

Senate ad hoc Committee on Renewal - Interim Report

January 22, 2015

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Preamble

Our Committee's mission is to examine the state of governance at Western focusing on collegial governance—both as it is constituted in official documents and as it is experienced by members of the university community. The final report will include recommendations for change. A list of the members of the Committee can be found in Appendix I. The Committee's terms of reference, as determined by Senate, can be found in Appendix II.

Our explicit focus is the university Senate, one part of Western's bicameral governance structure (alongside the Board of Governors). The assumption that collegial governance at Western can be improved is a premise that underpins the creation of our Committee. We recognize that an important challenge in producing recommendations will be to balance the often competing needs of broad and meaningful collegial consultation on the one hand, and institutional efficiency on the other.

Although much of the information collected speaks directly to Senate governance, some participants in town halls and one-on-one consultations have chosen to speak at length about collegial governance at the division, department and/or Faculty level. We have been open to this broad range of input based upon our assumption that collegial governance in other campus contexts may both reflect and reproduce governance patterns at Senate.

This is an interim report and, as such, the committee will continue to solicit comments and suggestions from the university community through a variety of mechanisms until the end of April 2016. We welcome submissions on all issues relating to governance at Western, including but not limited to those listed below under the heading "Themes."

Process

In its July organizational meetings, the Committee determined that both a review of Senate documents (including The UWO Act (1982; 1988) and the 1996 review of that act, bylaws, and Senate committee terms of reference) and extensive consultations with the university community to determine the lived experience of collegial governance at Western were necessary in order to carry out the tasks assigned by Senate. The Committee reviewed the corresponding documents in August. A website on the Secretariat homepage was established in September to serve as a collection point for communications with the Committee. By the beginning of the fall academic term, calls for submissions were made through a variety of channels. These included:

- E-mail requests to campus organizations and groups to provide written submissions and follow-up consultation meetings (a list of these can be found in Appendix III),
- A broadcast e-mail to the community at large,
- Targeted e-mails to current and former Senators, including principals of the Affiliates,
- Advertisements in *The Western News* and *The Gazette* (print and online) on two occasions,
- A link to our website was published in the electronic *Western Alumni News*
- Open town hall meetings with each Faculty throughout the Fall Term (also listed in Appendix III),
- One-on-one consultations with members of the community who indicated an interest in talking with a Committee member.

The Committee's objective was to provide multiple avenues for feedback to ensure that the voices of all who wished to address the Committee and the issues within its purview would be heard. An executive summary of the objectives of the Committee, along with an overview of Western's governance structure (Appendix IV), was made available to the community as a whole through the Committee's website and was distributed to participants prior to and at town hall meetings.

Each town hall meeting and consultation began with a summary of our Committee's task and an invitation to discuss collegial governance and share experiences. The Committee invited feedback from those participating without expressly soliciting problems or issues. The majority of those who have spoken with us have shared their frustration with governance processes and the resulting negative experiences. However, the Committee was also pleased to hear suggestions for improvement and we hope to share those in our final report.

During November and December 2015, the Committee compiled its document reviews, commentary from its consultations, and information received via its website to identify emerging themes regarding the current state of collegial governance and the Senate, including suggestions about how to move forward and address challenges.

Progress to date

The Committee has received a wide range of opinions from a variety of different constituencies across the university. We are confident that we have achieved the **breadth** of consultation that Senate directed, and we are appreciative of the many comments and suggestions received to date. However, the Committee had hoped for a greater **depth** of participation in our consultations to complement the breadth we have achieved.

Over the course of our consultations, the Committee has heard a variety of reasons as to why some members of the university community have chosen not to participate in our process. Some of these include:

- Several constituencies had already been polled by their representatives prior to the Committee's town halls and meetings. In these cases, constituents may have been confident that their input would be adequately delivered by the representative(s).
- Some community members may fail to see how the Committee's activities are relevant to them. This impression may be due to a lack of understanding about Senate, collegial governance processes, or how Senate's activities might affect their day-to-day life. Education about and communications from Senate are two issues we will address in our final report.
- A sense of disenfranchisement and cynicism may have led some people to disengage from the collegial governance process. Disengagement is one of the most important challenges that our recommendations will address.

