancing the brand and marketing of the institution.

The President may delegate authority for these functions to other executive level leaders. The President or designee will determine and transparently communicate appropriate methods for participation of faculty, staff, and students in areas of decision-making where the President has primary authority.

The Faculty

Because of their expertise, the faculty of Central Washington University have primary authority over specific aspects including curriculum, research and creative activity, and faculty status and joint authority with the administration over the scholarly and educational mission of the university. Oversight of the curriculum is a primary responsibility of the faculty and includes determining the requirements for academic programs, the sequence of courses in an academic program, the subject matter or content of individual courses, the methods of instruction (e.g., lecture, lab, discussion), and the assessment of student learning. Faculty have joint authority with the administration in the advancement of new programs and in the decision to terminate existing programs.

Additionally, meaningful assessment for annual evaluation, tenure, promotion, and post-tenure review is dependent on the expertise of faculty. While the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Deans determine the University and the College Criteria for evaluation, these criteria should be developed in consultation with the faculty. College and departmental criteria must originate from the University Criteria. Given their expertise, chairs and faculty within their departments and disciplines have primary authority to develop Department Criteria.

Given their role in curriculum, service, and scholarship, faculty should be consulted especially in the development and implementation of the educational component of the university budget. Early, ongoing and meaningful engagement in the overall university budget includes transparent sharing so that faculty can participate in decisions regarding expenditures, including especially those areas related to their expertise.

When the Board or the Administration disagrees with decisions that are within faculty expertise (curriculum and faculty status), they should exercise their authority with extreme caution and communicate the reasoning behind their difference of perspective.

Exempt and Classified Staff

Central Washington University is committed to intentionally incorporating staff voices into the framework of CWU's shared governance as a vital step toward cultivating a healthy and inclusive governance culture.

Exempt and classified staff play an essential role in the university's operations, supporting both students and the administrative functions across all divisions—including Student Engagement and Success, Finance and Administration, Academic Affairs, and the President's Division. Their expertise and daily engagement with the university community position them as critical partners in shaping policies and initiatives, particularly those related to the student experience.

To ensure meaningful participation, exempt and classified staff should be actively consulted during the development and implementation of various initiatives. Early, consistent, and purposeful involvement in relevant discussions allows staff to contribute their insights and influence decision-making processes within their areas of expertise.

As with other university constituencies, staff input should be channeled primarily through their shared governance leadership groups. Transparent and ongoing communication between these leadership bodies and their constituents is essential to this process.

Furthermore, exempt and classified staff governance leaders should be included in institutional planning efforts—such as the development of the university's Vision, Mission, Values, Strategic Plan, and budget allocations. When appropriate, staff should also be invited to serve on task forces and committees where their perspectives will enrich conversations and contribute to more well-rounded, effective outcomes.

Students

At Central Washington University the student experience is the focus of our collective effort as we assist students in becoming “engaged professionals, active citizens, and lifelong learners.” As a result, the student voice is valuable in our governance environment and provides a perspective that is critical to our decision-making.

As with staff, to ensure meaningful participation on the part of students, they should be actively consulted during the development and implementation of various initiatives. Early, consistent, and purposeful involvement in relevant discussions allows students to contribute their insights and influence decision-making processes within their areas of expertise.

Additionally, in the state of Washington, a student sits on the Board of Trustees providing another avenue for student participation in the governance of the university.

IV. Shared Governance Commitments

The following commitments of shared governance have been developed through careful study of internal practices and policies, as well as key documents from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards (AGB). These commitments are intended to guide the way in which the various shared governance groups interact with each other to align priorities, communicate transparently, and foster innovation, ultimately advancing the vision and mission of the university. Ultimately, shared governance at Central Washington University depends upon the creation of a culture of collaboration and consultation.

1. Engagement and Institutional-Thinking – We will commit to a culture of meaningful engagement that is based on understanding and honoring the various roles, authority, and responsibility of the shared governance groups at CWU, recognizing that respecting boundaries is essential to healthy shared governance. We will balance support for our own constituencies and areas with institutional thinking, adopting a shared governance mindset that advances the vision and mission of the university.

2. Mutual Trust and Respect – We will operate through an ethos of mutual trust and respect, recognizing that shared governance depends on collaboration rather than competition among faculty, staff, students, administrators, and trustees. We will engage each other believing in the good will and intentions of others, and we will ask questions and provide feedback when we sense that mutual trust and respect have not been a part of a decision-making process.

3. Communication – We will establish open and regular channels of communication so that decision-making processes are clear, with accessible documentation that ensures inclusivity and accountability. Transparent communication between shared governance groups and from shared governance leaders to their constituency is a key to the success of shared governance and should exist through formal and informal channels.

4. Academic Freedom – We will maintain a strong commitment to academic freedom as a cornerstone to the teaching and learning experience that faculty provide for students and to the scholarly endeavors of faculty as they seek to expand the boundaries of

knowledge. Academic freedom exists within the disciplinary areas of faculty to support their expertise in teaching and scholarship.

5. Accountability – We will take the assessment of shared governance seriously, recognizing that holding ourselves accountable to these commitments and honoring the roles, authority, and responsibility of various groups is essential to healthy shared governance. We will regularly assess governance structures and processes to ensure effectiveness and adaptability to evolving institutional needs, with clear accountability for decisions and outcomes.

6. Sustainability – We will develop shared governance practices that are sustainable, and we will ensure continuity in leadership, institutional memory, and ongoing professional development for participants in governance roles. We will regularly review these commitments, along with university policies and procedures, to nurture a culture of institutional-thinking and a shared governance mindset.

Through the commitments outlined in this document, all constituents will work to include and honor appropriate voices in decision-making processes with formal and informal mechanisms to ensure decisions are made collaboratively and in the best interest of the institutional vision, mission, and values. To ensure equitable inclusion of input in these processes, we will engage in meaningful consultation early on and we will honor the roles, authority, and responsibility of various constituencies in the shared governance environment.

V. Resources

- American Association of University Professors. (1994). On the Relationship of Faculty Governance to Academic Freedom. In: *Policy Documents and Reports* (2015), 123-25. 11th Ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.
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- Association of Governing Boards. (2017a). Shared Governance: Changing with the Times. Association of Governing Boards.
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