

CHAPTER 6—UNIVERSITY ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

New School University has grown dramatically in size and complexity. In response to unprecedented growth over the last decade, and the increasing disciplinary diversity of its faculty, students and staff, the institution has created new vehicles for internal communication and shared governance, both within individual schools and in the university. It has made significant strides toward an administrative plan that aspires to increase collaboration and centralization of university services. This period of organizational growth and transition has been a time of inevitable organizational tension and uneven development. One of the university's greatest strengths—the diversity, talent and experience of its students, staff and faculty—also poses one of its greatest challenges. The process of creating the necessary governance and administrative systems to smoothly operate eight independent schools, as one whole, has been difficult and is ongoing.

The following sections provide a brief history and a description of the current status of the organization, administration and governance at the university and in the schools. They also offer an analysis of the implications of this status—both strengths and limitations—for the effective functioning of a university. No comprehensive review was done of the university's administrative plan. The subcommittee focused on human resources functions and staff development. The report concludes with recommendations to help correct existing deficits.

PART 1: BRIEF HISTORY OF ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

In 1991 the Middle States team made the following observations about the organization and governance of New School: 1) It is “a collection of highly autonomous divisions with relatively limited intra-institutional operation and coordination”; 2) “Perhaps less well developed are student services ... New School relies to an unusual degree on oral information exchanged in group settings”; and 3) “The Trustees are impressive by any standards that can be applied... The problems of inadequate horizontal communication below the level of the deans and officers are compounded by the absence of good vertical communication in several of the academic divisions.”

Five years later, in July 1996, a review by two external reviewers from Middle States concluded that “the university has made substantial progress in achieving its goals and in addressing the concerns and recommendations of the 1991 evaluation.” They found that “the institution has built lines of communication and strengthened the formal structure for university-wide participation in the consideration of issues facing the university and/or the academic divisions through the establishment of university-wide advisory committees for faculty, students and staff and alumni; as well as student advisory committees in several functional areas such as computing, financial aid, health services and housing. Significant communication building was also achieved within the academic units.”

Then, in April 1997, a mobilization by some faculty and students from the Graduate Faculty and Eugene Lang College led to the initiation by former university president Jonathan Fanton of a process of self-assessment at the university and school-wide levels regarding governance. The reports of the school-wide governance task forces cite different observations from the different schools, but three major findings were consistent across schools:

1. “The number of students who participate on committees and councils is too small... The divisions need to move to the next level in their efforts to communicate effectively with their constituencies...[and achieve] a greater utilization of the campus computing network for inviting and facilitating involvement...” (6, 9)
2. All agree, “It is difficult to secure the participation of part-time faculty who often cannot justify the investment of time in unremunerated committee work... It is not easy for part-time faculty members to assume the extra responsibilities of committee services.” (6, 7)
3. Many considered “ways to strengthen communication among the administrators, faculty members, students and staff of the division, and several proposed the establishment of new advisory councils to facilitate consultation and ensure that part-time faculty and students are heard.” (9) ³⁵

Progress has been made on all three fronts, but more remains to be done.

PART 2: CURRENT STATUS AND MAJOR CHALLENGES

New School University is still in an emergent state as a university, but the subcommittee’s process of self-assessment revealed that progress continues to be made on the organization, administration and governance of the university. In this section, we present the current status and the remaining major challenges as identified by the subcommittee.

Governance: The Trustees and Boards of Governors

The Board of Trustees is engaged and committed to its responsibility to the university. In the last 18 months, the trustees have shown increased attention to strategic planning and the university’s future (see Appendix F). They recognize that New School University is still in transition from a group of independent divisions to a coherent but complex institution of higher learning. They also acknowledge that this type of organizational transition—which is in all cases challenging—has been complicated by the arrival of new leadership, i.e., a new president, new vice presidents, and several new deans.

The trustees, as the lead governing board of the university, were instrumental in ensuring the institution continued to function smoothly during the two-year transition period between presidents. A trustee-led search committee took responsibility for identifying the new president. Philip Scaturro, a trustee, served as university chancellor during the transition and,

³⁵ New School Discussion Papers, *Number 30: Reports of the Governance Task Forces*, Spring 1998. See governance exhibit.

together with the provost and executive vice president, formed the Office of the President. The new president's official appointment was effective January 2001.