Nonetheless, during the course of our consultations, a number of themes and issues were raised repeatedly across a broad range of Faculties, campus units, and organizations. We feel confident that the "Themes" we have identified below reflect the major concerns of the Western community.

Themes

Following each consultation, the Committee debriefed to discuss predominant messages that had been expressed. Across all constituents and all forms of submission (written documents, town halls, meetings with leadership groups, one-on-one consultations), we heard experiences and concerns regarding five predominant themes:

1. Engagement
2. Transparency
3. Consultation and Communication
4. Representation
5. Culture and Leadership

While participants held varying views on these issues, the following sub-themes were pervasive across the consultations and align with at least one, if not more, of the major themes. Our goal at this interim point is to bring these views forward to Senate and to the university community more broadly. We welcome continued discussion as we move towards the final report.

Awareness of Senate's Role and Impact:

- For many in our community, the work of Senate and particularly of its committees is a mystery.
- Many do not know how to interpret Senate's decisions with regard to how they may impact their daily work.
- People are aware that information about Senate's work is available online but many are unsure where and how to find it.
- Documents are not 'layperson-friendly.'
- Many are not aware that they may observe Senate meetings at any time.

Engagement in Senate:

- Senate is perceived as a body of 'received knowledge' where questions are not welcome.
- Senate's role is seen as that of a rubber stamp and, as a result, even many Senators have disengaged.
- It is difficult to get faculty members to run in Senate elections, leaving Deans and Faculty nominating committees to fill vacancies.

Preparation of Senators and Representation on Senate:

- Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of Senators is needed, especially a clearer sense of Senators' accountability and connection to their constituency.
- More robust training and mentoring of Senators is needed, particularly for student Senators who, at times, do not feel prepared to participate fully.
- Some Senators are not prepared prior to meetings and appear not to take the job seriously.
- The value of serving as a Senator needs to be recognized in the Senators' home units and respected across the campus.
- Senators are largely strangers to one another, venues are needed for inter-Senator communication.
- Multiple groups believe that they are not represented (or not adequately represented) in the Senate and feel that the current makeup of Senate needs to change.
- During our consultations, Senate voted to add discussion and follow-up questions to the current question period at Senate. Some people indicated that they hoped this might spark further debate and engagement at Senate.

Senate Committees and Subcommittees:

- Most in the university community are unaware that the work of Senate is largely done at the committee level.
- The mandate and reporting structure of Senate subcommittees is not well understood.
- Decisions of Senate, its committees and subcommittees and the reasons behind those decisions are not communicated transparently or clearly to the university community.
- Terms of reference and membership of Senate committees should be revisited for mandate and representativeness and this should be done regularly.
- Senators' service on Senate committees promotes engagement and ensures broader understanding of governance, yet there is a sense that committee members are often not prepared for meaningful participation and some Senators do not serve on any committees.

Senate and Board of Governors

- The two governance bodies in our bicameral system are isolated from one another, and mechanisms to enable more effective collaboration between them need to be put into place.
- Senate and Board members who are cross-appointed to the two bodies should have specific responsibilities delineated including a reporting role.

Collegial Governance and the current Post-Secondary Environment

- In the current fiscal environment, academic decisions increasingly have a fiscal component, requiring more direct interaction and consultation between our two governing bodies.
- Given the fiscal environment, tough academic decisions must be made. Having the necessary discussion is critical, but so is reaching the decision. A balance is needed.

Campus Culture and Leadership

- Trust has been broken: trust that our leaders and Senators are acting in the best interest of their constituents, trust that people's voices are being heard, and trust that committees are representative and transparent in their decision making.
- Problems in collegial governance derive from the style of leadership or as a response to changes occurring across the post-secondary sector and not necessarily from the governance structure itself.
- There is a sense that the university, at virtually all levels of administration, has increasingly abandoned true consultation in favour of "executive decisions." As a result, the campus community no longer feels invested in major campus initiatives.
- Information from a variety of administrative levels is not communicated effectively; the lines of communication are often perceived as rigid, one-way and hierarchical.

