

Shared Governance at Augsburg College

**submitted by
the Governance Task Force to the**

**Augsburg College Board of Regents
May 2, 2014**

Executive Summary

Charged by the Board with studying and assessing current governance practices at Augsburg College, the Task Force identified three salient characteristics of the context for shared governance: Augsburg's democratic ethos, growing demands on the College and the increased size and complexity of the institution. Within that context, three main areas of concern were identified: communication, organizational structure and confidence and trust in leadership. Drawing on the results from over 25 meetings and extensive feedback from all constituencies on campus, the Task Force found great strengths in the institution and opportunities for improvement. We thank all those who contributed to this project. We ask the campus community to consider moving toward a set of specific changes and revisions to current governance practices in the coming two years. We suggest to the Board that it work to identify and charge a group that will collaborate with the Board, Cabinet, Faculty Senate and Staff Senate to:

- complete a decision-authority matrix to clarify authority in different areas of the College's work;
- undertake a comprehensive revision and update of the Faculty Handbook;
- recommend a set of measures to improve the flow of decisions, authority structures and organization of the academic programs;
- develop orientation materials and a guide to governance for new Board members, faculty, staff, administrators and students;
- draw on best practices to organize some form of community-wide conversations that include Regents, administration, faculty, staff and students;
- lay out the budget implications of changes in governance;
- select pilot recommendations in Spring 2015;
- recommend specific changes, with their budgetary implications, by the May 2015 Board Meeting;
- create a revised communication protocol and produce an accessible outline of our organizational structure and decision making processes in an effort to increase trust and confidence. These projects should be completed by Fall 2015 with ongoing assessment of effectiveness and revisions as needed.

Introduction

The Augsburg 2019 Strategic Plan calls for Augsburg to be “organized for collaboration, efficiency, and effectiveness” and to “maintain a sound and sustainable financial footing.” In light of these goals, the Board of Regents charged President Pribbenow with forming a Governance Task Force (GTF) to “*engage the community in an examination of Augsburg’s existing decision-making structures and processes in light of Augsburg’s traditions and culture and contemporary models of shared governance in higher education.*” The members of the Task Force and co-authors of this report are Matt Entenza, Diane Pike, and Joe Underhill (Co-chairs), and Kathy Swanson, Eric Jolly, Katherine Berggren, and Jane Ann Nelson, with Leif Anderson staffing and serving as liaison with the President’s office.

The Task Force met twelve times from November 2013 to April 2014 and held 25 information-gathering sessions from January through March, with over 600 individuals participating at those sessions. These included meetings open to the entire campus community and focused conversations with faculty, Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, Student Government, Leadership Council, the Board of Regents, College Cabinet, attendees at the April All-Hands meeting, and divisional groups. The Task Force received over 100 individual written responses, gathered either in person at these meetings or submitted via email. The Task Force also examined Augsburg’s governing documents, the broader external context faced by the College, best practices for governance and studied the responsibilities and roles of various parts of campus involved in organizational decisions.

A draft of this report was made available to the entire campus community from whom we received an additional 20 responses, including extensive feedback from some members of the campus AAUP chapter. The Task Force has worked diligently to capture the range of views on campus. We are confident that faculty, staff, administration and students wanting to contribute or to provide feedback had the opportunity to do so. The full set of anonymous written responses is available for review (see appendix C).

The Task Force would like to thank all the community members who participated. We are consistently impressed with the thoughtfulness, level of engagement, and genuine desire on the part of our colleagues to find ways to improve shared governance at Augsburg. Their commitment to our central educational mission and to the principles of shared governance remain perhaps our greatest resource and is a powerful testament to the health of the institution.

This report is not a set of proposals for how to change governance practices. Rather, completing the charge requested by the Regents is one step in an ongoing process of strengthening shared governance. Thus, the purpose of this report is to:

- summarize the findings from our investigation of governance practices at Augsburg College;
- diagnose the main sources of the challenges and identify opportunities for more effective governance;

- offer some initial suggestions for the Board to consider to improve governance and then to identify potential concrete actions for the coming year.

The report begins with a brief definition of terms and a description of the context in which the challenges of the College are faced. It then proceeds to analysis of the governance dynamics in the three main areas identified: communication, organizational structure and the level of trust and confidence in leadership on campus.

What is governance and how is it shared?

The Task Force found the following formulation of governance useful in its work: *Governance is the ongoing process of making high-level decisions about the overall direction of the College, including decision-making on budgets, hiring, strategic plans, and new program development. It is shared in that the authority and primary responsibility in different areas of the campus (curriculum, budgets, facilities, etc.) necessitate varying degrees of involvement by the Board, faculty, staff, students, and administration.* Shared governance is necessary in institutions with multiple sources of power and authority such as the authority based in the legal/administrative structures and the professional authority of the faculty. As well, everyone who is part of the college community has authority derived from his/her stake in the College, unique wisdom and experience, and the gifts that he/she can bring to the collective life of the institution. The principles laid out in the AGB (Association of Governing Boards)/AAUP (American Association of University Professors) "Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities" provide widely accepted standards for shared governance (see appendix B.) We found no disagreement with these principles from Augsburg's Board, administration, staff or faculty.

