

formal faculty meetings, as well as serving food at breaks and perhaps box lunches for breakout group conversations, will further differentiate this conversation from regular faculty meetings.

Such conversations might be organized around topics such as a new strategic planning or master planning process, the pressures on the budget, the relationship between the curriculum and the co-curriculum, the goals of a future capital campaign, enrollment and retention, or the most desirable size for the institution. The conversations serve a twofold purpose. First, they inform the faculty about the state of the institution and explain the context, both internal and external, for administrative and board decisions. Second, the president and members of the administration benefit from hearing the faculty's thoughts about decisions that are yet to be made. In other words, what is most important in these conversations is that the president and vice presidents both be forthcoming with pertinent information and actually listen to and take into account what faculty members are saying. In some instances, the president might bring in an outside expert to provide a broader context for the discussion. In other cases, the president or vice presidents may provide that context, as long as they keep their presentations brief.

### Shared Governance

Because every campus culture is, as I've noted earlier, idiosyncratic, so is the way that the institution practices shared governance. But some notions are pretty standard, particularly those that derive from the *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*, 1966, which was later adopted by the American Association of University Professors, the American Council on Education, and the Association of Governing Boards (section 4, paragraph 4).

For example, it is standard practice for the board to charge the president with developing a vision for the future, a slate of evolving strategic priorities, and fundraising plans. It is also standard practice for the board to delegate functions and powers it considers

appropriate to the president and through the president to subordinate administrative officers and the faculty. The president is also usually charged with ensuring that the institution adheres operationally to standards of sound academic practice and ensures that, in the areas of shared governance, the board understands the full range of faculty views and the faculty understands the decisions and views of the board.

Moreover, just as the board delegates responsibility for leading and managing the institution to the president, the board and the president delegate primary responsibility for the curriculum, methods of instruction, degree requirements, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life that relate to the educational process, to the faculty. According to the AAUP document, here the president and the board normally "concur with the faculty judgment except in rare instances and for compelling reasons." In such instances, it is good practice for the president to explain to the faculty the reason for such a decision.

What does vary from campus to campus is how these notions are implemented. On some campuses, the president chairs the faculty meetings; on others, the provost, the academic vice president, the academic dean, or a faculty member takes the role of chair. Some institutions have faculty senates. On some of those campuses, it is customary for the president to interact with the faculty senate; on others, the faculty senate operates separately from the president, often working with the chief academic officer. Some faculties meet as a whole monthly, others less often. Some may meet more often. On some campuses, the president, the chief financial officer, and the chief academic officer shape the annual operating budget. On some campuses that group includes all the vice presidents. On yet others, faculty, staff, and students are members of the group crafting the budget, which it then recommends to the president, who in turn recommends it to the board. Faculty participation in board meetings varies from campus to campus too. On some campuses, they have no role at all; on others, they serve on trustee committees and have

at least one representative serving *ex officio* on the board, often with voice but not vote.

My own favorite story about faculty governance comes from a president who no longer wanted to chair faculty meetings so that she could participate in the discussions more easily. She brought this up with the faculty, making it clear that she would be content for either the provost or the chair of the faculty senate to chair the meetings. The faculty deliberated for several months and then voted down her request, with faculty leaders telling her privately that many of them feared that if she no longer chaired faculty meetings, she would stop attending them.

But no matter how campuses practice shared governance, what is important is that the president not only communicate regularly with the faculty but also actively engage and listen to those faculty selected by their peers to be in leadership positions during conversations about matters of academic importance.

## **The President and the Staff**

I recommend that presidents hold a variation on the faculty conversation with staff members. The goal here is similar: to share information with the staff about matters of institutional importance and listen to their ideas. To accommodate staff members who work different shifts, presidents might offer two sessions of perhaps ninety minutes each. Again, I encourage the president to describe briefly the state of the college and then listen to the thoughts about impending decisions. Because some staff members hesitate to ask questions publicly, in advance of these meetings the president might invite the staff to email questions or even send them anonymously by campus mail.

Staff members often feel second-class to the faculty, but good presidents recognize their value to the institution, students, faculty, alumni, and more. Indeed, staff members on the proverbial front lines are often the ones who work most closely with students. Some