

Unions and University Governance

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Two key arguments

- Collegial governance is under incredible stress because of internal and external pressures to universities
- The preservation of meaningful collegial governance increasingly rests on strong faculty associations

Collegial governance

- A distinctive form of shared decision-making
 - Academic: Curriculum design, program development, establishment of centres, departments, research institutes, and academic policy more generally
 - Personnel: Recruitment, renewal, and evaluation of faculty members and senior administrators, as appropriate
- Collegial \neq congenial
- Collegial governance is under pressure
 - External pressure from government, corporate interests
 - Internal pressure from Boards, senior administrators

Paradox of unions and university governance

- The introduction of faculty unions in Canada was perceived by many as an existential threat to collegial governance
- Paradoxically, faculty associations have become one of the few sources of power left to defend robust and meaningful collegial governance
 - Unions use collective bargaining to mandate consultation, negotiation, representation, and shared decision-making on a whole host of issues
 - Unions use legally-binding grievance procedures to contest administrative overreach and violations of collegial governance
 - Unions can safeguard collegial governance by actively organizing and mobilizing members to fill key service roles and by fighting to strengthen collegial governance structures

Structures at Brock U

University Governance

- Bicameral system of university governance: Board + Senate
- Full-time teaching staff constitute a majority at Senate
- Senate Chair & Vice-Chair elected by the body

Faculty Association

- Certified union
- Represents all full-time faculty and professional librarians in one bargaining unit
- Certain rights to participation, consultation & negotiation embedded in collective agreement
- Active organizing beyond the collective agreement

Collective agreement provision examples

- Article 4 Policies and Practices
 - 4.06: If, in the University's view, a proposed new or amended policy or practice affects the terms and conditions of employment of members, then the policy or practice must be negotiated with the Union prior to implementation...If any part of the new or amended policy or practice conflicts with or is inconsistent with the Collective Agreement, the Collective Agreement shall prevail.
- Article 12 Rights and Responsibilities of Members
 - 12.02: The University and the Union recognize the importance of member consultation and participation in the selection processes to fill senior academic administrative positions. Members have the right to serve on search committees for senior administrative positions and Associate Deans/Associate University Librarians, as provided for in University policy governing those searches. All such search committees shall include self-identified members of equity-seeking groups to the extent possible
- Letter of Understanding:
 - The Parties agree that, during the life of this Collective Agreement, no substantial changes shall be made to the Policy on the Appointment of Academic Administrators and its associated procedures document...

Concrete wins at Senate

- Wrestled away academic program prioritization from the President's Office
- Asserted control over program pauses
- Secured common submission date for final grades
- Guaranteed growth of full-time teaching staff positions on Senate if any ex-officio positions are added
- Beat back ill-advised recommendations for governance reform brought forward by an external consultant as apart of a mandated provincial government review

How to get started?

- Break down self-imposed barriers between union issues and Senate issues
- Organize and mobilize around Senate as a complement to union action — not a substitute for it
- Small victories build confidence to take on larger battles