As evidence of a strong commitment to ensuring a smooth transition for the new president, Robert Kerrey, the trustees held a board retreat for the first time in academic year 2001-02. The retreat gave the new president and new trustees, as well as the older trustees, an opportunity to focus collectively on the university's mission, on future strategic planning and on proposed new budget rules. Other retreats are planned for the future.

The full board meets four times a year and consists of 49 regular trustees, four life trustees and the president. Ten new trustees were confirmed since January 2002. The major decision-making arm of the board is the 21-member executive committee, composed of the chairs of the trustee committees, the chairs of the boards of governors, the seven officers and several long-time members. The executive committee has traditionally met six times a year and more when warranted. As of July 2002, it will meet five times a year. In addition to the executive committee, 12 standing committees meet three to four times a year. These include the audit, budget planning, and development committees, among others described in Appendix F. The goal of each of the committees is articulated in the by-laws. These committees propose policies and actions to the executive committee and the full board for approval.

The board is guided by well-articulated by-laws, which are reviewed on a regular basis. They were adopted in 1983 and amended in 1983, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1994, September 1995 and December 1995. Further amendments are planned for the academic year 2002-03. Any changes in the organization of the board or university lead to an amendment of the by-laws. The by-laws are available to all members of the university community by submitting a request to the Secretary of the Corporation.

Trustees are expected to show regular attendance at board meetings, actively participate as chair or member of one of the standing committees, participate on one of several Board of Governors, assume leadership roles after some time on the board, attend university events, and make monetary contributions to the university. The evidence shows that the trustees of New School University work hard to fulfill their responsibilities. Each board member is assessed a year prior to the expiration of his/her term. The assessment is the responsibility of the nominating committee, with direct input from the president, who meets individually with the trustees under review. The trustees also have a defined process for evaluating the president every four years.

To facilitate the work of the trustees, the Office of the Secretary of the Corporation initiates orientations for all new trustees and is completing a handbook that compiles information that trustees need—such as the by-laws and conflict of interest policy—to perform their function well. The Secretary and her staff serve as liaisons between the university administration and the trustees. The Office handles all preparation for committee and full meetings—a minimum of 42 individual meetings a year, prepares all the minutes of these meetings, organizes all university events that involve the trustees, and manages retreats, orientations and all other contact with the trustees. The office also facilitates interactions between the trustees and the president and other officers of the university.

The board has established formal channels of communication with the administrative officers of the university and, to a more limited extent, with the deans. The university officers and deans attend all full board meetings; they are excluded from participation in executive sessions. The university officers consist of the executive vice president, the provost, the secretary of the corporation, and six vice presidents. There are currently two vice president vacancies. The officers report that the trustees are fully informed and responsive.

The trustees' relationship with the deans is different and less developed. The deans have been participating in board meetings since the fall 2001 but, as the Governance Exhibit depicts, the most direct avenue of communication between the trustees and the deans of the various schools is through the trustees' work with the division-level boards of governors. While the deans attend all full board meetings and are invited to some of the committee meetings, their only direct link to the trustees is to those trustees who are also governors of individual divisions.

A Board of Governors, also described in Appendix F, provides counsel and support to each academic division. Beginning in September 2001, the president began a campaign to enhance the authority and involvement of the Boards of Governors within the seven schools and the Jazz and Contemporary Music Program. This effort remains a central focus in the 2002-03 academic year. Governors are appointed by the trustees for a three-year term and may be re-appointed for one additional successive term.

In October 2001, the guidelines of the Boards of Governors were revised. The major revision was to change all the names to Boards of Governors (two boards were previously called Boards of Governors, the rest Visiting Committees), thereby sending a signal that members were not just advisors but governors. The revisions also included trying to keep the size of the boards to 25 members—so that they do not become unwieldy or ineffective because of a large size. A further amendment to the guidelines in 2002-03 is being considered to allow a chair of a Board of Governors to be a non-trustee, which would encourage the development of leadership within individual boards. The Chair of the Board of Trustees and the president of the university continue to serve as ex-officio members of each Board of Governors.

