

From: Perry Dane
Sent: Tuesday, November 27, 2018 8:50 PM
To: Peter Gillett
Cc: Jon Oliver
Subject: Shared governance

Dear Peter,

I hope you had a good Thanksgiving.

Thanks so much for your remarks at the last Senate meeting on the meaning of “shared governance” and its implications. You might remember that I expressed some similar thoughts, if less eloquently, during the debate on S-1501 on Senate leadership. I still believe that, as Senators, we need always to (1) keep in mind the classic meaning of “shared governance” in the American university context as a partnership between the administration and board on the one hand and the faculty (or faculty plus students and other internal stakeholders) on the other, and (2) consider our individual role to be to act out that collective mission of shared governance and not only represent the specific interests of the constituency that elected us. (This view parallels, of course, though not exactly, the view of the parliamentarians’ role famously articulated by Edmund Burke in his Speech to the Electors of Bristol. <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch13s7.html>.)

I wonder if it might be helpful to pursue these questions further.

First, it might make sense to devote part of one of our subsequent meetings to a “Committee of the Whole” discussion on the mission of the Senate, the nature of shared governance, and the responsibilities of individual Senators. I’d even suggest that Senators be asked to read some of the relevant literature – on both university governance and representative bodies more generally – in advance of such a meeting.

Second, it might help to focus the discussion even further by taking a fresh look at the Senate’s governing documents. The By-Laws of the Camden Faculty Council declare that “The members of the Council, however elected, shall represent and attend to the interests of the entire campus.” The Senate Handbook, as I read it, by contrast, does not speak explicitly to the representative responsibilities of Senators, though it is full of language about “constituencies” and “constituents,” which might suggest a less Burkean vision. An absolute declaration of the sort included in the Camden Council By-Laws might not be appropriate to the University Senate, which includes members from a broader range of groups in our academic community. Still, it might be possible to find language that strives for some happy synthesis, or at least puts the questions squarely on the table. (I’ve taken the liberty of copying Jon Oliver on this e-mail.)

Thanks again.

All the best.
Perry

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