The governance structure is established in the College's Articles of Incorporation, Constitution, and Bylaws. In addition, the Faculty Handbook and Employee Handbook are important documents that guide daily operation. These founding documents delineate shared responsibilities. A simple summary of the different areas of responsibility of the major stakeholders is found in Table 1. A much more detailed analysis of the authority structure is in progress.

In broad areas of the life of the College, the major stakeholders play different roles--consulting, providing formal recommendations, deciding on issues and/or approving or ratifying decisions made at a lower level. *Consultations* include informal feedback and suggestions; *recommendations* are required as input to decision-making at a higher level of the organization; *decisions* are the institution's official choices on the matter at hand and constitute the area of greatest authority and responsibility; *approval* is provided at the highest level of the institution, often a component of a system of checks and balances.

Table 1: Brief Summary of Shared Governance

	Board of Regents	Officers of the College	Faculty	Staff	Students
General Management & Financial Oversight	Decides	Recommends	Consults	Consults	N/A
Fundraising	Approves	Decides	Consults	Recommends	N/A
Strategic Vision	Approves	Decides	Recommends	Recommends	Consults
Academic Program	Approves	Approves	Decides	Consults	Consults
Physical Plant & Campus Buildings	Approves	Decides	Consults	Consults	Consults
Tenure & Promotion	Approves	Decides	Recommends	N/A	N/A

The College is under the legal auspices of the Augsburg Corporation which represents our ties to the ELCA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. One of the main responsibilities of the Corporation is the appointment of members of the Board of Regents whose responsibilities include the “general management of the affairs of the Corporation; [and] the disposition and management of funds, gifts, and legacies” (Bylaws, Art. II, Sec. 3). The faculty are to “establish the departments of instruction and programs of study, determine the requirements for admission and for graduation, and determine candidates for academic degrees” (Bylaws, Art. IV, Sec. 3). The Task Force found review of these documents helpful; it highlighted that basic elements of our constitution as a College are not widely understood by the community at large. Our review also revealed some ambiguities in the documents. The need for a clearer delineation of what constitutes the “academic program” was identified. Multiple constituencies indicated that boundaries between curriculum and operational issues, such as when courses meet or who decides which academic policies, were not commonly understood. This issue is critical because specific authority to maintain the academic program is granted by the Board to the faculty through our governing documents.

These documents place a heavy burden of responsibility on the Board for the governance of the College. At the same time, the staff, administration and faculty carry out the majority of the work done to keep the institution operating on a day-to-day basis. The voices of the students are important as well, since their education is the *raison d’être* of the institution. This highlights the need for a close and

collaborative relationship between the Board, faculty, administration, staff and students.

The Task Force also found it useful to differentiate governance from “leadership,” which can be understood as a set of qualities and practices associated with individuals in particular organizational positions. Governance determines who is in authority and what kinds of authority are granted. What those individuals do with that authority is a matter of leadership. Questions of individual competence are important and a matter of review, assessment, and accountability, but they are not a matter of governance *per se*. That said, questions of leadership arose frequently throughout our discussions and are difficult to untangle from governance. This report attempts to differentiate these two important dimensions while acknowledging their necessary interrelationship.

Governance has also often been conflated with the larger social dynamics and pressures bearing on the College and impacts the campus via the governance structure. The leadership of the College is often the bearer of bad news that results from outside demands or developments and thus is often seen as responsible for those developments. Leadership is responsible for how the College anticipates and responds to these demands whether they be changes in the market or new federal regulations yet cannot directly change the realities we face as an institution. The Board of Regents, the Officers of the College, and the faculty leadership collectively have the responsibility to anticipate and respond effectively to the demands and shifting landscape of higher education. These bodies need to be held accountable should they fail to meet reasonable expectations in regard to these duties. It is our collective responsibility as a community to understand the difference between issues of competence and the wider set of demands and challenges faced by all institutions of higher education.

The discussion of shared governance has been further complicated by the fact that there is some confusion around the distinction between faculty status and administrative status. The College documents define the President and officers of the administration as faculty yet as the organization has grown in its complexity, the specialization of administrative leadership roles has resulted in a diminished recognition of that status and an increased sense of “we/they”. These complexities and ambiguities are worth bearing in mind as we consider our collective work.

What constitutes good shared governance?

