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Cover Page Footnote

1. We acknowledge and thank Haley Admire for assistance in preparing the manuscript and also thank our former Provost, James Wohlpart, for encouraging us to share our experiences. 2. Author names are listed in alphabetical order.

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Times of crisis may reveal much about the character of an institution. A special report of the AAUP in May, 2021 described several case studies of colleges and universities that experienced severe violations of academic shared governance norms during the pandemic, including ad hoc governance processes, suspension of faculty handbook provisions, and financial exigencies that generally resulted in reductions of academic programs and faculty (AAUP, May 2021). A separate report of a survey to faculty governance officers, however, revealed that although 24% of those surveyed reported that faculty influence in institutional decision making suffered during the pandemic, 62% reported that it was unchanged. Moreover, 15% reported that faculty's influence had *increased* on their campuses during the pandemic (AAUP, August 10, 2021). Clearly, there is substantial variation in institutional responses to crises pertaining to the status of faculty participation in shared governance. Consequently, a growing body of literature observes significant implications of an institution's shared governance practices for its long-term viability (see Kezar & Holcombe, 2017 for a review).

This article describes governance processes on our campus as challenges emerged during the simultaneous unfolding of both a new faculty evaluation system and the COVID pandemic from Spring 2020 through the following academic year. Below, we describe the challenges that emerged relative to evaluation of faculty teaching, research, and service. In addition to describing challenges, we also highlight our responses to those challenges, lessons learned from our collective experience, and new initiatives that resulted from these experiences. An overarching theme pertains to the developmental trajectory from shared governance to shared leadership when solving complex problems on our campus.

Structures for Shared Governance and COVID Response

The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) is a mid-sized, public, regional comprehensive university. It is one of three state universities within Iowa, and the only public comprehensive in the state. UNI has most recently enrolled just over 9,500 students. Approximately 87% are undergraduates, and 89% are residents of the state of Iowa. UNI is a predominantly residential, in-person campus but we do have robust and growing distance education offerings. The campus hosts 641 full- and part-time faculty members with about 72% of faculty tenured or on the tenure track.

Elected faculty leaders in university-level shared governance on our campus include a Faculty Chair, Faculty Senate Chair, and President of United

Faculty, our faculty union. These faculty leaders regularly meet with the Academic Affairs leadership team, especially including the Provost and Associate Provosts. The Faculty Chair executes our faculty constitution, which specifies the rights and responsibilities of the voting faculty, and is the spokesperson for the university faculty with internal and external constituents. The Faculty Senate is responsible for educational policy, curriculum, and effectiveness of university faculty committees delegated by the faculty constitution. United Faculty is the exclusive collective bargaining representative for the faculty on issues of wages and other issues, such as grievances, safety, workload, and working conditions when permitted. United Faculty also provides individual faculty members with advocacy, support, and legal counsel.

As faculty leaders and administrative faculty have worked together in recent years, we have begun to recognize our work as characteristic of shared leadership, as it is described in literature on higher education policy and practice (see Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). Over time, our campus has evolved from a traditional top-down approach to decision-making, to one in which distributed shared governance was tolerated, to embracing decision processes that are better characterized as shared leadership and responsibility. Although shared governance and shared leadership are related, there are important differences. Shared governance leverages the distinctive expertise of faculty and administrators, but often results in segmentation of roles in which faculty are responsible for the curriculum and administration is responsible for the budget (Rosenberg, 2014). A shared leadership approach represents an important developmental step beyond shared governance, overcoming some of the vulnerabilities of the latter (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). Shared leadership, beyond shared governance, recognizes that some faculty may possess expertise in budgeting and planning, whereas some administrative faculty may provide expertise and other resources that contribute to a robust curriculum. Further, the practice of shared leadership provides opportunities to build shared cognition and a shared vision of the university's mission that motivates participants and improves the university's effectiveness (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). Shared leadership on our campus involves administrators and faculty regularly consulting, engaging, and collaborating on initiatives to achieve shared aims. We also work together continuously to foster leadership capacity across the university, and are proud of the many partnerships and collaborations among and between faculty and administrators to pursue opportunities and to address challenges. One such challenge was the COVID crisis.