This academic year, for the first time in the university's history, a joint Board of Trustees/Boards of Governors meeting was scheduled for October 23, 2002, followed by a reception, designed to bring together the trustees and boards of governors to encourage communication on university-wide issues.

Deans meet with the individual board of governors of their division three to four times a year. Members of the Boards of Governors are expected to attend meetings, be familiar with the mission, departments and facilities of a division, work on specific projects as specified by the dean, participate in special events of the division and to serve as divisional and university representatives in the larger community. There is, of course, variation in how often and in what ways the boards of governors interact with the different divisions. The goal in all cases, however, is to increase interaction between the trustees and each division's leadership and to make each board of governors effective and the members committed to their roles.

An important part of the governors' jobs is to fundraise for the individual schools and university. All members of the boards of governors are expected to make a contribution to their division's annual fund—the contributions vary by division, ranging from \$1000 to over \$10,000 annually (the contributions are not mandatory but strongly encouraged). All trustees are expected to make a contribution to the university annual fund.

Challenges

Growth of the University. The university community needs a clearly articulated vision from the trustees on the ideal relationship between revenue generation, mission and size of the university and its administration. Some faculty, students and staff have expressed a concern that revenue generation may be driving some of the major decisions made by the university's leadership. This past academic year the trustees and the boards of governors were involved in discussing the deans' five-year plans. This conversation needs to be continued and expanded to include input from faculty, students and staff.

Communications. The trustees take their responsibilities seriously, but there are existing challenges of communication and governance that need to be improved. The mechanisms currently in place to facilitate direct input to the trustees and governors from faculty, senior staff and students of the various schools are inadequate.

The university officers prepare the agendas for the board meetings but there is no equivalent mechanism for getting input to the board agendas from the faculty and senior staff. Some trustees have extensive links with the university and/or particular schools, but for the most part the boards of governors serve as the main bridge for direct exchange of ideas between the trustees (who serve as governors) and the deans of individual divisions. This venue permits little more than occasional reporting to the governors from invited faculty members. We recommend that in the future, representatives from the elected Faculty/President's Committee and/or its predecessor be invited participants at one or more board meetings. In addition, the trustees may want to invite faculty and senior staff (full and part-time) to be active participants (more than reporting) in at least one board meeting annually. When they are invited to participate, the board meetings should be organized around major academic and/or administrative themes of particular interest to the faculty and/or staff. Alternatively, faculty and senior staff with relevant expertise may be invited to participate in some of the meetings of the standing trustee committees.

Board officers met this year with representatives from the university-wide student advisory council and began a conversation on how best to increase student-trustee contact. Tentative agreement has been reached on inviting representatives of the Committee to attend at least one full board meeting a year as observers, as well as to meet with the trustee officers several times a year. Additionally, the Committee on Student Affairs, a standing committee of the Board of Trustees, meets regularly with students. We recommend that one or two trustees participate in an annual meeting of the student advisory council.

These are just some examples of ways to increase the direct communication between trustees and other key members of the university community; there are many other possibilities. Faculty, students and staff should be encouraged to recommend more ways for increasing their involvement with trustees and governors.

Diversity. Last year the nominating committee of the board decided that one of its key objectives for the next few years will be to increase the diversity of the board. The members have paid particular attention in the last year to attracting more trustees who are women, of varying ethnic backgrounds (e.g., Hispanics), who have corporate sector expertise and who are likely to make substantial contributions to the university. In an effort to enhance board diversity, the president has written to each trustee asking them to recommend a diverse pool of candidates for the board and boards of governors. In addition, the president and the Office of the Secretary are initiating contact and welcoming members of racial and ethnic-identified organizations and minority-based civic and cultural organizations to get to know the university. Progress toward increased board diversity has been incremental. From October 2001- October 2002, the university elected ten new trustees (in addition, four trustees—all male and non-minority—left the board). As a result, the number of women on the board has increased from nine to twelve; and the number of racial/ethnic minorities has increased from seven to eight. The board has also seen an increase in new trustees under the age of 50.

