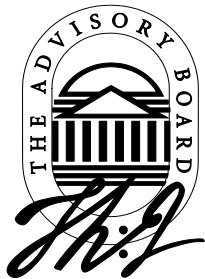


UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP COUNCIL



Strategies for Cultivating a Productive
University Shared Governance Model

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- I. Research Methodology and Parameters
- II. Executive Summary
- III. Increasing Personal Interaction Between the Administration and the Faculty Senate
- IV. Messaging the Significance and Purpose of the Faculty Senate to the Broader Faculty
- V. Hardwiring Processes and Structures for Internal Senate Communications
- VI. Appendices: Organizational Overviews

I. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PARAMETERS

The findings detailed in this report were drawn from interviews with the following sources:

University Sources			
University	Classification/ Location	Undergraduate Enrollment	Number of Full- Time Faculty
University A	Public/West	15,000-20,000	800-850
University B	Public/Midwest	20,000-25,000	1,150-1,250
University C	Public/Northeast	10,000-15,000	800-850
University D	Public/Southwest	15,000-20,000	450-500

Sources: National Center for Education Statistics;
The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

I. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PARAMETERS

Sources:

- Advisory Board's internal and online (www.advisory.com) research libraries
- The Chronicle of Higher Education – Available at: <http://chronicle.com/>
- Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) – Available at: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>
- Internet, via search engines and multiple websites, including various university websites

Research Parameters:

- Interviews for this research brief were conducted with public institutions of a variety of sizes. The University Leadership Council believes that on this topic, many universities face similar challenges, though the scale of those challenges may vary depending on university size.

Research Challenge:

A member university approached the Council with the following question:

How do universities structure their shared governance models to foster a positive relationship between the administration and the faculty senate?

Specific challenges include:

- Defining decision-making procedures and parameters
- Minimizing unproductive debate that impedes action
- Streamlining the faculty handbook for easier application
- Ensuring that faculty are engaged in governance and that the Senate is representative of the faculty as a whole

Introduction:

Due to a variety of reasons, the faculty senate at many universities does not operate at optimal levels of efficiency and effectiveness. Universities commonly experience an adversarial relationship or disconnect between the faculty senate and the central administration, slowing decision-making ability and rendering the body unproductive. Administrators often have little personal interaction with the senate, which can hamper collaboration on key faculty issues and lead to resentment. Further, it is often the case that the larger faculty community does not understand the purpose or value of the senate, and thus it can be difficult to attract strong leadership. External factors also impact productivity levels of the senate because inefficient internal senate processes can lead to slow decision-making and gridlock.

This brief profiles tactics to overcome the aforementioned obstacles and provides actionable strategies to improve these issues.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Observations and Recommendations:

Universities that have a harmonious relationship between the central administration and the faculty senate establish methods of communication through which both groups have the opportunity to exchange ideas and cultivate a relationship. These methods include:

- Compulsory attendance at faculty senate meetings for the president and provost
- Inclusive decision-making processes
- Regular meetings between administrators and faculty senate leadership
- Informal luncheons or meetings between administrators and senators to discuss top-of-mind issues
- Senate leadership succession guidelines that facilitate familiarity and continuity of relationship with the administration

It is important to message the significance and purpose of the faculty senate to the broader campus by educating faculty members and other stakeholders across the university.

Common methods of messaging include:

- Department and college visits during which administrators get to know faculty and engage in question and answer sessions
- Meetings between central administrations and deans to urge promotion of faculty participation in the senate
- Informal networking to encourage senate candidacy of promising faculty leaders

Hardwiring faculty senate processes and structures will help improve internal communication and allow senate leadership and senators to make decisions more efficiently. The following strategies streamline and improve internal senate communication:

- Create a senate subcommittee tasked with crafting transparent amendments and revisions to the faculty handbook
- Summarize upcoming business for full senate body to preview and begin discussion
- Mix senator, administration, and guest seating arrangements to symbolize collaboration between these groups

III. INCREASING PERSONAL INTERACTION BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE FACULTY SENATE

Many universities note that there is a disconnect between administrators and the faculty senate. Often, neither group has a solid understanding of the other's perspective, leading to highly contentious debate and—in extreme cases—to the administration regularly ignoring recommendations from the faculty senate.

Council interviews revealed that many universities are facilitating greater interaction between administrators and the faculty senate by employing the following tactics:

Tactic #1: Make Attendance at Faculty Senate Meetings Compulsory for the President and/or Provost

Many presidents and provosts do not demonstrate interest and involvement in the faculty senate due to competing priorities. This can convey a lack of respect for the role the faculty senate plays in university governance—a point not lost on senators.