As we confronted the COVID challenges, we were fortunate to have a number of successful examples of shared leadership that provided a strong foundation for our COVID collaborations. These included a 2015-2017 salary equity study by a joint committee of faculty and administrators that resulted in

salary increases for 51 faculty totaling more than $150,000. That study led to a shared recognition that our evaluation system was in need of a major overhaul, so another joint committee of faculty and administrators worked 2017-2019 on more clearly defining faculty workload and developing concrete evaluation standards for the university with each department's faculty and head tailoring these to their discipline and creating specific criteria. The new evaluation system also created a formal post-tenure review process and a promotional ladder and standards for contingent faculty. The first year of implementation of this new system was 2019-2020, so its newness added to our COVID evaluation challenges. A final example of trust and shared leadership occurred after the Iowa legislature gutted our collective bargaining laws in 2017. Although our contract was reduced from more than fifty pages to a single page, most of the language was rolled into a new faculty handbook, and a joint committee of six faculty and six administrators continue to collaborate in overseeing this language and discussing new revisions in our Faculty Handbook Committee.

Principles and Infrastructure for COVID Decision Making

The COVID pandemic first began to affect our campus operations in Spring, 2020, as we prepared for the scheduled spring break. Given the extreme speed with which our campus needed to respond to the crisis, and the numerous moving parts that would be involved in the response, our Provost at that time, James A. Wohlpart, published the following 4 principles that would guide our response: shared governance; focus on vision, mission, strategic plan; deep care; and shared leadership. *Shared governance* was described as a tradition of respecting faculty and administrative expertise, emphasizing the importance of communication, collaboration, transparency, and regular information sharing to facilitate data-driven decisions. Our focus on *mission* emphasized a central theme of student success, which seemed to resonate with faculty (and other) participants during a challenging time, motivating us to decisive action. *Deep care* was described as extending grace to students, peers, and to ourselves. Throughout the crisis, and still, "grace" and "care" are frequently invoked as justification for action. *Shared leadership* grew throughout the crisis, as ideas for solving problems and preventing potential difficulties emerged through authentic dialogue, and it became often difficult to identify one specific individual as the source of a helpful solution. These principles provided the center of gravity that was needed to guide the collective action of disparate individuals and groups as we did our best to maintain a resilient campus amid the pandemic crisis.

Like campuses across the country, UNI went into crisis mode in mid-spring of 2020 with the decision that all state universities in Iowa would

transition to fully online instruction at the end of our spring break week. Faculty were given 11 days, including spring break, to make the shift.

An Incident Command System was immediately formed under the emergency conditions to respond. It was administration-heavy, led by Vice Presidents, with representatives from Facilities Management, Public Safety, Public Relations, Risk Management, Business Operations, and the Health Center. This structure was set up to be rapid, responsive, and to make top-down decisions; which was appropriate for taking emergency actions. But it was not sustainable for long term planning.

With a desire to re-engage our shared leadership ethos, a new structure was launched at the beginning of summer 2020, called Forward Together. The new structure was focused on the safe and successful fall re-opening of our campus. The effort was led by a steering committee which oversaw a much larger team of representatives from across all campus divisions, with a heavy focus on faculty and teaching. The new structure was designed to engage a wide range of voices and integrate plans from every part of campus including academics, residence and dining, business operations, Information Technology, student life, athletics, and Facilities Management.

We had a team of over 75 people divided into eight groups. Each group focused on aspects of campus functions. The teams explored actions, policy changes, and temporary measures needed for a successful reopening; and the Steering Committed moved those recommendations to the appropriate leadership group for consideration and adoption. The actions of the Forward Together committee allowed us to reopen campus with 80% of our courses face-to-face or hybrid, while keeping our on-campus COVID rate lower than the surrounding community.