Governance: Administrative Officers, Faculty, Staff and Students

In his first year, President Kerrey modified the avenues of communication with the university trustees and with the senior administrative officers (provost and vice presidents) by making them more informal and inclusive. He meets regularly with the executive committee of the board, with boards of governors, and with trustee committees. He meets weekly with the provost, secretary, and vice presidents of the university. The purpose of these weekly meetings is to review major decisions that have to be made, share information from various school boards and committees, prepare the agendas for the trustee meetings, and exchange suggestions. It is also the major collaborative vehicle for problem solving and decision-making. Sharing authority seems to exist at this level of governance and lines of communications are fluid.

Prior to this academic year, the president formally met with the deans and officers once a month. This academic year the president revised the schedule so that he and the deans meet more frequently. The purpose of the meetings is to exchange information and share advice. The monthly deans and officers meeting will continue, but the president will also meet at least once monthly just with the deans. He also has begun an informal series of dinners with the deans. The first was held September 2002 and a second is scheduled for November 2002. The practice will be continued at least into the spring semester. These more frequent exchanges with the president should result in a greater role for the deans in the major decisions that affect their schools. In the last academic year (2001-02), the deans also chose to hold monthly meetings alone to discuss their common agendas.

The avenues for expression of staff, student and faculty views in university and school governance are more limited than those available to the deans—though progress has been made. In the last five years, there has been an increase in the formal channels of communication between the president and administrative officers of the university, and faculty—as well as between students and faculty. For example, there is an informational meeting of the entire senior staff of the university that includes all administrative directors and coordinators with the president and his senior officers four times a year. Another example is the expanded use of on-line communications, including the creation of a more sophisticated website, more frequent and regular mass email announcements and mailings to all members of the university. University Seminars described in Appendix F are another forum for communication.

Second, in 1997, the Associate Provost for Student Affairs was promoted to Vice President for Student Affairs. Creating a more senior officer position to represent the voice of students was a direct response to early criticisms from students that they had no representation in university policy.

Third, new advisory committees for both the university and its colleges were formed. At present, formal university-wide and school-wide committees exist for the faculty, students and administrative staff to exchange information. The three university-wide committees—the faculty advisory committee (FAC), the student advisory council and the staff advisory committee—meet once a month. The student advisory council, to which each school elects or appoints representatives, meets with the Vice President for Student Affairs; the Staff Advisory Committee (an appointed body) meets with the Vice President for Human Resources. In addition, a senior staff meeting is held on a regular basis.

The Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) has met monthly since 1993. It consists of appointed representatives from each of the schools. During his tenure, the former president chaired all the FAC meetings and the provost was present. The purpose of the meetings was to share information and to seek input on academic and administrative matters likely to affect the faculty and teaching. In academic years, 1999-2000 and 2000-01 the Provost chaired the FAC. This changed in April 2002 when the new president assumed the role of FAC chair. As described in the following section, the Faculty/President's Committee has replaced the FAC.

Challenges

University governance systems are still evolving. While the new management venues have increased information flow across the university and within the schools, they have not substantively increased the sharing of decision-making and authority across the university. If, as was stated in a 1997 university governance report at the “heart of a strong... governance system is the frequent and informed involvement of faculty, students, staff and senior administrators in the consideration of the issues confronting their academic division, especially when the discussion in and among these groups is based on wide consultation and broad and effective communication,” then the university has yet to fully realize its governance system. There is no university-wide governance structure that provides the means through which policy is developed and authority assigned, delegated, and shared in a climate of mutual support.

What is lacking is an effective avenue for vertical communication (from top to bottom and vice-versa) and sharing of decision-making. There is a shared sentiment among some of the faculty members that the university administration is imposing more centralized authority (regarding budget, hiring, use of space and technology) with limited communications from and to all impacted bodies. While it is true that the administration has monthly meetings with the deans of the schools, the information shared at these meetings is not systematically shared with the faculty or school administrators and other staff. In some cases, systems exist for such exchange, but the information is not regularly transmitted. We recommend increased communications from the deans to faculty, staff and students on all major issues discussed at the monthly meetings with the university administration. As a first step in this direction, we recommend that the tentative agendas for the president and deans meetings be made available to the university community a few days prior to each meeting.