In keeping with the goals of Augsburg 2019 and the core values of Augsburg College when assessing current governance practices, we continue to define what we mean by good governance or “effectiveness.” What are the roles of efficiency, collaboration and financial stability? The mission of the College includes educating students to be informed citizens and thoughtful stewards. It would be difficult to profess these goals while not practicing them ourselves. Thus, another sign of an effective structure for decision-making is that it balances fairness, ethics and

humaneness with the need to respond in a timely fashion to the changing landscape of higher education. Basic equity is a priority shared by all. That said, the institution cannot ignore the fundamental economic and larger political realities within which it is operating. To do so could risk the future viability of the institution.

Governance also requires fostering a strong community and we see the strengthening of the community as crucial to good governance. An effective governance structure should provide members the opportunities to bring the full range of their skills and talents to bear on the work of the institution.

The specifics of these goals for good governance will be the subject of ongoing discussion and should include reflection on the standards by which we evaluate our governance practices. The principles laid out in the AGB/AAUP Statement on Government are a highly regarded and widely used set of guidelines that we can and should draw from as we move forward.

Background and context

The Board's charge to the Task Force was to examine governance "*in light of Augsburg's traditions and culture.*" Three aspects of these traditions and culture stand out: Augsburg's democratic ethos, the increasing external demands and the increased internal complexity within the institution. Together these characteristics constitute both substantial strengths and pose significant challenges to governance at Augsburg.

Democratic Ethos. The College's anti-authoritarian roots in the Lutheran Free Church and the resultant loosely structured organization have provided the College with a strong democratic ethos and a tradition of faculty leadership. These aspects of the College's culture have allowed all members of the campus community the creativity and freedom to pursue interests and new ideas that have helped make Augsburg the rich place that it is. At times, however, the result is a lack of direction or accountability. Courses, programs and events (some initiatives brought forward by departments, others brought by administration) are frequently added but with little shared understanding of how these additions contribute to the overall direction of the College; it is also the case that programs are rarely cut. The result is an institution that is perennially spread too thin and lacks focus. At the same time, Augsburg has always had a strong sense of community based on a strong set of values, a compact campus and relatively small number of students, staff, administrators and faculty. This sense of community is under strain as the College has grown and the demands placed upon it have increased.

Growing demands on the College. Governance takes place within the context of an increasingly complex and demanding environment in higher education. This change in our external environment has been both gradual and radical. Our

graduates are expected to be workforce ready in newly defined ways and the rapidly shifting landscape of information technology is challenging traditional forms of instruction and course delivery. Rising costs of higher education are problematic and are resisted by our stakeholders; this pressure can lead to having to defend costs, adjust financial aid and search for a sustainable business model for a tuition-dependent organization. Decreasing state and federal support for higher education has also contributed to greater financial pressures for students and the institution. The College has to pay attention to the demands of accreditation, changing legislation, competition from other schools and increasingly complex legal and regulatory requirements. Such institutional expectations include academic requirements, employment law directives and federal and state regulations on health care. We are also committed to environmental concerns, as reflected in the College's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint.

The College has responded to these external demands with varying levels of success and, as a result, is a much more complex institution. We have added new academic programs, some thriving and others less so. We have created important academic and institutional support programs such as Academic Advising, TRIO support programs, the McNair Scholars program, and the Office of Planning and Effectiveness. Of necessity, there are now more employees who do not teach but attend to these myriad commitments and expectations.

Increased size and organizational complexity. These external pressures have led to corresponding internal developments which present both opportunities and challenges for effective governance. Augsburg College operates more like a university than a liberal arts college; we support a wide range of programs, locations, and services. In 1970 the college had 1,500 students (FTE) and no working adult undergraduate or graduate programs; there were just under 100 full-time faculty and 150 staff. Today we have over 3,500 students, including 700 graduate students in seven different graduate programs in two cities and 20 internationally-based employees. The number of full-time faculty now stands at around 175. Part-time faculty have risen to over 50% of the teaching staff (with 183 part-time faculty in 2013). These changes raise concerns about the status of tenure and are forcing the College to grapple with the role and status of non-tenure track faculty. Augsburg's organizational structure, established in the mid-20th century, is out of sync with an organization of this size and complexity leading to frustrations from almost all quarters. A pervasive sentiment expressed during our campus discussions was a lack of clarity around who has responsibility for which aspects of the College's decision-making.

Increased diversity on campus has enriched our community and provides valued opportunities for cross-cultural learning. This increasing range of differences in race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and learning abilities also leads to more demands on the institution to recruit, retain, educate, and support our students. Students express concerns about how the campus is responding to the increased diversity on campus, particularly as reflected in campus

public safety practices, food services, and the accommodation of the range of different faith traditions in the student body. The campus has the opportunity now to embrace this diversity and to navigate the challenges it entails both in the classroom and across all aspects of campus life. In this regard the College's Lutheran heritage is both an asset and at times a limitation. The contemporary understanding of the Lutheran idea of "radical hospitality" provides one basis for responding to this increased diversity on campus while posing some potential challenges for a predominantly Lutheran board and alumni and a predominantly non-Lutheran campus community. It is important to recognize the new levels of inclusion required. Attention to this dynamic is vitally important work. It may require that we bring our governing documents into alignment with the current community realities while continuing to draw on the institution's rich Lutheran heritage and identity.

