

# Research Brief

## Faculty Governance at Pepperdine

Lisa E. Bortman, EdD  
Jazmin I. Zane, PhD  
April 2015

*Governance is the term we give to the structures and processes that academic institutions invent to achieve an effective balance between the claims of two different, but equally valid, systems for organizational control and influence. One system, based on legal authority, is the basis for the role of trustees and administration; the other system, based on professional authority, justifies the role of the faculty. The importance of legal authority was recognized with the founding of our first colleges. The acceptance of the role of professional authority is a more recent phenomenon that has evolved over time* (Birnbaum, 2004, p. 5).

### INTRODUCTION

When colleges in America were first established, faculty had little to no involvement in the institution's governance or decision-making processes (Birnbaum, 2004). After World War II ended, an academic revolution led to faculty beginning to acquire oversight of the curriculum and other educational matters. However, it was not until 1967 when the *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities* (American Federation of Teachers, 2006) was developed and accepted as the formal statement on faculty governance. Birnbaum states:

Not only did the Joint Statement confirm the faculty's "primary responsibility" for educational matters such as faculty status and programs of instruction and research, but it also articulated the importance of faculty involvement in educational policy more generally, including setting institutional objectives, planning, budgeting, and selecting administrators (p. 6).

The current literature on *shared governance* explains how faculty participation in institutional governance has become even more challenging due to complexities found in occupational roles, divisions, locations, departments, and levels of authority (Pope, 2004). Pope further contends that this complexity makes it difficult to develop and maintain trust between faculty and staff, which is essential for shared governance.

In addition, the internal and external demands on higher education have resulted in an overly complex system for decision-making and policy development. These demands result in time commitments that are often challenging for faculty given their responsibilities to teaching, scholarship, and service. Despite these competing demands, faculty continue to express a desire to be involved in institutional governance.

Research from the past three decades highlights several areas in which faculty have consistently exerted influence: undergraduate curriculum, standards for promotion and tenure, and standards for evaluating teaching (Jones, 2011; Teirney & Minor, 2003). Faculty have had the least influence in setting budget priorities, strategic planning, and evaluating presidents and vice presidents.

Stensaker and Vabø (2013) state that faculty often criticize the administration for not allowing them to have the degree of shared governance authority and influence they desire. On the other hand, the administration's view regarding shared governance is that faculty committees are not responsive to change or move too slowly to be effective. Some researchers have noted that although obtaining faculty involvement may take more time, the process ensures final decisions are made after

### KEY FINDINGS

- ⇒ In 2012 and 2014, faculty highly rated the idea that shared governance is important in order for Pepperdine to accomplish its mission and strategic plan.
- ⇒ Seaver College and graduate school faculty reported that their current influence in governance is significantly lower than their desired level of influence in governance.
- ⇒ Pepperdine faculty identified five areas that are challenges to faculty participation in governance: systems and structures in place, the perceived value of the faculty's opinion and contributions in the administration's decision-making, levels of trust between faculty and administration, communication and transparency in the administration's decision-making, and issues of time for faculty in the current RTP system.

a thorough evaluation and review, and usually includes buy-in from the community (Heaney, 2010; Kezar, 2004).

In regards to faculty governance at Pepperdine, Dr. W. David Baird, Dean Emeritus of Seaver College, stated the following:

Pepperdine University is a relatively young institution whose understanding of faculty in governance has evolved over the past seventy-five years. This evolution has been shaped by a Board of Regents that mandates a collaborative, consultative model of governance that assumes a working partnership between the faculty and the administration. Before 1974 that partnership yielded little faculty participation; thereafter (with the prodding of WASC and AAUP guidelines) it produced unique but viable modes of interaction. Among these are the University Academic Council, which is concerned with institution-wide educational and program issues; school-wide faculty advisory committees, which function as the official voices of the faculty of particular schools; adoption of policies that assure faculty participation in the selections of deans, department chairs, and faculty colleagues; the University Faculty Council, which meets regularly with administrators to discuss matters of general relevance to the university; input into the choice of the provost, first in 1983 and then in subsequent choices; appointment of three seats on the all-powerful University Planning [budget] Committee; and, for the first time in the history of the institution, participation in the process to select the president in 2000. In the context of colleges which have missions similar to Pepperdine’s, the evolution in faculty governance has yielded ever greater levels of participation since 1974. The collaborative character of that participation, however, remains unsatisfactory to some members of the faculty.