Next steps

Several consultations remain to be completed and the Committee will continue to examine and evaluate the information gathered to date. This process will include a further examination of Senate and Senate subcommittee policies, bylaws and terms of reference in order to identify areas for improvement in light of the themes that have emerged from our consultations. Our ultimate goal will be to identify structural changes that can ensure on-going, effective collegial governance.

Since this interim report is now available to the Western community, we also invite feedback as we prepare our recommendations on: 1) how to improve collegial governance at Western and, 2) how Senate can best serve our university community in the current provincial, federal and international climate for post-secondary institutions. We request that Senators offer us their feedback, as well as speak to their constituencies about this document and solicit their input. Additional comments and suggestions can be sent to the committee's email senate-renewal-cttee@uwo.ca or to any member of the committee.

Appendix I

Committee Membership

At its June 2015 meeting, nine members were elected by the Senate to comprise this ad hoc committee:

Betsy Skarakis-Doyle (chair)	faculty	Health Sciences
Emily Addison	undergraduate	Huron University College
Heather Bishop	PMA	Alumni Relations
Alison Hearn	faculty	FIMS
Lorelei Lingard	faculty	Schulich
Steve Lupker	faculty	Social Science
Sheila Macfie (vice chair)	faculty	Science
Mark McDayter	faculty	Arts & Humanities
Vacant, to be refilled in January	graduate student	
Irene Birrell (ex officio, non-voting)		

* The committee wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Professor Greg Kopp, Arjun Singh, and Tom McMurrough

Appendix II

Senate ad hoc Committee on Renewal Terms of Reference

Mission: To facilitate and collect the flow of information from all sectors and to make recommendations to the Senate, and through Senate to provide advice to the Board, with regard to moving the University of Western Ontario forward.

Membership: nine members chosen by Senate, four of whom will be faculty members (not including deans or associate/assistant deans), and two of whom will be student Senators (one graduate, one undergraduate).

Terms of reference:

1. To make recommendations that will establish more robust and transparent decision making practices and processes at Western
2. To receive comments and recommendations from across campus and from the affiliated university colleges and to determine ways forward that are beneficial to the whole community
3. The committee is given the following specific tasks:
 - (a) a full review of the state of governance at Western focusing on collegial governance and the role of Senate, including a review of the constitutional documents of Senate including the by-laws and regulations, the terms of reference of all committees, and a review of the development of agendas for Senate meetings;
 - (b) such other matters that arise during its investigations with respect to the enumerated tasks of the committee.

Timeline

The committee shall constitute itself as soon as possible, and report back to Senate with a preliminary report in January 2016 and a final report by the end of the academic year of 2015-16.

Approved by Senate, June 5, 2015

Appendix III

Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Renewal

Fall Meeting Schedule as at December 9, 2015

Date	Event	Guests
Sep 23	Consultation & Committee Meeting	Campus Council
Sep23	Town Hall	Arts and Humanities
Sep 24	Committee Meeting	
Sep 29	Town Hall	Engineering
Oct 1	Consultation & Committee Meeting	UWOFA/UWOFA-LA; SOGS
Oct 2	Town Hall	Science
Oct 15	Consultation & Committee Meeting	USC; UWOSA; PAW
Oct 23	Town Hall	Health Sciences
Oct 27	Town Hall	Music
Oct 28	Town Hall	FIMS
Oct 30	Committee Meeting	
Nov 2	Town Hall	Education
Nov 5	Consultation & Committee Meeting	PMA
Nov 11	Town Hall	Social Science
Nov 12	Town Hall	Law
Nov 17	Town Hall	Libraries
Nov 20	Consultation & Committee Meeting	Alumni Association
Nov 27	Consultation & Committee Meeting	Student Senators
Nov 30	Town Hall	Schulich
Dec 1	Consultation	Deans
Dec 3	Committee Meeting	
Dec 4	Consultation	AVPs and Vice-Provosts
Dec 7	Town Hall	Ivey
Dec 9	Committee meeting	
Dec 11	Committee meeting	
Dec 17	Committee meeting	
Jan 11	Consultation	P/VPs

Appendix IV

The following was made available through the Committee's website and was distributed to participants prior to and at town hall meetings.