The most effective administrators make working with the senate a top priority, despite a multitude of other obligations. At **University A**, both the president and the provost attend most faculty senate meetings together. The president attended an estimated 80 percent of meetings over the last two years and when he is unable to attend, the two offices work together to ensure that the provost *always* attends in his place.

Spotlight: A Designated Proxy for Provost in Absentia

Not all university administrators will have the schedule flexibility to achieve 100 percent attendance in a given year. At **University D**, a “Provost Fellow” on the faculty senate (who is a former Chair of the Senate possessing a particularly strong “big picture” understanding) maintains the provost's presence in the rare case that he is unable to attend.

Tactic #2: Foster a Culture of Partnership between the Administration and Faculty through Collaborative Decision-Making

Often university administrators delay reviewing, or even ignore, faculty decisions, leading to faculty senate frustration and discontent. In fact, some administrators make key decision over the summer months while the faculty senate is in recess. Administrators that have been successful in creating positive relationships with their faculty senate understand the need to meet one-on-one with senate leaders and convey a commitment to a relationship that is more partnership than authoritarian. Because all stakeholders are aware that the president and provost hold ultimate decision-making authority, compromises are nearly always attainable. At universities with poor relations, a change in senate leadership represents a new opportunity for culture change.

Spotlight: A Gesture of Good Faith

At **University D**, shared governance has been characterized historically by tension, conflict and adversity.

The provost recently surprised several deans by announcing his intention to wait until the full senate returned in the fall to decide on a set of potentially controversial policy changes related to graduate education—a decision that in the past would have been hurriedly made over the summer while the faculty senate was away.

III. INCREASING PERSONAL INTERACTION BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE FACULTY SENATE

Tactic #3: Establish a Small Executive Forum Consisting of Administrators and Senate Leadership to Preview and Vet Key Issues

At many universities, even administrators who regularly attend senate meetings have little formal interaction with senate leaders. The lack of small-group interaction prevents the two parties from conducting a thoughtful and thorough vetting of the issues, and as a result the senate is often presented with insufficient information to make well-informed decisions.

Universities with successful shared governance models set up committees or other bodies which create a small executive forum for leadership from the administration and faculty senate to talk through issues in advance of discussion with the full senate.

Profile: Faculty Senate Executive Committees

At **University A**, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee meets on a monthly basis two weeks prior to meetings of the faculty senate. Through roundtable discussion, they evaluate issues raised by faculty members to determine which merit deliberation by the full faculty senate. Thus, the Executive Committee serves as a vetting board, with senate leaders and various administrators having “first crack” at all issues together. While the provost does not have an official vote on the executive committee, he has a bully pulpit of sorts, providing the opportunity to facilitate the meeting and influence deliberations in a way that would be difficult or impossible in meetings of the full senate.

Similarly, the Executive Committee at **University B** also serves to bridge the gap between the central administration and the faculty senate—this committee serves as a vetting mechanism for the executive level of both the administration and faculty bodies without having to bring all matters in front of the larger group.

Tactic #4: Provide Opportunities for Informal Interaction between Administrators and Senators to Discuss Top-of-Mind Issues and Improve Personal Relationships

Faculty senate meetings generally have full agendas, meaning that even at universities where administrators are regular attendees, the meetings provide little opportunity for discussion between senators and the president, provost, and other administrators about top-of-mind issues not on the agenda.

Progressive administrators avail themselves to senators on separate occasions from formal senate meetings, improving personal relationships and providing a window into senator perspectives.

Profile: Open-Forum Luncheons

In addition to regular senate meeting and executive committee meetings, the president and provost at **University A** have a third monthly senate-related commitment—an informal luncheon with senators, during which any and all issues are open for discussion. This forum provides an opportunity for the concerns of individual senators to be aired without hindering progress during a formal senate meeting. The provost reports that the session not only provides senators a chance to voice their opinions, it provides administrators with a valuable preview of faculty opinion on a wide variety of on- and off-the-radar issues.