Although by no means new to the College, a recurrent theme in our discussions on campus was of faculty, administration and staff having to do more without adequate resources to fully address the issues. More financially stable colleges and universities in the region have loomed large in the institutional imagination at Augsburg feeding a pervasive sense of relative deprivation. While not a governance issue in itself, this actual and perceived lack of resources constitutes a set of limiting factors that we need to take into account when thinking about governance. Our budgetary constraints mean we need to identify improvements that can be carried out within the limited time and resources available. Additional investments may need to be made in governance with corresponding decreases in spending in other parts of the institution. We should be under no illusions about the costs and inherent trade-offs required to address this aspect of the work of at Augsburg. At the same time, limited resources do not mean that we cannot change within the limits of those resources.

One related concern expressed is the view that Augsburg has become administration heavy. As noted, the College has grown and the amount of non-teaching work necessary has increased. There are an increased number of non-teaching positions at all institutions of higher education. However, analysis shows that Augsburg has relatively few non-teaching positions compared to peer institutions. The College's level of per-student spending on administration and management is three-quarters of the MPCC average, as is the ratio of administrators to faculty (IPEDS data and 2013 College Fact Book). Furthermore, our interviews and campus discussions found no evidence of unnecessary administrative layers although some faculty expressed concern that there are problems in efficiency and the distribution of administrative support as a result of the current configurations of staffing. On the whole we were encouraged to find at all levels of the institution that there was, within the normal bounds of human variability, a consistently dedicated and hard-working community doing work that was necessary to the health of the College. Some individuals expressed a lack of awareness of particular staff persons' functions, so it would be valuable to educate each other about our various contributions. As far as we were able to determine from our investigation, the

addition of many of the administrative positions stems primarily from the increasing complexity of the work, rather than from some autonomous effort on the part of the administration to expand or increase its budget. If there is any concrete and specific evidence to the contrary, we have not found it.

With this background, history and context in mind, we turn to examining current governance practices.

Assessment of current governance practices at Augsburg College

A set of three interrelated factors surfaced repeatedly in the Task Force's information-gathering sessions: communication, organizational structure, and confidence or trust. A recurrent theme was that these three dimensions were interrelated. Improvements in governance will not be possible without addressing all of these. Addressing any one of them will also help address the others (e.g., better communication will help build trust; a clearer organizational chart improves communication).

Adapting an analytic framework employed by the Higher Learning Commission for assessing campus practices, the Task Force examined four aspects of each of these dimensions of governance:

1. What is the challenge/problem?
2. What issues emerge from this challenge?
3. What might be responses to this challenge?
4. What would be the effects of these responses?

What follows is a brief summary of the three main areas of concern with an accompanying table summarizing our findings from the public meetings held this spring. *In each table the list of "Possible Responses" encapsulates our ideas for possible changes.*

Communication

Perhaps the most common topic of conversation regarding governance was the issue of communication--its timing, content, clarity, or amount. There was a frequently expressed concern for the need to contextualize and appropriately explain decisions and to bring issues to the campus at the earliest possible opportunity; this change would better allow input and feedback from relevant stakeholders, experts, and those who are charged with carrying out the decision. The concerns reflected a ubiquitous communication issue in both vertical and horizontal directions. Agreeing upon channels of communication, prioritizing important information sent out, and providing safe means for feedback were all identified as possible responses. We were troubled to hear of the number of people who do not feel comfortable speaking openly or critically about campus governance.

These concerns were particularly acute among staff and untenured faculty and were heightened by the sense of precariousness occasioned by the lay-offs in 2013.

Reflecting, in part, the lack of clear organizational structure and responsibility, we noted the plethora of different communication channels and forms currently in place:

- A-mail
- Campus-wide emails (from the President, Provost, and other campus leaders)
- Weekly updates
- Multiple moodle sites
- College reports web site
- Multiple public web sites
- Multiple Augnet folders
- Shared Google documents
- Multiple calendars (Campus events, Dean's Calendar, Convocation, Athletics, etc., with minimal central coordination)
- All-Hands meetings
- Board meetings
- Board retreats
- Task force and commission meetings (this Task Force, the Commission on Academic Opportunities, Campus Master Planning, etc.)
- Faculty Meetings
- Division meetings (for both faculty, administrators, and staff)
- Departmental meetings
- Senate and committee meetings

The campus continues to work on coordinating this wide range of communication channels but the current set of practices results in information overload. The avenues for communication and discussion need to be streamlined, prioritized, and organized. This change should increase delivery of important information to the relevant audiences with sufficient time to then process and provide feedback to decision-makers. This problem is, in part, a resource issue as the work of coordinating and sorting out these communication channels is difficult and time-consuming. However, this work is an investment well worth making.

