

Running head: Shared Governance during a Transition from a Community College to a 4-Year College: How are the Faculty Impacted?

**Shared Governance during a Transition from a Community College to a 4-Year College:
How are the Faculty Impacted?**

Winifred Jumbo

College of Education, Northern Arizona University

CCHE 580 The Community College

Dr. Susan Kater

September 26, 2021

Running head: Shared Governance during a Transition from a Community College to a 4-Year College: How are the Faculty Impacted?

The students, faculty, staff and administration of a college serve very important roles, whether by attending the institution, teaching the students, maintaining operations or leading the movement of changes. I would like to explore how practicing good and fair shared governance with faculty is extremely important to the well-being and growth of a community college. I'm going to use Diné College as an example in my paper. Recently, Diné College transitioned from a 2-year community college to a 4-year college. The College has always served students, so they may attain their certificate or associate degrees with faculty primarily focusing on teaching. There have been several administration changes at Diné College, but the purpose of serving the Navajo Nation has been a driving factor for the higher educational institution.

As many community colleges continue to transition to baccalaureate-granting institutions, it's very common for faculty to see a major transition in their roles and responsibilities at a college, which brings forth critical factors in the shared governance. Diné College was one of many colleges who recently developed "the four-year itch" (Martinez, 2019). Diné College was very relatable to the article entitled, "The Rules Change: Exploring Faculty Experiences and Work Exceptions Within a Drifting Community College Context" written by E. Martinez. Faculty at Diné College almost only engaged in teaching courses every semester without any additional expectations. Full-time faculty at Diné College were allowed to teach courses with overload pay, if needed, prior to the change of status to a 4-year baccalaureate-granting institution. There were small incentives for faculty when they served on various committees when Diné College was a community college, but that is currently included in their service expectations, so incentives for serving on committees is not readily available. That is one small example of change in the atmosphere for full-time faculty. There is not much room for overload pay and there was a drastic reduction in adjunct faculty at Diné College.

Running head: Shared Governance during a Transition from a Community College to a 4-Year College: How are the Faculty Impacted?

When the change in status of Diné College occurred, so did the faculties' responsibilities. As I have learned, "the three basic tenets of faculty work include teaching, research, and service (Martinez, 2019). At Diné College, faculty were aware of their responsibilities of teaching courses by way of a 9-month contract prior to the transition. After the transition was made, there were greater expectations such as research and some service. Faculty were given an opportunity to apply for a tenure track/ranking, enter 2-year contracts and be granted titles, such as, "Associate Professor" or "Professor." As mentioned in the in the Martinez article, "the change in faculty recruitment, roles, and rewards has the most clear and direct impact on faculty work lives ([46]). Some of the status-oriented shifts faculty experience within striving contexts include heightened research expectations, new surveillance measures (e.g., impact rates), alignment of promotion and tenure with higher research and publication expectations, and intense pressure to secure externally funded research grants and prestigious fellowships and awards ([37]); ([46]); ([46]); ([46]); ([46])" (Martinez, 2019). With proper communication among the college leadership and faculty it's very vital to share the ongoing plans of the college. In the case of faculty, there is a population of faculty who have been at the college for numerous years, who are comfortable with the primary purpose of teaching, as opposed to the incoming new faculty who are more comfortable with the new expectations, which include teaching, research and service, as mentioned above. How does a college maintain balance among all the faculty? At Diné College, there seems to be two populations of faculty. Those who are comfortable with the changes and those show a bit of resistance to the changes in expectations, because they are comfortable with the community college structure.

Faculty play a key role in shared governance. Proper communication among the entire college community will help provide a smooth transition of changes in the larger academic

Running head: Shared Governance during a Transition from a Community College to a 4-Year College: How are the Faculty Impacted?