This is also true within some of the schools. While there has been progress toward the establishment in all schools of monthly meetings of faculty with deans and administrative staff and increased student participation, the sharing of actual decision-making is still limited to one or two schools. In addition, there continues to be no uniform standard or practice for adequately capturing the voice of part-time faculty and staff. It is difficult for part-time faculty members to assume the extra responsibilities of committee services without adequate, additional compensation for serving on department and school-wide committees. At the present time, the Provost's office provides a \$250 stipend to part-time faculty in all schools if they attend at least four divisional and/or university-wide committee meetings. In addition, some schools may provide an additional stipend. These compensations, however, are too modest to encourage many part-time faculty members with other work commitments to participate in regular committee meetings. What is absent is a university-wide policy would help clarify the expectations and limits of a governance role for part-time faculty and staff and to insure adequate incentives for those willing to commit the time.

In academic year 2001-02, university faculty members from various schools met to discuss ways to play a more instrumental role in academic decision-making. The only formal mechanism until recently for direct faculty input to the president and university administration had been the Faculty Advisory Committee. Some faculty members expressed a concern that the president did not chair the FAC and that the Committee's "show and tell" formats and ambiguous advisory role made the process feel inconsequential. Moreover, it did not give the FAC members a role in shaping academic policies and procedures that affect the quality of teaching and learning. Specifically, an *ad hoc* group of faculty asked for: 1) more information from the administration before key decisions are made that are likely to affect them; 2) an independent faculty forum to exchange information across the different schools (there has never been a university-wide faculty senate); and 3) a direct way to provide input into what the officers and deans of the university are doing. Issues raised as important for faculty consideration included: the need for more transparency; enrollments; budgets; scholarships; research support; computer systems; inequities across the different divisional faculties; faculty and dean searches; appropriate use of search firms; administrative decisions regarding building closings; and the functioning of the library.

After weeks of meetings in the spring of 2002 between the president, provost and faculty representatives from the different schools, the following resolution regarding the implementation of new faculty governance structures was proposed by the *ad hoc* group of faculty and approved by the Faculty Advisory Committee: The FAC resolved to reform itself as an elected interim Faculty Senate for the 2002-03 academic year, charged with developing a permanent faculty governance structure for New School University. It was agreed that this interim body would consist of 25 representatives; six delegates from Parsons; four from The New School; three delegates each from Milano, the Graduate Faculty and Eugene Lang College; and two delegates each from the Actors Studio, Mannes College, and the Jazz Program.

A steering committee from the current body, which included representatives from all the schools, met subsequently with the president and provost to discuss the implementation of this interim faculty senate (or forum), including compensation for faculty representatives. The group resolved to convene an interim university Faculty/President's Committee composed of elected members from each division. Specifically:

1. This will be an interim committee, to meet from October 2002 through May 2003 and charged with overseeing the process of creating a permanent faculty governance structure. The goal is to have a permanent governance structure in place by fall 2003.
2. It was agreed that each division would hold elections to select the designated number of faculty representatives to the committee. In most cases, members of the committee felt that such elections could be conducted by October 1. However, in particular instances, such as that of the Mannes College, a somewhat later deadline seemed necessary. In such cases, interim appointments will be made from within the division until the elections are completed.
3. This new Faculty/President's Committee replaces the current Faculty Advisory Committee, which is now dissolved. The F/P Committee will meet with the president monthly to consider issues facing the university, as the FAC did, but it will also be charged with working with the president to establish a permanent faculty governing body.
4. Since the interim committee has a one-year mandate, all elections to the committee would be for one year only.
5. Each divisional representative on the *ad hoc* committee has been asked to provide a brief description of its proposed election process to the interim Faculty/President's Committee as soon as possible. It was agreed that such processes would differ across divisions, given the wide range in the nature of faculty appointments.

The Faculty/President's Committee met for the first time on October 14, 2002. The president and members of the Committee agreed that the elected faculty members would meet every two weeks *without* the president and once a month with the president.