Communication that results in misperceptions can be exacerbated by the institutional and legal need for privacy. Certain decisions, of necessity, cannot be shared. Protecting individuals who are laid off or dismissed and ensuring legal protections of private information or discussion of sensitive topics limit our ability to discuss openly all matters of governance. That said, it will be of great service to the institution either to explain to the community when and why such information cannot be shared and/or to provide, to the extent possible, clear statements of the policies governing decision-making. The more the community knows and the clearer the statements of policy, the less room for misperceptions.

Another theme in the data collection was the idea that those individuals and groups asking for more information need to step up and not simply express distress at “not knowing.” There were numerous examples of both problems: flaws in what was sent by whom and when, as well as problems in passive response and lack of effort among those to whom information was sent. Many faculty and staff shared concerns that there has been a pattern of administrative decisions communicated to the community only after the decision has been made. This pattern has limited the ability for the wider community to participate in shared governance. One problematic dynamic named during our conversations was the situation in which individuals suddenly find out about a proposed policy change and then expect things to stop or change so they can then weigh in when the issue has already been thoroughly vetted by the committee charged with that work. At faculty meetings, it is not uncommon for Senate or Personnel Policies Committee to bring forward a proposed change in language in the Faculty Handbook; one or two colleagues may propose an amendment and then the entire proposed change is sent back and delayed another month. Due diligence and careful deliberation are needed, but the current practice of decision-making sometimes has slowed to a pace that does not appear to serve the institution well. Administrative initiatives, such as the recent Commission on Academic Opportunities or assessment work are often experienced as empty exercises in self-study that result in no real improvements in the institution. Or if they have resulted in changes, most constituents do not seem to know about those improvements. These dynamics take valuable time and resources away from staff, administrator and faculty talents and responsibilities to educate and to support our students.

Table 2

	Communication
Problem/Challenge Perceived	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Poor timing of communications that are late or do not happen at all; -Poor communication occurring at all levels of the organization, including the Board; -Lack of clarity about who is responsible for communication; -Confusing messages; -Lack of rationale about decisions; lack of context; -Lack of responsibility from “receivers” for tracking the communication flows.
Issues that Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of informed input to decisions because of communication gaps;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Incorrect or incomplete messages being shared; -Tendency to fill the communication void with worst-case scenarios or suspicions; -Staff and faculty frustration, leading to a lack of confidence and a decrease in members' sense of agency; -Lost time and energy; -Individuals feeling "surprised" by new initiatives and unable to weigh in or suggest alternatives.
<p>Possible Responses (GTF suggestions for the Board based on feedback from the community)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identification and agreement to 1-2 main channels (A-mail, email, face-to-face meetings); -Setting of clear expectations for sender and receiver responsibility; -Development of templates for guidance before sending communication, including rationale for decisions; - "Flipped" meetings, with reports sent out ahead, and substantive discussion during meetings; -Establishment of an online list of current projects and allowing opportunities for feedback before decisions are made.
<p>Potential Impact of Responses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Actual change from current protocols, leading to better decisions because of better information and feedback; -Staff and budget maintaining and organizing new channels of communication (e.g. searchable archives and online lists of current projects under consideration); -Requirement that receivers and senders are held accountable (identify ways collaboratively); -Increased opportunities for better quality control and building of community by fostering more genuine dialogue on current issues among those

	with an interest and/or stake in the issue.
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Organizational Structure

Much of the existing structure of the College was developed in the 1950s when it completed the process of gaining accreditation as a liberal arts institution. This structure, set forth in the Bylaws, Constitution, and Faculty Handbook, reflects a reality which little resembles the Augsburg of today in terms of decision-making processes although the spirit of our approach as a small, faith-based liberal arts college remains. There is also a strong strand of informality which often reduces the relevance of whatever formal structures may be in place. Policies and decision-making authority are sometimes unclear or ignored, resulting in widespread confusion about “who decides” or who is accountable for particular decisions.

The current structure is misaligned with our needs and results in delayed decisions, poorly communicated decisions, and lack of clarity about who is responsible for what. Further research is needed to more fully articulate the best structural forms for Augsburg as it now operates, but this misalignment appears to lead to wasted efforts and an inability to respond to the external changes noted previously. Clarity of current official structure versus actual practice is warranted. Numerous examples in both faculty governance and administrative decision-making were revealed in our information-gathering sessions.

