

# A Few Observations on Collegial Governance

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# on:

- 1. Ian Austin and Glen A. Jones (2015).  
Governance of Higher Education: Global Perspectives, Theories and Practices  
(New York: Routledge).**
- 2. Changing Academic Profession  
(2007-2008 ) with Amy Metcalfe et al. Now  
being repeated in 2017-18.**
- 3. Study of university senates (with Lea  
Pennock, Jeff Leclerc, Sharon Li)  
conducted in 2012**
- 4. Case studies of governance at 6  
“flagship” universities (with Julia**

# A Few Limitations:

- 1. There are major differences in the structure and perceived success of senates at different universities. One has to be careful not to overgeneralize.**
- 2. Even at the same institution, there will be a wide range of opinions on the success and failings of academic self-governance.**

# A Few Observations

## Collegial Decision-Making at the Department/Faculty

- CAP data: faculty believe that they have influence at the local/department level (perceived influence decreases as one moves to the senate level)
- Role of faculty-level council may not be clearly defined (What does this mean at RCB/RCM universities)

# The Senate

- 1. Our 2000 study suggested that senates were in serious need of reform. There were some modest reforms in the period between 2000 and 2012:**
  - a. Improved orientation programs**
  - b. Rationalization of committee structures at some U's**
- 2. Continue to be concerns with effectiveness, role**
- 3. Limited role in assessing academic quality, research policy, advancement priorities**
- 4. Little space for self-assessment (What are we doing right? What can we do better?)**

# Senate

- 5. Faculty, students and administrators have VERY different views of the senate**
- 6. Concerns with faculty engagement (Are faculty raising the big questions? Do they care?)**
- 7. Some senates have very narrow roles. Is there a space for broad discussions of key questions?**

# Boards

- 1. Increasingly influenced by best practices in corporate governance**
- 2. Do board members understand the unique role of the university? Do they understand that university governance is different?**
- 3. University presidents under considerable pressure at some institutions (president is the release valve).**

# Observations

- 1. Importance of provincial context (e.g. Alberta, BC, Quebec, Ontario)**
- 2. How do faculty learn about their role in university governance?**
- 3. University governance is based on a system of checks and balances – these systems can be quite fragile in a crisis (UBC, Saskatchewan, Concordia)**
- 4. Our senates continue to play a key role in university governance (contrast to many other jurisdictions)**



# Thank you

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