



## **Statement on Shared Governance**

### **Definition**

Athens State University values shared governance. For the purposes of this statement, shared governance is defined as an environment where all members of the University community work collaboratively concerning all matters which serve to accomplish the University's mission and, either directly or indirectly, affect the academic environment at the University. Shared governance involves the full participation of the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and students concerning matters affecting the University, within their respective roles and responsibilities.

### **The Role of the Board of Trustees in Shared Governance**

As specified in the Code of Alabama Section 16-47A-1 et. seq., the Athens State University Board of Trustees is vested with primary authority for the supervision, management, and control of the University. In exercising its authority and in recognition of the University commitment to shared governance, it is desirable that the Board should have the opportunity to receive input and recommendations from various University constituencies, either through the President or directly to the Board through established channels. It is recognized that the President, in making recommendations to the Board, will frequently have consulted with University constituencies in developing the recommendations. However, administrative matters such as budgets, time constraints, laws, and the policies of external groups, bodies, and agencies having jurisdiction over the institution, among other things, may set limits to the opportunities for additional input to the Board.

The primary responsibilities of the Athens State University Board of Trustees include efforts to:

- Contribute to efforts to sustain the University's mission, goals, integrity, traditions, and values, and assist in defining and promoting the strategic direction of the University.
- Advance initiatives that promote the University's programs and services, and that influence others to take part in its mission and assist in the realization of its goals.
- Recruit, approve, support, and evaluate the University President.
- Promote and protect fiscal integrity, approve the University budget, monitor resources and productivity, and advocate and participate in fundraising efforts.
- Serve the entire institution rather than any one part of it, or any individual or group within it or outside of it, or in the promotion of any partisan or political cause.
- Be thoughtful as to how the University is represented in Board actions and statements.
- Support principles of equal opportunity, nondiscrimination, and diversity for all students, faculty, and staff.
- Strictly maintain confidentiality of the Board's executive sessions, especially, but not only, with respect to sensitive personnel matters.

### **The Role of the Administration in Shared Governance**

The University President and the President's Cabinet have a primary responsibility to promote a collaborative and supportive working environment, and to protect, encourage, and recognize faculty and staff in the performance of their duties related to teaching, learning, student and institutional support, professional development, scholarly work/research, and community service. Toward this end, a primary responsibility of the University administration in shared governance will be to maintain open and constructive communication



between administrators, faculty, and staff as they work toward the common purpose of achieving the University's mission.

The President has primary responsibility for communicating with and making recommendations to the Board of Trustees. In many instances, the President will consult the Cabinet and other University constituencies in developing recommendations presented to the Board. However, administrative matters such as budgets, time constraints, laws, and the policies of external groups, bodies, and agencies having jurisdiction over the institution, among other things, may set limits to the opportunities for additional input to the President and Cabinet.

The President also has the primary authority for the approval of new operating policies that define the expectations or requirements for University administrators, areas, and functions, in accordance with the requirements of the University policies adopted by the Board of Trustees. Operating policies are commonly developed in consultation with Cabinet members and appropriate University constituencies. Once approved, Operating Policies are then assigned to the appropriate executive administrators and staff members for implementation and periodic review.

### **The Role of the Faculty in Shared Governance**

Faculty either have primary responsibility or share responsibility equitably with other University constituencies, as outlined below, in formulating and forwarding recommendations to the University administration. It is desirable that the faculty should, following such recommendations, have the opportunity for further consideration and further transmittal of its views to the President or to the Board of Trustees through established channels. However, administrative matters such as budgets, personnel limitations, time constraints, laws, and the policies of other groups, bodies, and agencies having jurisdiction over the institution may set limits to the opportunities for additional faculty input. The faculty's role may include, but is not limited to, recommendations concerning curriculum, course content, degree requirements, class schedules, evaluations, representation on other units or bodies, discipline and dismissal of faculty/staff/students, fair academic policy and fair faculty/staff/student representation on search committees for University administrators.

Whatever the faculty's role, the principles of shared governance include:

- Valuing and seeking fair and objective dealings between administration and faculty members, with opportunities for open and collegial communication between faculty and administrators;
- Scheduling of meetings with adequate notice, and reasonable timeframes for decision-making processes, so as to allow faculty to prepare for, and productively engage in the meeting and/or decision-making process;
- An environment of professionalism, dignity, and respect (e.g., an absence of intimidation or retaliation);
- Professional, fair, and consistent treatment of all faculty, with the understanding that faculty not treated in this manner may engage in the University's employee grievance process;
- Timely and reasonable communication by the University administration offering rationale for any modification or rejection of the input received.

### **Faculty Role at the Departmental Level**

#### **Primary Responsibility**

- The departmental faculty makes recommendations (and decisions, where such duties are defined by the President) on departmental matters that include, but are not limited to, departmental academic



programs and curricula, course content, degree requirements, class schedules, departmental budget priorities and requests, and other departmental needs.

- Department chairs are appointed by the appropriate College Dean following a recommendation by vote of the faculty in their respective units. Department chairs serve three-year terms.