III. INCREASING PERSONAL INTERACTION BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE FACULTY SENATE

Tactic #4: Provide Opportunities for Informal Interaction between Administrators and Senators to Discuss Top-of-Mind Issues and Improve Personal Relationships

Profile: Ad hoc Preliminary Discussions

The provost at **University D** holds informal meetings approximately one to two times per month to discuss issues of particular importance. Further, on an as-needed basis, the provost selects two deans or vice provosts to join two senators (selected by the senate chair) for an initial review of an upcoming policy issue. One recent session focused on a pending discussion of student background checks. For this preliminary meeting, the deans from the two university colleges that require student background checks met with two senate representatives to debate the issue in advance of the faculty senate meeting. This impromptu session allowed both parties to address key concerns and present a unified message to the provost and the senate.

Spotlight: Shared Administrative Support with the Faculty Senate

At **University C**, the Office of the Provost assigns an administrative assistant from his office to provide support to the faculty senate. This person is able to serve as an informal source of information through which the provost's office can learn about deliberations at committee meetings, and also inform the office of any discrepancies of information or breakdowns in communication between the administration and senate.

Tactic #5: Facilitate Continuity between the Senate and the Administration through Creating Senate Leadership Succession Guidelines

Most universities experience turnover of senate leadership on an annual basis. Even those administrators who enjoy a strong relationship with senate leadership must annually cultivate a new relationship with a senate president or chair; even if the new senator chosen is a strong leader, they bring with them a new leadership style and approach, making it difficult for administrators to achieve a particularly strong relationship with any given senate leader.

At **University B**, there is a tradition of the senate vice chair succeeding the chair for the following academic year. This succession fosters continuity and helps ensure functional communication between administrators and senate leaders. A similar tradition at the university has the senate chair almost always serving two consecutive terms—it's highly unusual for the chair to turn over after just one year.

IV. MESSAGING THE SIGNIFICANCE AND PURPOSE OF THE FACULTY SENATE TO THE BROADER FACULTY

Faculty members are often unclear about what the senate is, what the senate does, and who the senate represents. As such, faculty are uninterested in dedicating their time to the group. Additionally, administrators report that, in many instances, senators are not truly representatives of broader faculty concerns.

Faculty senators often share the following traits:

- ✓ Schedules allot for faculty senate time commitments
- ✓ Strong personal views on specific issues
- ✓ More tenured than the average faculty member

Tactic #6: Enfranchise Faculty via a Central Administration Information Outreach Campaign to Departments and Colleges Campus-Wide

Many faculty members have little understanding of the faculty senate's purpose, composition or the time commitment required to participate. Likewise, they do not have many opportunities to speak directly with the executive administration.

Administrators who are most effective in communicating with faculty do so with meaningful gestures (e.g., taking the time to meet individually with faculty) and campus events such as the one profiled below:

Profile: Department Level Executive Visits to Generate Faculty Interest in the Senate

In order to raise awareness of the senate and the senator role, the president and provost at **University A** embarked on an informative campaign in 2007-2008 during which they made two-hour visits to all 45 academic departments within the university. In each visit, they toured the facilities for 45 minutes meeting with faculty members individually, and made themselves available for extended, hour and fifteen minute question-and-answer sessions with groups of faculty. During these sessions, faculty members were informed about various decisions made by the senate that are relevant to them individually, including tenure, curriculum, and teaching load. As a result of these sessions, the provost reports high faculty interest in the senate role.

IV. MESSAGING THE SIGNIFICANCE AND PURPOSE OF THE FACULTY SENATE TO THE BROADER FACULTY

Tactic #7: Urge Deans and Department Heads to Promote Faculty Participation in the Senate

Because of a perception that serving on the senate is a time-sink that reduces the productivity of faculty, some college deans want to prevent their best faculty members from joining the senate.

The most effective administrators work hard to combat this notion, emphasizing the limited amount of time required of senators. For example, the provost at **University A** engages in conversations with deans about the importance of getting good, hard-working and cooperative faculty involved in the senate to avoid what he had seen on previous campuses: that less-productive faculty with more free time—and often more extreme views—ended up taking most available senate seats. The provost talks to the deans and department heads about the contributions made by the senate to the health of the university and the positive effect that having strong senate representatives could have on the individual college. In a memorandum sent to all academic staff, the chancellor of **University E** sent a similar message, stating:

“I urge all academic staff to consider participation in governance as members of the academic staff assembly as well as boards and committees at the campus, college, and department/unit levels. I also ask deans, directors, department chairs, and supervisors to encourage and make this participation possible.”

Tactic #8: Encourage Senate Candidacy of Promising Faculty Leaders through Networking

Many faculty senates do not represent the diversity of perspective present among the full faculty. Some faculty members with strong leadership potential have little interest in senate participation unless recruited by a close colleague. To overcome this, universities use current senators to identify and recruit prospective senate candidates.