## METHODS

To obtain faculty’s perspective on shared governance at Pepperdine, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) distributed the *OIE Faculty Governance Survey* during Spring 2012 and Fall 2014.

Pepperdine faculty received an electronic invitation to complete the survey during the respective semester. Survey questions were based on a national faculty governance survey developed by the University of Southern California (USC) Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis (Teirney & Minor, 2003). OIE received permission from USC to use and adapt survey questions to assess shared governance at Pepperdine.

Of the 695 Pepperdine faculty solicited in Spring 2012, 187 participated in the survey (26.9% response rate). Of the 758 faculty solicited in Fall 2014, 412 participated in the survey (54.4% response rate). Faculty from all five Pepperdine schools were solicited, including full-time and part-time (adjunct) faculty. Data reported in this brief are primarily from the 2014 administration.

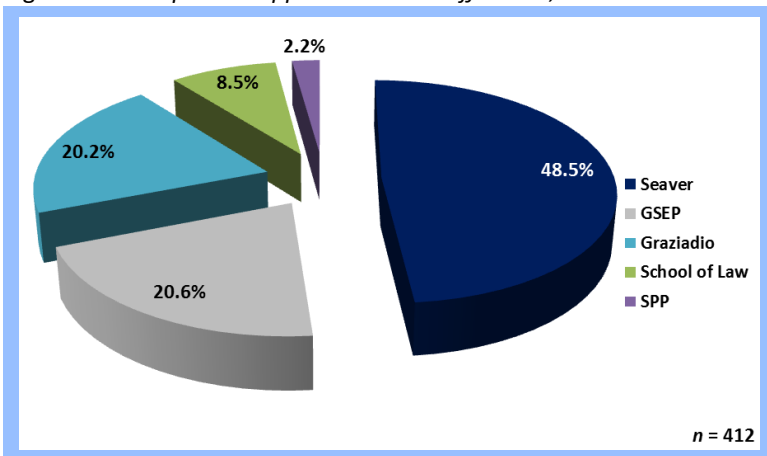
## RESULTS

Table 1 highlights demographics of the 2014 faculty participants, and Figure 1 displays a percentage breakdown of the participants’ Pepperdine school affiliation.

Table 1. *Participants’ demographics, 2014.*

Descriptive	%	<i>n</i>
<i>Gender<sup>a</sup></i>		
Male	58.5	241
Female	41.5	171
<i>Ethnicity<sup>ac</sup></i>		
African American	5.1	21
Hispanic/Latino	5.4	22
Asian	6.6	27
White	82.0	337
Two or more	1.0	4
<i>Current academic rank</i>		
Professor	36.8	147
Associate Professor	18.3	73
Assistant Professor	15.3	61
Lecturer	10.8	43
Instructor	13.0	52
Other	5.8	23
<i>Adjunct faculty<sup>b</sup></i>		
No	66.3	270
Yes	33.7	137
<i>Tenure status<sup>a</sup></i>		
Tenured	46.2	162
Tenure track	15.7	55
Non-tenured	38.2	134
<i>Load<sup>a</sup></i>		
Full-time	71.1	293
Part-time	28.9	119

