

Collegial Governance at Northeastern State University

Approved by: Northeastern State University Executive Cabinet
Responsible Official: Office of the Provost
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Related Policies:
Additional References:
[RUSO Policy and Procedures 1.25](#)
[RUSO Policy and Procedures 3.3](#)

POLICY

Collegial Governance at Northeastern State University¹

Adopted by NSU’s Faculty Association, Staff Council, Student Government Association and President’s Cabinet

The faculty, staff, students and administrators of Northeastern State University (NSU) believe in a collegial system of university governance, based on a concept of authority and responsibility shared among constituents. A collegial system has, as its fundamental principle, the concept of good faith consultation among these colleagues prior to decision making as stipulated below.

All constituents in the system, appropriate to their respective roles, can benefit from Collegial Governance. If good faith consultation among constituents exists, if decision-making authority is approached in an inclusive and responsible manner, and if all participants are committed to governance through a collegial system, then university goals and objectives can be more easily achieved to further the mission of the institution.

Under the collegial system, decision-making authority is delegated or assigned to the collegial group most expert in or responsible for the particular area in which the decision is made. However, the President is the Chief Executive Officer of the university as appointed by the Board of Regents of the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) and is statutorily responsible for the governance of the university. ([RUSO Policy and Procedures 1.25.1](#)) This document does not abridge this responsibility or authority.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A COLLEGIAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE

1. Colleague is defined as a university employee or student.
2. Leadership, reason, persuasion, and cooperation are the hallmarks of the collegial system.
3. All colleagues have the opportunity to participate, directly or through elected representatives, in the collegial process.
4. Good faith consultation and mutual respect among colleagues are fundamental principles of the collegial system.
5. When a decision is reached by the person responsible for making the decision, and that person has considered the recommendations and input made pursuant to this document, the decision is reached through the collegial process.

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6. All colleagues are bound equally by the results of the system and should abide by those decisions. Leaders (e.g., President, Vice Presidents, Provost, Faculty Council President, Staff Council Chair, deans, chairs, and President of Student Government Association) have a particular responsibility to implement the decisions of the system.
7. Academic freedom is an essential element of collegial governance, and nothing in this document restricts this at NSU. According to [RUSO Policy and Procedures 3.3](#), faculty are entitled to freedom regarding research and publication of that research and freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject. Faculty are to be objective in the teaching of controversial matters and have a responsibility to be accurate, exercise appropriate restraint, and show respect for the opinions of others.

The various constituent structures involved in collegial governance are comprised of:

President's Cabinet. The President's Cabinet is a decision making body regarding matters related to internal administration and operations of the university. It includes the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Student Affairs, Vice President for Business and Finance and Executive Director for Public Relations and Marketing. On policy matters, the Cabinet is a recommending body to the President. The Cabinet, as necessary, is assisted by the university's General Counsel.

Executive Council. The Executive Council includes members of the President's Cabinet, Faculty Council President, Staff Council Chair, NSGA President, Athletic Director, Special Assistant to the President, Director of Public Safety and the Executive Director of the NSU Foundation. The Executive Council provides an opportunity for each representative to bring issues, questions, and concerns for discussion.

Faculty Council. The Faculty Council is a legislative body of the Northeastern State Faculty Association and is designed to serve as a liaison between faculty and the administration to facilitate participation in the development of institutional policies and further the pursuit of the University's mission and goals. The final authority to speak for the faculty of the University still resides with the Faculty Association as a whole.

Staff Council. The Staff Council is a legislative body of the staff and serves as a liaison between the staff and the administration to facilitate participation in the development of institutional policies and further the pursuit of the University's mission and goals. The final authority to speak for the Staff of the university still resides with the university staff members.

Northeastern Student Government Association. The NSGA Executive Council represents the students' legislative body and serves as a liaison between the students and the administration to facilitate participation in the development of institutional policies and the pursuit of the University's mission and goals. The final authority to speak for the students of the university still resides with the Student Government Association as a whole.

Chair's Council. The Chair's Council facilitates communications among departments, colleges, and Academic Affairs to encourage consistency, creativity and interdisciplinary collaboration to further the university's mission and goals and those of the individual colleges and departments.

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University Policy Committee. This committee leads the review process for all proposed new/revise university-wide policies. The committee serves as a resource to university departments regarding policy development and implementation. This committee reviews, recommends and forwards policies to the Cabinet. Seven members with representation from multiple administrative areas to include: a representative from each Cabinet member's area (5), President of Faculty Council, Chair of Staff Council, plus General Counsel as ex officio.