#### **Shared Responsibility**

- The departmental faculty has reasonable and equitable participation in bodies involved in the recruitment and selection of new faculty members in the department.
- The departmental faculty has reasonable and equitable participation in the recommendations on academic matters affecting the department's College.

#### **Faculty Role at the College Level**

##### **Primary Responsibility**

- The College faculty makes recommendations (and decisions, where such duties are defined by the President) on College matters that include, but are not limited to, academic programs and curricula in the College, College budget priorities and requests, and other College needs, services, and facilities related to the College's academic programs.
- The College faculty elects the faculty members who serve on the Faculty Senate and the University Tenure and Promotion Committee.
- Faculty representation on standing and ad-hoc committees or other decision-making groups (concerning such College matters) should be included.

##### **Shared Responsibility**

- Selection of Executive Leadership is an important shared responsibility. When the University is seeking new leadership for a Dean's position, the President will appoint an appropriate committee. The faculty representation on the committee will be chosen from a list of faculty members elected by each respective College, with the majority of faculty being from the College where the vacancy exists.

#### **Faculty Role at the University Level**

##### **Primary Responsibility**

- The faculty makes recommendations (and decisions, where such duties are defined by the President) relative to all matters that affect the academic environment, including, but not limited to, those related to academics and academic personnel.
- The faculty makes recommendations (and decisions, where such duties are defined by the President) concerning the curriculum review process.

##### **Shared Responsibility**

- Faculty shall have reasonable and equitable participation in bodies involved in the recruitment and selection of administrators.
- Special committees formed by the President or Provost will include equitable faculty, staff, and student representation, as may be deemed appropriate by the President or Provost.



## **The Role of the Staff in Shared Governance**

Staff will have either primary responsibility or share responsibility in University governance in the formulation and development of recommendations concerning policies, procedures, and processes, particularly those that have or will have a significant effect on staff. The Staff may have the opportunity to forward such recommendations to the President or to the Board of Trustees through established channels.

With regard to members of the University staff, the principles of shared governance will include:

- Adoption of policies and/or procedures that provide staff with opportunities to provide input to the Cabinet, the President, and in some cases the Board of Trustees;
- Providing recommendations and opinions of staff to the appropriate Cabinet member and President. In addition, the Staff Senate Presiding Officer will give a summative report on staff activities to the Board at each meeting;
- Professional, fair, and consistent treatment of all staff, with the understanding that staff not treated in this manner may engage the *Employee Grievance Procedure*;
- Timely and reasonable communication by the University administration offering rationale for any modification or rejection of the input received.

### **Staff Role at the University Level**

- The staff will elect the staff members who serve on the Staff Senate. The Staff Senate, a recognized body within the University shared governance structure, serves in an advisory capacity to the President of the University with respect to matters pertaining to the staff of the University. The Staff Senate also works to promote better understanding, cooperation, and communication between university staff, faculty, students, and administration on all levels.
- The Staff Senate provides a forum for discussion and deliberation related to changes or improvements that affect the professional growth and well-being of staff and the promotion of a productive, fair, and supportive working environment in support of the mission of University.
- The staff will have reasonable and equitable representation on standing and ad-hoc committees or other decision-making groups concerning University matters including bodies involved in recruitment and selection of staff, faculty, and administrators; the areas of expertise of the staff members chosen as representatives on such committees should be given due consideration as they relate to the charge of the committee.
- The staff will work to integrate roles and relationships into structures and processes that support the faculty and administrators, and that achieve positive student outcomes.

## **The Role of Students in Shared Governance**

In most cases, Athens State University students participate in the shared governance of the institution through the Student Government Association (SGA), which serves as the primary voice for students. Representatives from other student groups or the student body may also be involved in shared governance when appropriate, particularly when institutional decisions or planning will have a significant effect on students.

In serving as the primary voice for students, the SGA encourages all students to attend SGA meetings and share concerns related to institutional matters. As stated in the SGA Constitution, the purpose of the SGA is to “encourage and promote cooperation between the students and the faculty and administration, to unify



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the student body and to promote an intellectual interest in all phases of university citizenship and the sense of individual responsibilities.”

Aligned with its purpose, the SGA has a primary role in the management of student clubs and organizations at the University. Applications for new clubs seeking recognition are first reviewed by the SGA, and if approved, are then forwarded to the Director of Student Activities and the Vice President for Enrollment and Student Support Services for final approval. In addition, the Interclub Council, consisting of members from recognized clubs and chaired by the SGA Vice President, meets monthly to promote unification and collaboration between recognized clubs and organizations.

Members of the SGA or other students may have a shared role in the governance of the University by being asked to serve as representatives on standing institutional planning or decision-making bodies when appropriate. Student representatives may be appointed to ad-hoc committees, particularly when the committee's charge involves an issue that will have a significant effect on students. Students have shared responsibility in the student judicial process, with three students serving as members of the Student Judicial Committee. The Committee acts as a hearing body for students who are contesting a charge of violating the Student Code of Conduct.