Figure 1. *Participants’ Pepperdine school affiliation,<sup>a</sup> 2014.*



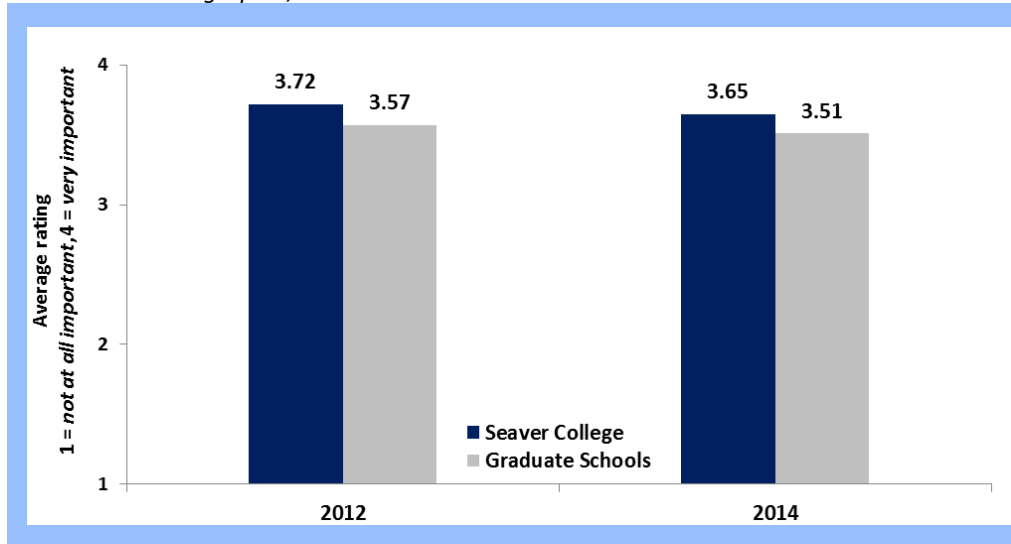
<sup>a</sup>Institutional data.

<sup>b</sup>Self-report data.

<sup>c</sup>One participant’s ethnicity was “unknown” and was excluded.

Both Seaver College faculty and graduate school faculty responded that shared governance is highly important in order for Pepperdine to accomplish its mission and strategic plan in 2012 and 2014 (Figure 2). Ratings were based on a four-point scale, with 1 = *not at all important* to 4 = *very important*. Results exclude “don’t know” responses.

Figure 2. Faculty ratings of the importance of shared governance to accomplish Pepperdine’s mission and strategic plan, 2012 and 2014.



2012  $n = 160$ ; 2014  $n = 334$ .

Source: OIE Faculty Governance Survey, 2012, 2014. Item: “To what degree do you believe ‘shared governance’ is important for the institution to accomplish its mission and strategic plan?” Results exclude “don’t know” responses.

Faculty were also asked to rate the importance of faculty influence in specific areas of governance, as well as the amount of hours per week they would be willing to devote to these areas (results are shown in Table 2 on page 4). Responses regarding the importance of faculty influence were high, ranging from 2.70 to 3.73 on a four-point scale (1 = *not important* to 4 = *essential*). Both Seaver College and graduate school faculty scored “curriculum” as the area where faculty influence is most important. Faculty agreed they would be willing to devote at least 1 to 10 hours per semester for most of the governance areas listed.

Among tenured faculty, “setting financial planning” at the university level was rated least important; however, 87.8% of the faculty reported that they were willing to devote time to this area (Table 2). Nontenured faculty rated all areas of governance over 3.00 on a 4-point scale for level of importance. This was a higher average than for any other group. More than 89.0% responded that they would be willing to devote time to all areas of governance assessed.

Table 2. Faculty ratings of importance and willingness to devote time each semester to selected areas of governance, 2014.