A frequently noted feature of our current structure are the multiple roles at all levels of the institution, for faculty, staff, and administration. For instance, many faculty are working on tasks as diverse as institutional advancement, recruitment, all levels of governance, web-site management, budget management, service on ad hoc and standing committees, and assessment work. Faculty, administrators, and staff indicated that they often lack adequate time, resources, or training to do the increased workload well. The institution and its employees will be better served by dividing up the work to allow people to focus more rather than to try to do it all. The increased range of complexity of tasks and forms of expertise necessitate a greater level of functional differentiation and specialization rather than the “yeoman farmer” conception of the work of a faculty or staff member or administrator as a jack-of-all-trades. Current work from the Provost’s office to clarify and specify leadership roles and duties among faculty should help address some of these problems.

Another challenge to governance is a lack of clarity as to the role and authority of bodies such as the Faculty Senate or positions such as the new Provost. The Senate has worked diligently to respond to proposals and new initiatives forwarded by the administration and by faculty, but their responsibility for and leadership in the success of these initiatives is not clear. Providing a clearer structure and set of

guidelines for the role of the Senate, Committee on Academic Planning, Academic Affairs Committee, Leadership Council, the various commissions and councils and Cabinet will be of great benefit to the institution. The Faculty Senate has recently engaged in serious and productive discussion of this question and we hope the Board will support and join that discussion in the coming year.

Implications

The Task Force did not see the need for significant revisions to the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws. That said, those documents highlight a disjuncture: those roles with the greatest legal responsibility for the institution, the Board of Regents, have the least involvement and familiarity with the day-to-day operations. Those charged with carrying out the work and with the greatest familiarity (students, staff, administrators, and faculty) have the least governance authority. This structural situation again places a heavy burden on the Board to perform its duties in stewarding the College and ensuring its well-being. It requires that faculty and administrative leaders and the organizational structures within which they work facilitate constructive dialogue across all levels of the organization.

The Task Force clearly identified the need for a thorough revision and updating of the Faculty Handbook, noting that its current structure and size reflect a slow accretion over time. Currently, the Faculty Handbook includes a combination of three distinct subjects: 1) professional ethics and responsibilities; 2) matters relating to faculty governance; and 3) matters relating to employment at the College. All matters relating to employment could be placed in the Employee Handbook which is overseen by Human Resources. The Faculty Handbook should be consolidated and simplified with two main sections: one on professional ethics and responsibilities and one on governance issues. This work should be carried out by a relatively small group who are given the time and resources for the task. The current process as carried out by the Personnel Policies Committee is not adequately supported for this task.

Another common theme revealed by our investigation was the need for more extensive training for the Board, administration, faculty, staff, and students on governance. Currently, new members of the community receive little if any information about governance practices and the responsibilities of various sectors of the institution. It was suggested that a relevant training session and a short “Guide to Governance at Augsburg” be developed. The Decision-Authority Matrix should be made available to all new Board members, faculty, staff, and students.

Table 3

	Organizational Structure
Problem/ Challenge Perceived	-Misalignment of current structure with

	<p>goals;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No designation of responsibility for who communicates what to whom; -Lack of clarity as to who decides what; -Failure to understand contributions of others; -Informality or lack of explicit policy on important decisions, including budgets or program evaluation.
<p>Issues that Result</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Delayed or poor decisions; -Lack of clarity of authority and responsibility; wasted time; -Perception that the lack of a clear sense of the structure is a weakness; -Decreased sense of agency among campus citizens and a lack of respect for others' work; -Difficulty in knowing to whom community members should go when problems do arise.
<p>Possible Responses (GTF suggestions for the Board based on feedback from the community)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reorganize decision-making and governance structures to fit with current complexity of our work; move beyond the simple functional structure with "attached" commissions; -Develop greater specialization and clarification of roles; -Foster a more open culture of decision making to avoid Groupthink and invite constructive criticism; -Blend faculty and administration at the leadership level in new configurations; provide needed training on institutional level decision-making to that group and the Board; - Create clarity and transparency in decision-making authority, accountability, and reporting; -Identify and clarify areas of disagreement in decision-making authority, including a clearer definition of what constitutes the academic program;

	-Train new members in governance via, in part, a “Guide to Governance” manual.
Potential Impact of Responses	-Short-run costs of reorganization in time and resources; shift in power bases; new roles; different modes of sharing of power; symbolic shifts; -Greater ability to focus on clearly identified tasks; -Improved level of trust and communication through a clearly defined organizational structure.

Confidence/Trust in Leadership

The examination of governance at the College was prompted in part by recent tensions among members of the community. For some individuals, this tension was experienced as a lack of confidence (a questioning of competence) while for others it was expressed as a lack of trust (a questioning of motives or intentions). These tensions were exacerbated by the drop in enrollment in Fall 2012 and the resultant budget shortfall which increased the sense of precariousness for employees. The pace of the capital campaign and progress on the Center for Science, Business, and Religion (CSBR) and the handling of particular issues (such as the endowed scholarships) likewise contributed to some of these concerns.

