GW | Faculty Senate

A RESOLUTION ON PROCESS FOR POLICY REVISIONS (25/2)

WHEREAS, the George Washington University (GW) has developed many policies in order to deliver and fulfill its educational and research missions, guiding university decision-making over important issues that significantly affect faculty, staff, and students;

WHEREAS, the leadership of GW often consults with the faculty in the formulation of these policies, as is required by shared governance principles, and highlights these consultations in public-facing documents and discussions of policies at the university;

WHEREAS, effective policy making, particularly within a higher educational institution, requires an adequate period of stakeholder deliberations and public comment to ensure that all voices are effectively represented, enhancing policy efficacy, transparency, and legitimacy;

WHEREAS, hasty policymaking at GW has led to errors in policy formulation, confusion about the meaning of new policies, and inadvertent policy noncompliance as faculty, staff, and students do not know or understand new policies;

WHEREAS, narrow and/or last-minute consultation is often ineffective and risks judgment errors in policy formulation as important voices and perspectives are not heard and incorporated given that the faculty cannot provide consultation unless there is sufficient time to bring their expertise and perspective to bear on important issues;

WHEREAS, shared governance principles underline the importance of faculty and its role as core to the university's research and educational mission[1] and the university leadership has repeatedly and publicly underlined the unique importance of faculty and its role as the core of the university mission;[2] and

WHEREAS, these shared governance principles are well established and consistently promoted by the Faculty Senate;[3]

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE FACULTY SENATE OF THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

1. Encourages and expects the university leadership to uphold shared governance principles and strengthen its partnership with the faculty by *meaningfully* consulting on all policies that affect faculty and students, especially as these may pertain to the educational and research mission of the university;

2. Defines the term "consultation with the faculty" in areas of policy as including four elements: (1) that there are adequate opportunities for the members of the Faculty Senate, its Standing Committees, and/or any special committee or subcommittee formed by the Senate to provide written comments and

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[1] cf. The Role and Composition of the Executive Committee: PEAF report with recommendations, footnote 3

[2] cf. appendix 1

[3] Senate Resolutions 24/9, 22/13, 20/3

meet with the committees drafting new or revised policies from the very beginning of the process; (2) the policies are publicly posted and a formal notice is sent to members of the Senate and its Standing Committees that a period of public comment has begun; (3) this public posting provides at least 60 days of review before the policy being approved and/or posted as active; (4) that feedback from faculty is meaningfully addressed and responded to before the relevant policy is implemented or announced as university policy;

3. Encourages university leadership to continue any informal, ad hoc, and/or confidential practices of conversation and information gathering as may be needed, especially in areas that may be sensitive or disproportionately affect particular groups of faculty and students; provided, however, that these informal conversations shall not, on their own, be construed as consultation;

4. Recommends that except in exceptional cases, policies drafted during the summer are provided with at least 60 days' notice such that Standing Committees can be brought together to discuss and provide comments during periods of leave; in these "exceptional cases," the Provost (or Provost's designee) should be responsible for preparing a memo to be sent simultaneously to the FSEC Chair and to the most relevant Standing Senate committees outlining why such a case is exceptional and requires a truncated period of pre-implementation review. The memo should also outline the administration's plan for continued consultation on the policy in question;

5. Discourages the university community from representing a policy as the product of consultation with the faculty unless the requirements for consultation described in Resolving Clause 2 above are satisfied;

6. Discourages all members of the university community, including faculty, staff, students, administration, Trustees, alumni, and neighbors from confusing "consultation" with either "agreement" or "endorsement," each of which is a higher standard usually requiring a vote of the Faculty Senate, the Faculty Assembly, or a relevant Standing Committee depending on the nature of the issue, the norms surrounding policymaking in the area, and the issue's scope;

7. Recognizes that in exceptional circumstances, rapid decisions need to be made. However, on this definition "consultation with the faculty" has not occurred unless a Faculty Senate passes a resolution describing the exceptional case as having included consultation with the faculty. In the absence of such a resolution, we discourage the university community from representing the policy as having occurred with consultation with the faculty; and

8. Recognizes that new interpretations of policies or latent policies often emerge that are not official policies, such as those on the Free Expression website[4], and recommends extending the procedures on consultation outlined here to those new interpretations or proposed policies.

Professional Ethics and Academic Freedom Committee
September 3, 2024

Adopted as amended by the Faculty Senate
September 13, 2024

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[4] [FAQs](#)

Appendix 1:

<u>Ellen Granberg and Chris Bracey to GW faculty, June 10, 2024.</u>

"As we look toward the future, we are continuing to think deeply about how we, an educational institution with a renowned faculty and a community of passionate and committed advocates, can and should engage with each other and with global crises. We must continue to foster an inclusive and supportive community built on the values of mutual respect, free expression, and critical dialogue.

We launched the <u>Strengthening Our Community in Challenging Times</u> plan earlier this year as a starting point for these efforts. In the wake of the recent protests, it is clear that the ideals outlined within it remain essential, and additional work needs to be done this summer to prepare for our community's return in the fall. **Therefore, this summer, we will convene faculty-led working groups, each assigned to a topic related to a community challenge. These groups will be charged with providing recommendations by mid-August about how our community should approach the topic in the coming academic year.** GW's faculty are vital to our continued success as a global research institution, and we strongly believe that your leadership in this work is critical. The breadth and depth of your expertise mean that you are uniquely positioned to help our community understand the complex issues at play and provide solutions to enable us to move forward together….
Our hope is to receive reports, recommendations, suggestions, or any work product generated by the working group by mid-August so that we might integrate components into our university planning for the fall semester." [emphasis in the original]

<u>President Granberg to Faculty Senate, May 10, 2024</u>
"Affirmed that she does not think the administration is empowered to invent policies out of whole cloth. In fact, much of what the administration has been struggling with is the fact that GW policies were not followed; the university is now seeing the results of that. This experience emphasizes that **it is tremendously important to develop policies as a community** and then to adhere to them as a community." [emphasis added]

<u>Provost Bracey to the Faculty Senate, February 9, 2024</u>
"Affirmed that, if changes to existing policies or new policies are needed, he would want to bring in the relevant Senate committees (e.g., Education Policy & Technology (EPT)) to help with that work"