		Importance (1-4 scale) Average	Willing to devote your time?		%			n
			No	Yes	If willing, how much time?			
					1-10hrs	11-20hrs	>20hrs	
Seaver	Curriculum	3.70	0.7	99.3	49.7	27.8	22.5	151
	General standards and issues concerning promotion and tenure	3.53	2.6	97.4	63.5	21.7	14.8	115
	Setting budget priorities (school level)	2.94	5.3	94.7	84.2	11.6	4.2	95
	Strategic financial planning (school level)	2.94	7.0	93.0	78.9	14.1	7.0	71
	Setting budget priorities (university level)	2.92	8.2	91.8	89.0	8.2	2.7	73
	Strategic financial planning (university level)	2.84	9.8	90.2	82.0	8.2	9.8	61
Grad Schools	Curriculum	3.64	0.0	100.0	51.9	24.4	23.7	131
	General standards and issues concerning promotion and tenure	3.22	3.7	96.3	67.1	23.2	9.8	82
	Setting budget priorities (school level)	2.95	0.0	100.0	64.1	23.1	12.8	78
	Strategic financial planning (school level)	2.96	0.0	100.0	62.3	24.6	13.0	69
	Setting budget priorities (university level)	2.71	10.2	89.8	73.5	18.4	8.2	49
	Strategic financial planning (university level)	2.80	8.9	91.1	75.6	13.3	11.1	45
Tenured	Curriculum	3.70	0.0	100.0	51.5	29.1	19.4	103
	General standards and issues concerning promotion and tenure	3.43	3.8	96.3	62.5	20.0	17.5	80
	Setting budget priorities (school level)	2.89	5.6	94.4	77.5	11.3	11.3	71
	Strategic financial planning (school level)	2.85	6.2	93.9	72.3	18.5	9.2	65
	Setting budget priorities (university level)	2.75	14.6	85.5	87.3	10.9	1.8	55
	Strategic financial planning (university level)	2.71	12.2	87.8	77.5	16.3	6.1	49
Tenure Track	Curriculum	3.63	0.0	100.0	46.3	33.3	20.4	54
	General standards and issues concerning promotion and tenure	3.45	2.0	98.0	61.2	28.6	10.2	49
	Setting budget priorities (school level)	2.86	2.9	97.1	80.0	14.3	5.7	35
	Strategic financial planning (school level)	2.70	3.7	96.3	70.4	22.2	7.4	27
	Setting budget priorities (university level)	2.72	3.5	96.6	82.7	13.8	3.5	29
	Strategic financial planning (university level)	2.76	4.0	96.0	84.0	4.0	12.0	25
Nontenured	Curriculum	3.73	2.2	97.8	42.2	31.1	26.7	45
	General standards and issues concerning promotion and tenure	3.54	0.0	100.0	68.6	22.9	8.6	35
	Setting budget priorities (school level)	3.12	0.0	100.0	79.4	20.6	0.0	34
	Strategic financial planning (school level)	3.14	0.0	100.0	71.4	23.8	4.8	21
	Setting budget priorities (university level)	3.05	4.8	95.2	80.9	14.3	4.8	21
	Strategic financial planning (university level)	3.00	10.5	89.5	79.0	10.5	10.5	19

Item: "Please indicate how important faculty influence is in the following areas, and then indicate the amount of time you would be willing to devote each semester to the specific area." Importance ratings were based on a four-point scale, with 1 = *not important* to 4 = *essential*.

Both Seaver College (Figure 3) and graduate school (Figure 4) faculty reported that they perceive their current level of influence in governance to be significantly lower than their desired level of influence. Faculty predominantly reported having the greatest level of current influence in curriculum development, program planning, and educational policy. According to faculty responses, they perceive large gaps between current and desired levels of influence in the areas of salary structure and setting strategic priorities, budget priorities, and personnel policies.

Figure 3. Seaver College faculty current and desired level of influence in areas of governance, 2014.