Profile: Recruitment Tactics Pique Interest in the Faculty Senate at University B

The provost and associate provosts encourage senators to approach particularly engaged faculty in their own department or college to educate them about a senator’s role and responsibilities, and encourage them to run for a seat. This has been successful, as the senate currently reflects the diversity of the broader faculty.

Additionally, the faculty senate convenes a nominating committee tasked with going out and finding candidates for open senate seats. This practice has resulted in full slates of candidates being put forth for each senate election.

V. HARDWIRING PROCESSES AND STRUCTURES FOR INTERNAL SENATE COMMUNICATION

At numerous universities, the senate itself operates inefficiently. Mired in contentious internal debate, the senate often makes decisions at a glacial pace, leading stakeholders to become disinterested or disenchanting.

Effective and efficient senates have processes and structures in place to improve internal communication and decision-making.

Tactic #9: Create a Formalized Structure for Amending the Faculty Handbook to Simplify the Process

Nearly all universities struggle with a burgeoning and complicated faculty handbook. Universities tend to perpetually add addendums and appendices, resulting in a decline in the usefulness of the document.

However, some universities create structures that establish clear ownership of editing the document and reducing the number of perspectives involved in its review.

Spotlight: Updating the Faculty Handbook	
<p>To update and streamline its Faculty Handbook, University A commissioned its Professional Responsibilities and Procedures Committee (PRPC) to identify problem areas and provide recommendations. PRPC identified three categories of edits, in order of increasing importance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Typographical errors 2) Inconsistencies within the document 3) Inaccuracies or outdated items <p>PRPC presented the recommended edits first to the Executive Committee before they were placed on the senate agenda; following senate approval, the PRPC was granted authority to implement the changes. Assigning ownership of the process to a specific committee led to an efficient revising process.</p>	<p>University B has no central Faculty Handbook; instead, each department and college has their own handbook that conforms to general guidelines from the university to ensure a reasonable amount of equity. The associate provost for Faculty Affairs is tasked with evaluating each handbook every few years, assessing whether or not it meets the established criteria, and turning it back over to the unit to make any necessary changes. Contacts indicate that this process has been very effective in minimizing delay in updating faculty handbooks.</p>

A provost's perspective on managing the faculty handbook:

"You cannot build in a clause for every exception—you have to understand that reasonable people can make reasonable exceptions to reasonable rules."
Provost, University D

V. HARDWIRING PROCESSES AND STRUCTURES FOR INTERNAL SENATE COMMUNICATION

Tactic #10: Ensure a Smoother Decision-Making Process through an Introductory Discussion of Upcoming Business in Front of the Full Senate Body

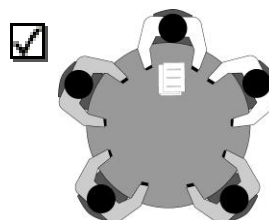
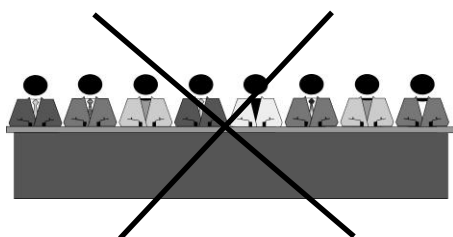
At many universities, senators are asked to debate an issue and come to a decision during the very meeting in which they are introduced to the issue. Senators can be justifiably hesitant to come to a decision on a topic with which they are not familiar, causing the decision-making process to slow or become contentious.

All of the universities interviewed believe that administrators who are successful at streamlining senate decision-making either raise upcoming issues in advance with the senate, or urge senate leadership to do so, so that the group can have an introductory discussion on the floor during the meeting a month before issues are actually up for a vote. This minimizes surprises and allows senators to familiarize themselves with issues and develop perspective, ensuring a smoother decision-making process.

Tactic #11: Mix Seating Arrangements to Symbolize the Common Goal of University Governance

Some universities unintentionally contribute to the adversarial climate of the senate by arranging the senate meeting room in such a way that senators, administrators, and guests are pitted against each other in confrontational seating arrangements.

Universities with a harmonious central administration-faculty senate relationship often arrange the senate meeting room in a way that reflects the common purpose senators and administrators share in shaping university decision-making. Specifically, contacts advise mixing seating arrangements so that senators and administrators are intermingled, rather than facing each other head on. Additionally, all of the universities interviewed suggest holding senate meetings in a conference room, if possible, or an auditorium, rather than a hall filled with long tables or the like. This tactic is symbolic, but contacts believe it can improve administrator-senate relations.

