

Golden Gate University

Statement on Shared Governance

Shared governance at Golden Gate University is a collaborative, strategic alliance among all University stakeholders, focused on the strategic issues that shape the University's present and future, and that is of service to the University's distinctive mission, history and values.

While ultimate legal and fiduciary authority and responsibility are vested in the Board of Trustees, the Board entrusts the administration of the University to the president, and the responsibility for academic matters to the faculty. Further, Golden Gate University's commitment to shared governance extends beyond higher education's traditional model that specifies the Board, the President and the tenure-track faculty as the sole parties to shared governance, appropriately engaging the perspectives and voices of all faculty (tenure-track and adjunct), staff, students and alumni in deliberations of institutional consequence.

Shared governance and decision-making at Golden Gate University are informed and guided by the following principles (Guiding Principles and Operational Principles). Recognizing that the Guiding Principles are interrelated with and co-dependent on the Operating Principles, all parties should enter into shared governance and decision-making with a generosity of spirit and presumption that their colleagues are acting with a good faith commitment to these principles.

Guiding Principles (Values & Ideals)

- ***Mission & Values:*** Deliberations and decisions must be carried out in a manner that is consistent with Golden Gate University's mission and core values, and by the collective vision of the University's future.
- ***Trust:*** In order for shared governance to function effectively and productively, it is essential that all stakeholders trust one another's expertise, experience, integrity, intentions and commitment to Golden Gate University and to each other. Trust must be earned, but effective shared governance requires a generosity of spirit.
- ***Honesty & Integrity:*** A commitment to the highest standards of personal honesty and integrity, to the integrity of the University and to the professional and community standards that guide institutional policy and practice.
- ***Collegiality & Respect:*** In discussions, deliberations and decision-making, all parties are considerate of the opinions, beliefs, perspectives and positions of others, recognizing the importance of multiple points of view in attaining the best outcomes in decision-making.
- ***Strategic alignment:*** Shared governance is at its essence a system of aligning

priorities, grounded in the agreement of the institutional stakeholders—the board, administration, faculty, staff and students—on the mission of the institution, the vision of its future, and the strategies it employs to fulfill that vision, as well as the stakeholders’ respective roles and responsibilities in realizing the vision.

- ***Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging:*** In carrying out decision-making and governance, all parties must evaluate their options in the context of the University’s firm commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. This evaluation should recognize the historical and ongoing ways in which institutional racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of structural bias can exacerbate unequal influence in the making and impact of institutional decisions and policies.
- ***Collective Accountability:*** As a component of their participation in shared governance and decision-making, all stakeholder groups hold themselves accountable for making decisions in accordance with these principles, for the outcomes of the decision-making and governance processes, and ultimately for regular evaluation of the effectiveness of shared governance at Golden Gate University.

Operational Principles

- ***Compromise:*** Recognizing that many complex issues have no single “right answer” to which all can subscribe, openness to hearing and respecting other points of view—and a willingness to change one’s mind—are essential to the spirit and substance of collaborative shared governance and decision-making. At the same time, it is equally important to recognize that some issues *do* have one “right answer,” and that in those instances compromise would not be in the institution’s best interest.
- ***Transparency*** (within the limits of FERPA, HIPAA and the need for confidentiality): It is recognized that the ability of institutional stakeholders to trust and support the various decision-making processes is greatly enhanced by ensuring that processes adhere to the guiding principles (above) and that as much information as possible regarding the process and its particulars is publicly available.
- ***Clarity of Roles:*** The various authorities, responsibilities and roles of all stakeholders at Golden Gate University are clearly stated in relevant institutional documents, and deliberations and decisions are carried out in a manner consistent with the specifics of those documents.
- ***Inclusiveness & Collaboration:*** Deliberations at Golden Gate University on decisions of institutional importance should include appropriate representation of stakeholders, with

the commitment that all voices at the University have an opportunity to be heard and acknowledged in the deliberations of important institutional issues. Further, a strategic collaborative alliance among stakeholders can only be achieved with open-mindedness to the views and opinions of others, a commitment to one another as partners, and a willingness to view issues in the context of the entire University, not those of a particular part.

- *Communication:* Implementation of a robust communications strategy that ensures that all stakeholders are able to communicate ideas, concerns and aspirations with one another is essential not only for informed participation in decision-making processes, but for the cohesiveness and vitality of the campus community as a whole.
- *Flexibility:* The world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity in which we operate requires flexibility: the willingness to think about things in a new way, the willingness to do things in a different way, the willingness to take risks.
- *Agility:* The challenges and opportunities confronting higher education institutions in the 21st Century require a pace of decision-making to which few institutions have been accustomed historically. It will be essential to identify shared-governance and decision-making processes and practices that find the right balance between thoughtful deliberation of the options and the need for immediacy in dealing with challenges and/or taking advantage of opportunities.
- *Continuous Improvement:* It is critical to recognize that effective shared governance is always a work in progress, and the Golden Gate University community is committed to periodic and ongoing evaluation of its governance and decision-making practices, with the goal of continuous improvement.