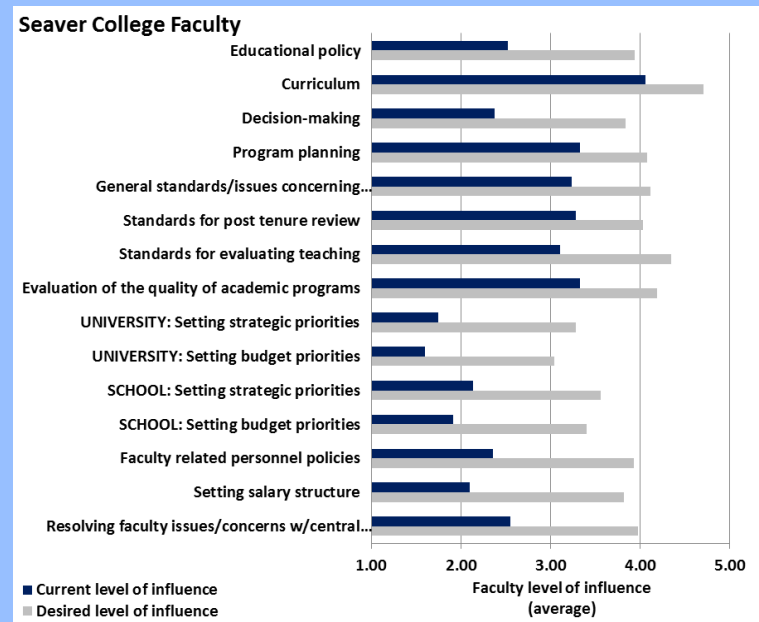
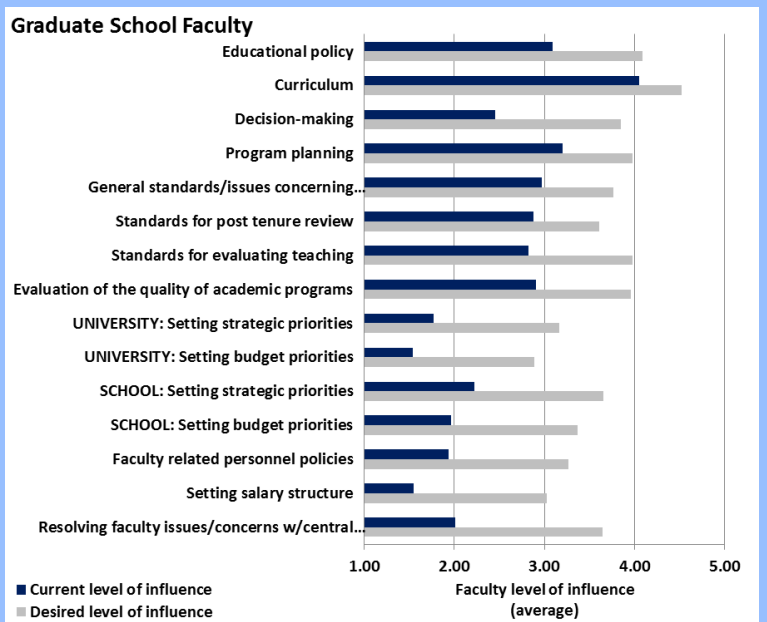


Figure 4. Graduate school faculty current and desired level of influence in areas of governance, 2014.



Area of governance	Seaver faculty ratings				Graduate school faculty ratings			
	Average	Average	Sig	n	Average	Average	Sig	n
Educational policy	2.53	3.94	***	137	3.09	4.09	***	120
Curriculum	4.06	4.71	***	136	4.05	4.53	***	120
Decision-making	2.38	3.84	***	130	2.45	3.85	***	117
Program planning	3.33	4.08	***	132	3.20	3.98	***	116
General standards and issues concerning promotion and tenure	3.24	4.12	***	132	2.97	3.77	***	113
Standards for post tenure review	3.28	4.03	***	128	2.88	3.61	***	109
Standards for evaluating teaching	3.11	4.35	***	130	2.82	3.98	***	116
Evaluation of the quality of academic programs	3.33	4.20	***	132	2.91	3.96	***	114
UNIVERSITY: Setting strategic priorities	1.75	3.28	***	128	1.77	3.17	***	111
UNIVERSITY: Setting budget priorities	1.60	3.04	***	127	1.54	2.89	***	109
SCHOOL: Setting strategic priorities	2.14	3.56	***	126	2.22	3.66	***	116
SCHOOL: Setting budget priorities	1.92	3.40	***	125	1.96	3.37	***	113
Faculty related personnel policies	2.36	3.93	***	131	1.94	3.27	***	115
Setting salary structure	2.10	3.82	***	130	1.55	3.03	***	116
Resolving faculty issues and concerns with the central administration	2.55	3.98	***	130	2.01	3.65	***	110

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .  $p$  values from Wilcoxon Signed rank tests.