Despite these challenges, the Task Force was struck by the lack of evidence of substantive differences among faculty, administration, and staff in terms of their goals for the College. There are perceptions of differences, but everyone we spoke with would like to see finances strengthened, salaries increased, and our educational programs improved. The Board is committed to raising salaries to median levels and fully supports the value of tenure for faculty. The commonality of interests stands in contrast to the experience of some individuals that the College administration and faculty are seeking fundamentally different goals for the institution. There was clear support for shared governance from everyone with whom we spoke.

Despite this widely shared set of goals and values, there remain real and important disagreements about the specific policies and/or current leadership of the College. The *Great Colleges to Work Survey* in 2010 (461 surveys sent out and 315 received for a response rate of 67%) and 2012 (373 surveys sent out and 174 received for a

response rate of 47%) showed widespread concerns about “Senior Leadership” (Note: the survey does not allow specification of to whom this category precisely applies.) Over that two-year period, respondents indicating that “Senior leadership provides a clear direction for this institution's future” dropped 16 points from 57% to 39%, while at peer institutions that figure was as high as 77%. On the question of whether the senior leadership has the “knowledge, skills and experience necessary for institutional success”, the number of positive responses declined from 63% to 54%. Across the six questions about senior leadership, positive ratings dropped an average of 9 points, from 58% to 49% with outstanding peer institutions’ leaders receiving as high as 79% positive ratings.

Written feedback gathered by the Task Force this year likewise reflected these concerns. To illustrate: community members wrote that “decisions appear to be pushed, if not imposed, by the Pres/Administration” and “administration makes poor decisions”; others felt that decision-making was “muddled” with “new committees and commissions created without clear purpose” and “too many mid-level managers”; “the leadership has betrayed the trust of the staff.” The Task Force frequently heard concerns about aspects of the President’s ability to raise funds, spending priorities, financial management, and leadership style. Some faculty and staff are highly critical; some have qualified reservations; some are supportive and express admiration for the current leadership. We should neither dismiss these criticisms as coming from a small group of malcontents nor equate these highly critical views with the campus as a whole. The concerns are real and opinions are mixed. Members of the administration, in turn, expressed concerns that faculty leadership is often unhelpful or excessively negative. This tension further erodes communication and reduces the willingness of stakeholders to “let go” of decision-making since they do not trust those to whom the decision-making authority has been granted.

These perceptions were often accompanied by a sense of disempowerment, a lack of responsibility and a tendency to blame others for the College’s challenges in many sectors. Challenges occur in all directions and across most constituencies, not just between faculty and academic administrators. Across the campus, there seems to be a common theme that “they” are the problem with few stakeholders acknowledging their own responsibility for the current state of affairs.

At the core of this aspect of governance is the question of the degree to which these concerns are based in fact or are misperceptions that can be corrected by improved communication and collaborative organizational structures. As to the matter of the extent to which there are significant problems with either competence or intention of specific persons in positions of authority, review of individuals’ performances will be required on a case-by-case basis by appropriate parties. Assessing the adequacy of existing review processes of the President, high level administrators, and Faculty Senate is important and should be undertaken with due diligence and care.

Part of the problem is that, despite the strong legacy of community, there has been a

decline in social capital or public culture on campus. The causes of this erosion are multi-faceted, but there is a need for concerted efforts to push back against the erosion of communal solidarity. Concerns or fears about the health of the institution are usually discussed in private rather than in the public sphere. Grievances are often not directly addressed. It is important to continue to examine why some members of the community are reluctant or fearful to express their opinions. These realities make shared governance more difficult and can undermine attempts to communicate.

Recent improvements in the College’s finances, the hiring of a Provost, the development of a program review protocol, and movement in the CSBR campaign, as well as a new sense of constructive engagement on the part of the Faculty Senate, all bode well for improved trust and confidence in leadership from the faculty, administration, and Board. To build on recent positive developments, a set of constructive conversations and dialogue that rebuild trust and confidence should be considered. Relevant stakeholders need to be willing to give each other another chance to work differently. Open dialogue among those who are ready to talk, rather than continued isolation, is crucial in this regard. The only way to get beyond the current divisive climate will be to work on those aspects of our situation that we can change. Possible responses considered by the Task Force, and suggested by community members, include various stakeholders agreeing to give each other another chance as part of a rapprochement.

Clarified organizational and authority structures will also provide opportunities for more constructive dialogue. This work will require what are often called “difficult conversations” or, at a minimum some conversation at all, in which different points of view are directly addressed in a constructive manner. More intentionally collaborative work processes, both laterally and vertically, would help to bring people to the table and decrease the impact of working in relative isolation. The eventual outcome of this work, we believe, would be improved communication and the ability to delegate or authorize different parts of campus to make decisions without everyone being involved. This change has the potential to help to strengthen community, rebuild trust, improve morale and strengthen a sense of civic agency across the campus.