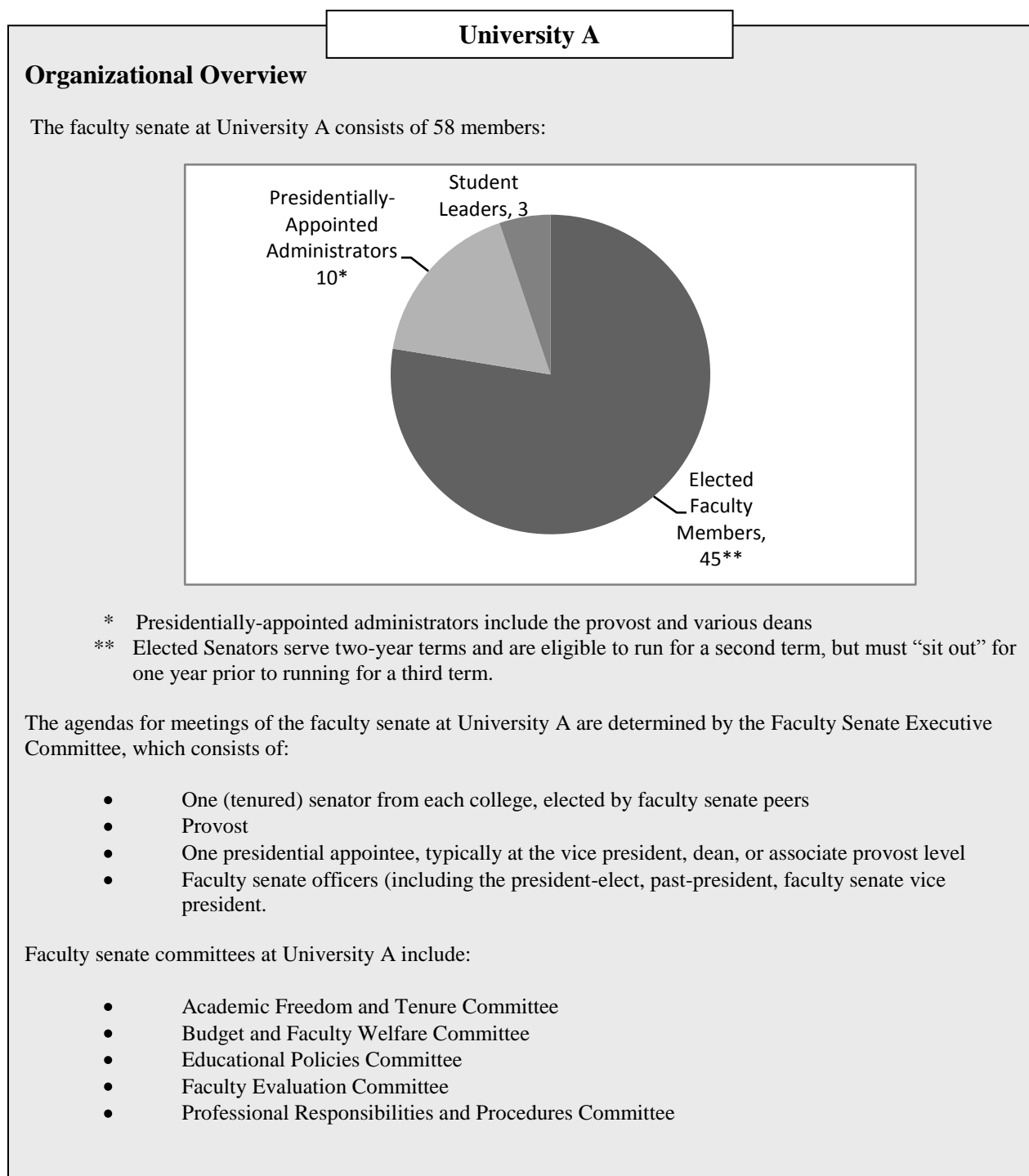


All stakeholders at the university must remember that faculty and administrators are on the same side—they are simply playing their designated roles in guiding the university along a path towards its stated goals.