Item: "Using a five-point scale with 1 = *minimal* to 5 = *substantial*, rate the level of influence Pepperdine faculty currently have, and the level of influence you desire to have, in the following areas."

Faculty were also asked to identify “critical challenges to faculty governance” at Pepperdine. This open-ended question yielded 202 comments that were coded. The majority of the comments fell into five areas that participants viewed as challenges to faculty governance (in ranked order):

1. Systems and structures in place to allow for faculty governance
2. Faculty’s opinions and contributions being valued in decision-making
3. Faculty trusting administration
4. Communication and transparency in decision-making
5. Issues of time for faculty in the current RTP system

Table 3 showcases faculty responses that are representative of the most frequently occurring themes and comments, and that which best captures the meaning of the categories. Comments were single coded, which resulted in some overlap. In addition to the above categories, there were also comments referring to the role of adjunct faculty in governance. Comments made in the 2014 survey closely resembled comments in the 2012 survey.

Faculty frequently reported that they felt that their input and participation were not valued or utilized in decision-making, which contributed to a perception of a top-down administrative decision-making process. Poor communication, lack of transparency, and limited structures were listed as barriers to faculty participation. However, faculty recognized that there were geographical challenges as a result of Pepperdine’s multiple campuses, in which faculty claimed that the campuses and different schools function independently of one another. Both of these views contributed to their perceptions of challenges to engaging faculty in governance.

Table 3. *Selected participants’ comments regarding critical challenges to faculty governance (by theme), 2014.*

<b>SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES IN PLACE TO ALLOW FOR FACULTY GOVERNANCE</b>
I see two: (1) Because there are not natural systems for shared governance, it requires a great effort and faculty are working very hard on so many other things, that to make this effort is difficult. I speak from experience; (2) The lack of transparency also creates apathy.
We have a corporate, top-down model where the core decision makers are Church of Christ members. This retains the affiliation of university but also limits broader faculty participation.
This is complicated because I don't believe faculty understand the degree to which they actually ARE involved in governance through curriculum, hiring, and promotion decisions. The problem is definition. So I think the greatest challenge is educating the faculty about governance.
The distributed nature of the faculty makes the creation of coherent planning and coordination difficult.
Being informed about issues and knowing how to participate in governance.
Continued willingness of the administration to be open and engaged with the faculty. Great strides have been made over the last several years (meetings with faculty, willingness to work with and run things by the faculty). I hope the administration will be patient with the faculty, since there is still some lingering distrust, and the faculty need to mature into a more active role.
The most critical challenge is the fact, not the opinion or the perception, that the faculty's voice in governance is always and exclusively advisory never definitive.
<b>FACULTY’S OPINIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS BEING VALUED IN DECISION-MAKING</b>
Getting the faculty to believe that their participation is valued. Recognition of faculty ideas.
Administration being open to faculty participation, and actually taking our perspectives into account in decision-making.
The most critical challenge is whether or not the decisions of the faculty once made will be respected.
I think that faculty input should be valued and I don't think it is. I don't know what would help except a complete system change.
Our participation would increase if we saw our views making an impact. At present, we make recommendations, but administrators make final decisions. Those decision rarely show any influence from faculty recommendations.
Faculty do not feel as though they can influence decision making. Faculty feel as though decisions have already been made or will be made in spite of faculty voice in opposition. An honest discussion about issues and seeing that administration is willing to make changes based on faculty input will encourage faculty to give input.