Summary of the Governance Structure at Western and Our Objectives

The Task

The Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Renewal was struck in June 2015 in response to concerns about the effectiveness of the governance bodies and lack of university community participation in the decision making processes at Western. The Committee's full terms of reference can be found here http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/senate/renewal_cttee/Ad%20Hoc%20Committee%20on%20Renewal%20-%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20and%20Membership.pdf, but, in summary, we have been asked to review governance at Western, with particular focus on collegial governance and the role of Senate. We have been asked to review the constitutional documents of Senate and to consult widely within the campus community. The intent is that the Committee's work and recommendations will lead to more robust and transparent decision making processes and practices.

The Committee has determined that a review of constitutional documents, in and of itself, is necessary but not sufficient in order to accomplish our goals. We are most interested in understanding, through broad community consultation, how the lived experience of governance at Western maps onto our constitutional policies and procedures.

Process

Through the fall, we will conduct the document review and consult with members of the university community, seeking to identify the gaps between stated policy and procedure and actual practice. Following this we will make recommendations that will bridge those gaps, either by more appropriately implementing current regulations or by adopting better practices. To that end, we are planning a series of meetings – large and small – to hear from a range of constituencies, with the hope that members of the community will help us to identify the challenges they experience and propose solutions for consideration. In addition to face-to-face meetings, we have established a dedicated e-mail address to which input can be sent.

Our Governance Structure

Western, like most Canadian Universities, is an autonomous, non-profit organization created by Provincial legislation, in our case, 'The University of Western Ontario Act'. The Act provides for a bicameral structure (two bodies) to govern the institution, the Board of Governors and the Academic Senate. As such, the Act specifies that governance at Western is a shared process and responsibility. As the 1996 review of the Act

by a joint Board/Senate committee stipulates, an emphasis on collegial decision making is consistent with “the University’s character as a public, collegial enterprise” (Final Report of Review of UWO Act,1996).

The following is a brief description of our governing bodies:

- The Board has 28 members comprised largely of individuals external to the community, although nine of its members re faculty, staff or students from the university. It is responsible for “the government, conduct, management and control of the University and of its property and affairs.” (UWO Act)
- The Senate has 103 voting members, comprised of 77 elected faculty, staff, students and individuals from the general community.) Further, there are 23 ex officio members including: the President, who serves as Chair, all Vice Presidents and Deans, Principals of the Affiliates, etc. The University Secretary sits as a non-voting member on both bodies. The Act grants the Senate responsibility for academic policy and for specific academic matters, including admission standards, programs of study, qualifications for degrees, examinations, scholarships and convocation.
- Although Senate and the Board are differently constituted, with different areas of responsibility, they are intended to work together to govern the university. Interactions between the two bodies occur as a result of: 1) there being an overlap of members, e.g., Board members sit on Senate and Senate nominates members to sit on the Board, 2) the bodies acting in advisory capacities for each other, 3) the requirement of joint approval of certain strategic and policy documents and decisions.
- Both bodies have standing committees to carry out the detailed work deriving from their respective responsibilities.
- The Act provides that meetings of both bodies are open to the public and are so advertised; however, confidential matters may be discussed in closed-door sessions.
- The Senate and Board by-laws set forth the procedure by which business is brought to each body for discussion and action if required. Those by-laws are supplemented by Sturgis’ Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure.

Detailed information about the governance structure, standing committees, election procedures, etc., can be found on the University Secretariat’s website: www.uwo.ca/univsec. In addition, staff in the Secretariat would be pleased to answer questions or provide additional information upon request.