I. PRINCIPLES OF COLLEGIAL GOVERNANCE AT NSU

- A. Final authority and responsibility for the welfare of Northeastern State University is vested in the President as appointed by the Board of Regents. The Board has delegated to the President the authority for effective management of the Institution (RUSO Policy and Procedures, 1.25).
- B. To the extent allowed by Board policy, collegial governance procedures and principles shall apply at all levels within NSU.
- C. Collegial governance utilizes informed participation and collaboration by faculty, students, staff and administrators.
- D. Faculty, staff, administration and students shall have opportunities to participate, according to existing university, RUSO, OSRHE, and state policy and guidelines, in recommendations that lead to decisions regarding:
 - 1. Mission and budget priorities for the University;
 - 2. Curriculum, course content and instruction;
 - 3. Research activities;
 - 4. Development of policies that affect faculty, staff, administration and student welfare generally;
 - 5. Development of human resources policies and procedures for exempt and non-exempt staff;
 - 6. Issues that affect the ability of students to complete their education; and
 - 7. Other issues that arise from time to time that affect the overall welfare of the university.
- E. Members of collegial governance bodies (i.e. Executive Committee, Faculty Council, Staff Council and NSGA, may be appointed or elected by constituents as outlined in appropriate handbooks or according to institutional policy).

II. PRACTICE OF COLLEGIAL GOVERNANCE

- A. NSU shall utilize its written procedures and organizational structures to provide for appropriate collaboration and communication between and among administration, faculty, staff and students. The structures and procedures shall be developed cooperatively, disseminated widely prior to adoption and reviewed periodically according to procedures and timelines established in the documents governing institutional practices.

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- B. The Colleagues shall recognize:
 - 1. The responsibility of administrators for forming and articulating a vision for the institution, for providing strategic leadership and for managing its human resources, finances and operations;
 - 2. The central role of the faculty in the institution's teaching, research and outreach programs, including the assessment of the quality of these activities through peer and external review in alignment with OSRHE policy;
 - 3. The essential support services provided by staff in facilitating the institution's mission and operations and the legitimate interest of the staff in participating in the development of policies and procedures that affect the welfare of the institution;
 - 4. That students are the university's main academic educational focus, and that they have a legitimate interest in matters affecting their ability to complete their education, including but not limited to costs of their education, assessment of progress and personal/social welfare.
 - 5. To the extent allowed by RUSO Policy, that there is a role for each group in the search for key institutional administrators, faculty and staff.

- C. University organizational charts, decision-making processes and policies shall address the role of non-tenured and non-tenure track, part-time, adjunct and other faculty ranks as established by Regent's policy. The President and other university-wide administrators shall seek regular input with the university's constituents through the use of organizational structures and committees.

- D. The President shall encourage collegial governance, based upon the principles and practices in this concept paper, is appropriately implemented in all sub-units.

- E. Effective implementation of collegial governance shall be a component of evaluations of administrators in the institution, except for the university president. Section 1.25.4 of RUSO policy determines the evaluation of the university president.

- F. All participants share with the President and NSU's leadership responsibility for:
 - 1. Being informed on issues that confront higher education,
 - 2. Acting within time constraints that are imposed by external agencies and influences, sometimes with little or no notice;
 - 3. Sharing appropriate information and providing timely feedback;
 - 4. Recognizing the specific goals and needs of the institution, and being accountable to the constituencies represented; and
 - 5. Distinguishing the roles played by various units and individuals in decision making and administration.

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- G. Given the dynamic nature of institutional governance, it is understood:
1. There will be occasions when university leaders must act in the best interest of the institution on major issues affecting the university constituencies without full benefit of the collegial governance process. In such cases, the representative bodies shall be informed in a timely manner.
 2. Administrators will inform constituencies in a timely manner of decisions. Constituents may inquire as to the factors that impacted that decision. Constituents may present a written statement of differing positions and/or any objections to the decision as part of the university's record on the issue.
- H. Faculty, staff and all students, are encouraged to express their opinions freely on all matters through professional and respectful dialogue. Administrators, including faculty, holding administrative appointments are encouraged to express their opinions freely in professional and respectful dialogue, but once a decision is reached, they are expected to implement policy as determined by the university leadership.
- I. Collegial governance requires a commitment of resources such as technology access, small office supplies and time from the constituencies. The university shall provide access to an appropriate level of resources, as determined by the President, to faculty, staff and students to allow them to carry out their collegial governance responsibilities effectively.
- J. Collegial Governance applies whenever decision making broadly affects or has implications for the university community and for the purpose of communication transparency at all times.

While participation in governance by faculty, staff, administration and students is necessary and important for the well-being of the University, the final responsibility for decision-making rests with the President. The President or his/her designee is governed by the regulations of the RUSO Board, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) and the Oklahoma State Statutes.

¹ Northern Kentucky University. "Collegial Governance at Northern Kentucky University," accessed October 24, 2013, <http://facultysenate.nku.edu/resources/paper.html>