//Table 3 (continued from previous page)

<b>FACULTY TRUSTING ADMINISTRATION</b>
I honestly think we are moving in the right direction. I believe that the administration is willing to change and has changed in the last two years. That is why I gave a 4 to "Trust between faculty and administration." Good faith between the two seems to be growing. We need to continue this course, however. This new trust is good but it is also fragile. In response to the question, I believe that faculty will participate more as they sense that their input is taken seriously, and that there is truly some shared governance. If we go backwards and return to autocracy or have a controversial autocratic episode, faculty might get involved again, but negatively rather than constructively.
Time, attention, and trust. I think it is difficult to communicate with faculty about anything not immediate to job description and tenure pressures. I think clear communication across multiple platforms/media, and different representative voices is helpful. More visible presence of administration and evidence of admin awareness of faculty issues and routines, and more clarity about how faculty are being represented to administration would be helpful. More clarity about roles and processes for decision making would be helpful. It is very difficult to engage faculty broadly and meaningfully in the midst of a teaching semester.
There is a lack of trust that is very deep and long standing. It will take a while to cure. In addition the faculty do not speak with one voice, and it is not easy to represent all of them with one or a few individuals.
<b>COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY IN DECISION-MAKING</b>
I believe that integration and transparency are the most critical challenges. Transparency and inclusion would facilitate faculty participation.
Lack of transparency in decision making. More transparency.
Too many decisions are done informally in committees formed by administrators. Faculty should be involved throughout the whole process.
Transparency regarding the budget, buy-in from all faculty members on a shared vision for the school; facilitation would require strong leadership to bring faculty on board or encourage them to pursue opportunities elsewhere.
Increase transparency and give faculty a REAL role in governance.
<b>ISSUES OF TIME FOR FACULTY IN THE CURRENT RTP SYSTEM</b>
Time. At least at my school, GSBM, we teach three terms each year, plus research, plus business connections.
Finding time. Lighter teaching loads.
Reducing overly burdensome teaching loads.
Time. Clear, tangible changes and outcomes of faculty participation need to be seen for the time and effort it takes.
I don't see a challenge right now. I think if anything, there is too much emphasis on governance, which takes the faculty away from where they can contribute most, which is to develop top scholarly work and innovate in teaching
The crunch to become a strong teacher and an accomplished scholar takes up the majority of available time for faculty who are not tenured. There is rarely time to consider serving on committees, other than school and divisional committees that don't meet often.
Practitioner faculty are told they need to be academically qualified, keep up relationships with their outside business communities, effectively teach, and do service. It's too much to do well. The challenge is to channel more governance and energy into learning outcomes that matter.

## DISCUSSION

Findings from the *OIE Faculty Governance Survey* are similar to those from past research, such that faculty view shared governance as important but feel undervalued in their roles and responsibilities (Jones, 2011; Tierney & Minor, 2003). Faculty influence in strategic decision-making and fiscal planning are reported to be low (Jones, 2011; Kissler, 1997), and faculty would like more involvement in university decision-making but need it to be recognized through the faculty reward process. Pepperdine faculty reported that their current workload is too high to allow them to take on the added responsibility of governance without such rewards. They report having autonomy in decision-making over curriculum and classroom pedagogy and practice, but having an inadequate amount of input when it concerns university strategic decision-making, including budgetary matters.

The categories resulting from the comments provided by Pepperdine faculty are essentially all interrelated, which is evident in the participants' descriptions. For example, faculty describe how improving systems and structures in governance would lead to better communication and transparency. When examining Pepperdine's governance structure, the lines of communication and the relationship between committees are sometimes difficult to determine. Kezar (2004) explains the relationship between communication and trust, such that colleagues need time to work with each other to build effective communication patterns and trusting relationships. This applies to administration working with faculty and faculty working with administration. As stated earlier, Pepperdine is a relatively young institution; hence, the collaborative trust and communication between Pepperdine faculty and administration is likely still evolving.