VI. APPENDIX: ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEWS

APPENDIX A – University A

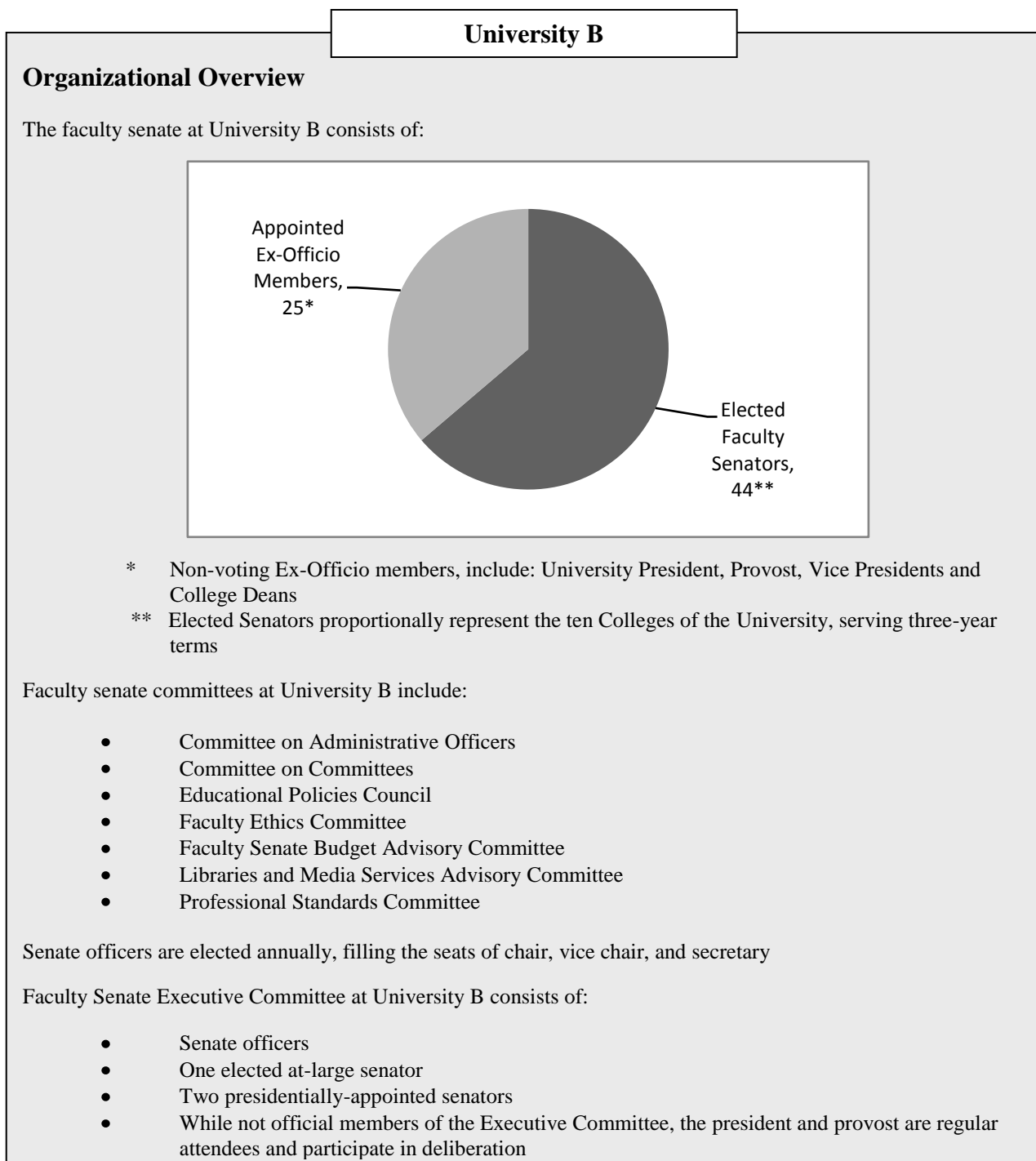
Council research uncovered a surprising diversity of faculty senate composition and size, senate leadership, and committee structure.



VI. APPENDIX: ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEWS

APPENDIX B – University B

Policy Decision-Making Procedure:



VI. APPENDIX: ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEWS

APPENDIX C – UNIVERSITY D

University D

Organizational Overview:

The faculty senate at University D consists of twenty-seven senators, proportionally representing each of seven colleges.

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee consists of the chair, former chair, secretary, and one senator from each college not represented by an elected officer.

Faculty Senate Committees at University D include:

- Strategic Planning Committee
- Teacher Education Committee
- Program Review Committee
- Library Committee
- Honors Committee
- Graduate Council
- Faculty Research Council
- Faculty Development Council
- Curriculum Committee
- Admissions Committee
- Institutional Assessment Committee

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