Administration and Staff Development

In the last twenty-two months, the president has asked that each administrative office become more efficient and aim to provide only quality services. The goal is to provide better services to each dean, each school, every student, and to all individual employees. While this subcommittee did not complete a review of the university's administrative system, we do know that with the appointment of a new vice president for human resources last year, there has been considerable progress toward making existing personnel policies and procedures more user-friendly. A main objective for the human resources vice president has been to find ways to make NSU the employer of choice for qualified candidates. This means offering flexible benefits and compensation packages that can be adapted to peoples' evolving careers and lives and ultimately ensures that employees retire with dignity and comfort. There has been progress made on all these fronts.

Human Resources is currently seeking new ways to make sure the members of university across the different schools begin to know each other and associate as one community—i.e., create a university community. There are also firm plans to increase staff development to include not only activities that increase skills but also more peer-to-peer exchanges that permit the growth of learning communities and eliminate some of the existing sense of staff isolation.

Challenges

Human Resources. One priority of the human resources director and staff is to increase the connection between human resource functions and the faculty. Faculty personnel files reside with college deans and the Provost's office, making it less necessary for faculty, versus other employees, to associate directly with human resources. The relationship is growing between HR and individual faculty members who participate in events like benefits orientation.

University-Wide Issues. One area that needs attention is the persistent understaffing in administrative offices across the university and in all individual divisions. A second need is for incentives for faculty and senior staff to collaborate across schools. The president and provost have expressed strong support for having divisions collaborate, but existing disincentives—such as varying tuition rates across divisions—have proved difficult to overcome. There are some vehicles for divisional collaboration to occur, such as: the Faculty/President's Committee, Senior Staff meetings, Deans and Officers Meetings and University Seminars. In addition, there are an increasing number of cross-divisional initiatives either in place or in the planning stage—examples include the existing Graduate Faculty/The New School M.A./Ph.D. program collaboration and the proposed Environmental Studies program—a collaboration of Lang College, the Milano Graduate School, and The New School. (Further discussion can be found in Chapter 3.)

Recommendations

1. Strengthen the relationship between trustees/governors and faculty, senior staff and students. Faculty and staff should be encouraged to recommend ways for increasing their involvement in the decision-making process with trustees. For example, the trustees could invite faculty and senior staff (full and part-time) to participate in at least one meeting annually with one of the Boards of Governors and/or a full meeting of the Board of Trustees. Faculty and staff are routinely invited to trustee meetings now and to standing committees, but they are asked to report to the trustees, not to be active participants in a board conversation. Alternatively, faculty and senior staff with relevant expertise may be invited to participate in some of the meetings of standing trustee committees. When they are invited to participate, the meetings should be organized around major academic and/or administrative themes of interest to the faculty and/or staff. In addition, one or two trustees may also wish to participate in an annual meeting of the student advisory council. More forums could be created for interaction between students and trustees.
2. Encourage planned growth and share a clearly articulated vision for the future with the university community. What is the ideal relationship between revenue generation, mission and size of the university? The trustees have given high priority to strategic planning but should consider expanding their planning meetings to include joint strategic planning sessions with some faculty and staff. The trustees may want to consider holding a joint trustees/faculty/staff retreat every couple of years with representatives from each of the schools.
3. Create reliable and direct systems of communication and input between deans and faculty, staff and students. While it is true that university administration has monthly meetings with the deans, information shared at these meetings is not systematically shared. In some cases, systems exist for such exchange but the information is still not regularly transmitted. This is also true at the schools. In addition, while there has been progress toward the establishment in all schools of monthly meetings of faculty with deans and administrative staff and increased discussions with students, the sharing of actual decision-making is absent.
4. Reinforce the role of part-time faculty and staff in the university community through standardizing compensation for participation in existing and new governance structures. In addition to modest stipends (\$250) now available for committee service, there should be increased compensation for involvement in elected bodies such as the Faculty/President's Committee.
5. Establish a formal, direct link between the permanent faculty governance structure—the structure that will be established by the Faculty/President's Committee this academic year—and trustees. This new body will make great strides in increasing the voice of faculty in the university, but in order for this improvement to be substantive, this body should have direct contact with the trustees.