Pepperdine faculty comments about satisfaction with their levels of participation in governance are similar to those in both national and international literature, which shows faculty are not satisfied with their institution's governance structure and their own level of participation and would like more influence in the governance systems (Jones, 2011). Improvements in all of the categories mentioned by Pepperdine faculty would arguably strengthen the trust and value between faculty and administrators.

## CONCLUSION

Research demonstrates why faculty involvement in governance is important and how it helps to ensure educational quality (Birnbaum, 2004; Heaney, 2010; Kezar, 2004). Faculty participation in governance results in social capital for the faculty, which leads to improved trust between administration and faculty as well as increased productivity (Birnbaum, 2004). Social capital makes it easier for constituents to resolve collective problems, and the development of social networks provides the institutional means to encourage socially desirable behavior.

Trust between authorities and constituents can be developed when each believes that the other will act in a predictable way, that each is concerned with acting in the interests of the other, and that each is able to act on the other's behalf. Trust strengthens the legitimacy of leaders and creates mutually reinforcing bonds of identity, confidence, and support between them and their followers. Trust is therefore an essential component of democratic governance that leads to compliance and cooperation with the group without inducing alienation (Birnbaum, 2004).

Institutions that share governance make more effective decisions, according to the literature. Birnbaum (2004) states that the three main parties involved in academic governance (i.e., trustees, administrators, and faculty) have different focal areas. Trustees focus more on responsiveness; administrators focus on efficiency; and faculty focus on academic values. Furthermore, each party has been socialized differently and is exposed to different aspects of the institutional environment; thus, trustees, administrators, and faculty possess expertise in different areas and view the institution from different perspectives. Effective governance requires that the viewpoint of each group be considered in decision-making. As Birnbaum (2004) quotes W. H. Cowley, "academic governance is far too important to be left entirely in the hands of professors or entirely in the hands of boards of trustees. The enterprise requires the participation of both" (p. 17).

*Academic governance is far too important to be left entirely in the hands of professors or entirely in the hands of boards of trustees. The enterprise requires the participation of both. —W. H. Cowley*

## REFERENCES

- American Federation of Teachers. (2006). Shared governance in colleges and universities: A statement by the higher education program and policy council. Retrieved March 5, 2015, from [http://faculty senate.tamu.edu/Quick\\_Links/Shared\\_Governance\\_in\\_Colleges\\_and\\_Universities.pdf](http://faculty senate.tamu.edu/Quick_Links/Shared_Governance_in_Colleges_and_Universities.pdf)
- Birnbaum, R. (2004). The end of shared governance: Looking ahead or looking back. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 127, 5–22.
- Heaney, T. (2010). Democracy, shared governance, and the university. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 128, 69–79.
- Jones, W. A. (2011). Faculty involvement in institutional governance: A literature review. *Journal of the Professoriate*, (6)1, 117–135.
- Kezar, A. (2004). What is more important to effective governance: Relationships, trust, and leadership, or structures and formal processes? *New Directions for Higher Education*, 127, 35–46.
- Kissler, G. (1997). Who decides which budgets to cut? *Journal of Higher Education*, 68, 427–459.
- Pope, M. L. (2004). A conceptual framework of faculty trust and participation in governance. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 127, 75–84.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster; 2000.
- Stensaker, B., & Vabø, A. (2013). Re-inventing shared governance: Implications for organisational culture and institutional leadership. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 67, 256–274.
- Tierney, W. & Minor, J. (2003). *Challenges for governance: A national report*. Retrieved March 4, 2015, from: [http://www.usc.edu/dept/chepa/pdf/gov\\_monograph03.pdf](http://www.usc.edu/dept/chepa/pdf/gov_monograph03.pdf).
- Tyler, T. R. (1998). Trust and democratic governance. In V. Braithwaite & M. Levi (Eds.), *Trust and Governance* (pp. 269–294). New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1998.