community, such as transitioning to a 4-year college. There were obvious heightened work expectations for faculty at Diné College, so clear communication was expected and needed. As Kelderman discussed, shared governance is “under attack” because more faculty believe policy decisions are conducted unilaterally by leadership, financial pressures are placed on colleges and donors play a key factor in controlling faculty appointments (Kelderman, 2016). The examples of unshared governance in some colleges have allowed for America to strive to democratize higher education (Kelderman, 2016). By having more representation of accountability in higher education for shared governance, there might be a decrease in tensions amount faculty and leadership. When transitioning an entire institution, one must consider all the details, so the entire college community feels comfortable, “it’s not just about waking up one morning and sating okay now we’re a four-year school, what does that mean? As with most forms of organizational change, tensions are likely to surface, yet there are ways they can be alleviated” (Martinez, 2019). The college leadership should use shared governance to deliver a careful explanation of how the faculties positions and duties will be impacted. Martinez states, “honest critical conversations about such shifts and aspirations might mean for faculty, as well as other stakeholders, are imperative. Discussion should consider faculty who have been at the college for significant amount of time, those who may be caught in the middle of the transition, as well as incoming faculty” (Martinez, 2019). During the transition phase, the new scholarship of teaching should be thoroughly discussed in an open manner within the college community and other areas of importance like policies and procedures should reflect the important changes of the faculty’s role and responsibilities in a timely manner.

As the new transition was taking place at Diné College, it was interesting to observe that there was no change in the mission of the institution. The mission statement remained the same, but Martinez writes, “redefining or changing an institution’s mission affects faculty and their work.

Running head: Shared Governance during a Transition from a Community College to a 4-Year College: How are the Faculty Impacted?

As noted, “moving to the next level can involve redefining the mission of the institution which, in turn usually redefines the professional work life of its members (p. 301)” (Martinez, 2019). If Diné College, included a change to address the new direction of the institution’s goals in a clear format through the mission, it might have provided an easy buy in from faculty with less resistance.

I wanted to explore this area as a critical issue in higher education because some community colleges are transitioning to 4-year colleges. With a clear movement of change it is imperative for the leadership to communicate clearly and effectively with the faculty of an institution. The faculty of a college provide the teaching to the students and their input is going to drive the delivery of models and resources. All colleges have internal issues to address, “while community colleges tend to be bureaucratic organizations, it is important for faculty to be involved in the decision-making process” (Martinez, 2019). When and if community colleges decide to transition to 4-year colleges, they should make every attempt to send clear message to faculty, “colleges should work to promote new faculty models that work for all faculty members and set clear guidelines for retention, promotion, and tenure” (Martinez, 2019). Because faculty interact with students on a regular basis, the leadership of a college should decrease the “living with uncertainty” and “tension between faculty and administrators” with the college community.

There is a need to include faculty opinions and concerns because they teach the students at a college and it’s a goal to have a great completion rate at their institution, “enhance faculty engagement and professional development for faculty and staff: involve full – and part-time faculty in completion: get with the digital world; accept the “digital divide” – know your students; address faculty beliefs about student and engage increasing numbers of adjunct instructor in the process; get faculty involved in completion; and use data to cultivate a campus culture (Liberal arts faculty

Running head: Shared Governance during a Transition from a Community College to a 4-Year College: How are the Faculty Impacted?
needs convincing)” (McPhail, 2011). The idea of including faculty in all aspects of shared governance might increase completion and graduation rates at a college.

The idea of keeping faculty at the forefront of decision making a college is going to increase morale on campus amount the teaching community. The inclusive share governance model for between faculty and leadership will eventually lead to more greater completion rates and graduation rates because the entire college community is working together to accomplish the same goal, which is student success. As the first tribally controlled college in the United States, Diné College has the potential to lead in the arena of offering one the most quality atmosphere for faculty in the area of student success with a rural community. There is much growth in shared governance, and it is our hope to continue to strive for excellence in offering 4-year degrees to the students attending the institution.

Running head: Shared Governance during a Transition from a Community College to a 4-Year College: How are the Faculty Impacted?

References

- Kelderman, E. (2016, February 29). *Unshared Governance New Pressures threaten the faculty's role in leadership*. The Chronicle of Higher Education. <http://chronicle.com>.
- Martinez, E. (2019, April). "*The Rules Change*": *Exploring Faculty Experiences and Work Exceptions Within a Drifting Community College Context*. Community College Review, 47(2).
- McPhail, C. J. (2011, April). *The completion agenda: a call to action*. American Association of Community Colleges.