Table 4

	Trust or Confidence
Problem/ Challenge Perceived	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Varied perceptions about the motivations or intentions of particular individuals and groups; -Lack of confidence in others that they have the skills to do the job well; -Lack of confidence that the leadership is effectively navigating the College in

	<p>the current environment;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fragmentation of community; -Fear of repercussions of speaking critically about leadership.
Issues that Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Unwillingness to share information or views; -Unwillingness to let others make decisions for us; -Lack of trust leading to filling in gaps in information with assumptions; - Fear of some members who do not feel safe sharing their views due to lack of trust or confidence; -Perception that some leaders have pulled back from difficult situations, thus limiting those leaders' sources of understanding what is happening in the College community.
Possible Responses (GTF Suggestions to the Board based on feedback from the community)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Development of collaborative decision-making that brings conflicting parties together; agreement to give each other another chance; -Creation of an advisory council to empower community members to share their views; -Establishment of campus summits and/or community-wide meetings; -Initiation of facilitated difficult conversations among stakeholders along lines of tension.
Potential Impact of Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improved level of trust and confidence; -Enhanced ability of stakeholders to focus on work "at their level" and let others do the work for which they are responsible; -Acknowledgment that change will take time; -Creation and participation in events/decisions where trust and confidence are built.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Task Force was charged with suggesting next steps and areas for further study. The three tables above each contain a set of “possible responses” and we offer these ideas to the Board for their consideration. These are areas where we think changes are needed but we have refrained from being more specific than warranted by our current level of understanding. Further study, piloting of programs, and careful deliberation will be needed before recommending specific changes. Throughout the process, the Task Force has attempted to model shared governance processes and hence believes that an open and thorough discussion of these proposed changes is essential as we continue to work out the details. We have synthesized our collective wisdom from the evidence gathered and welcome ongoing suggestions or revisions as this work proceeds.

We have been encouraged by what we have seen this year. The results of this year’s *Great Colleges to Work Survey* will not be available until the Fall term, but the response this year was over 60%. Over the months in which this work was completed, the Task Force has seen palpable signs of improved communication, awareness of the need to clarify organizational roles and authority structures and some increased sense of mutual respect and willingness to work together across lines of tension or disagreement among many of our colleagues.

But we want to emphasize that this work will be wasted if no changes in our actual practices and governance occur. The Task Force heard important ideas about communication, organizational structure and the climate at the College. If we do not change current practices, the institution will continue to face the same problems it does today as well as new ones. Change is rarely easy and will require effort and investment. We are confident that this investment of time and resources will be well worthwhile. Augsburg College is made up a group of dedicated, capable Regents, administrators, students, faculty, and staff. It deserves a governance structure commensurate with this deep dedication.

We suggest that some iteration of a Governance Task Force continue this work through the next academic year in close partnership with existing governance bodies (e.g. the Cabinet, Leadership Council, Faculty Senate) to produce specific recommendations and, where possible, to have the appropriate bodies implement changes by May 2015. We suggest moving toward a collaboration with existing committees and institutional structures.

Proposed Timeline:

Summer 2014: Study of Shared Governance Best Practices

Fall 2014:

- Board-directed work completes the decision-authority matrix and circulates it for review and discussion;

- Personnel Policies Committee and Faculty Senate, perhaps in collaboration with the Task Force, determine a process that results in a comprehensive revision of Faculty Handbook; (such intensive work may need to be funded by the College);
- Appropriate bodies work to improve the flow of decisions, authority structures and organization of our academic programs; documentation on how decisions could be more effectively is produced; this work could include rethinking how faculty meetings are used;
- Best practices and design for a comprehensive communication protocols around governance issues are studied and shared;
- Budget implications of changes in governance are always included in proposals (What would this cost and how would budgets potentially be shifted?).

Spring 2015:

Pilots of recommendations are selected.

May 2015: Recommendations are made to the Board for specific changes, including information on the budgetary implications of any changes.

Fall 2015: A first version of a revised communication protocol, organizational structure and decision making documents, and an assessment of the current confidence/trust are in place, with ongoing assessment of its effectiveness and revisions as needed.

We should not adopt new practices without due diligence but it is risky to put off needed action too far into the future. For its part, the Task Force asks the Board of Regents to continue its active engagement with these governance issues and to evaluate how it can best work with the administration and faculty in shared governance. We look forward to the continuation and strengthening of that collaboration.

Thank you again to all who supported this work and shared their time and wisdom.

Appendices (links to documents)

A. Schedule of meetings and information-gathering sessions

<http://go.augsburg.edu/gtf1>

B. AGB/AAUP “Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities”

<http://go.augsburg.edu/gtf2>

C. Summary of notes from community meetings

<http://go.augsburg.edu/gtf3>

D. Sources consulted

<http://go.augsburg.edu/gtf4>