Our campus is committed to shared leadership and local responsibility. We knew that once classes were safely underway that it was imperative to begin transitioning back to typical decision-making structures, which we did just a few weeks into the fall 2020 semester. Our COVID efforts then shifted again to a COVID Response Committee which focused on student and employee health, by monitoring and responding to COVID cases, and providing continued guidance to campus on safe practices.

COVID-Related Adjustments to Faculty Evaluation and Support

As we now transition into a bit more detail about how we navigated the process of evaluation during COVID, we provide an overview of our evaluation system prior to COVID. In the fall of 2019, our campus was gearing up to implement a new evaluation system that was a product of our shared leadership initiative. This evaluation system was grounded in university-wide standards and criteria, as well

as department-level standards and criteria that were developed jointly between faculty and department heads. As part of this system, faculty were reviewed by each department's Professional Assessment Committee (PAC), then the department head, and if seeking promotion and tenure, also the college Dean and the Provost. Given the uncertainty surrounding this new evaluation system, many faculty were somewhat apprehensive regarding its implementation and, coupled with the COVID crisis, numerous challenges emerged. The following passages outline specific challenges and our responses pertaining to the faculty evaluation process itself, to evaluation criteria related to teaching, scholarship, and service, and to their implications for faculty work/life balance.

COVID Challenges and Responses in Evaluation Process

We made several adjustments to the faculty evaluation process to accommodate the various ways that work was getting done on campus under difficult and changing circumstances. We shifted from paper to electronic faculty portfolios to allow Department Heads and Professional Assessment Committees access to files for evaluation and for teaching observations. We cancelled assessments of teaching, by both students and Department Heads, during the Spring 2020 semester due to the likelihood that they would not reflect consistently valid assessments of teaching. The timeline for submitting artifacts for faculty evaluation was delayed, which was appreciated by both faculty and administrators responsible for performance reviews. Faculty were also encouraged to include narrative statements, in their evaluation materials, regarding COVID's impacts on their productivity and goal achievement. In addition, some departments made temporary adjustments to their faculty performance criteria and standards for use during the year of the pandemic. Finally, although our collective bargaining agreement calls for merit increases, we had to make a decision regarding whether merit evaluations could be justified under the unusual circumstances. Surveys to faculty and Department Heads resulted in across-the-board increases to all faculty, which precluded the need for merit evaluations. These and other temporary measures were taken, in conversation with faculty leaders, consistent with principles for pandemic-related decision making outlined by our Provost.

COVID Challenges and Responses in Evaluation of Teaching

At UNI and other regional comprehensives, outstanding teaching is our primary role and excellence in teaching is evaluated first and foremost. As we all experienced, however, COVID required a rapid pivot to alternative modes of instruction that many faculty were not experienced with, and the additional challenges of teaching in non-traditional spaces, and in multiple modes at one

time, keeping up with students moving in and out of quarantine. All of this required far more of our faculty's time to plan and implement than ever before, with less confidence in our overall quality.

To address the most immediate need, and again using a shared leadership model that was heavy on consultation and problem solving, UNI offered multiple professional development opportunities in the summer of 2020 that included stipends for faculty time. UNI uses Quality Matters as our framework for assuring consistency and rigor in our online offerings, so our summer professional development focused on introducing a "lite" version of QM, as well as longer and more intense versions for full course redesigns for courses intended to be offered online past the immediate crisis. Our Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and office of Continuing Education partnered to create these and other options on new technologies, increasing student engagement, and facilitating faculty-to-faculty sharing of emerging best practices.

Applying our usual teaching standards in unusual times brought a number of challenges. We cancelled the student assessments of teaching in the spring of 2019, but returned to them this academic year, something that brought on more fear and stress for faculty who were doing their best under very trying conditions, but who feared that students might have unrealistic expectations. To ensure that the evaluation of teaching was authentic, observations were critical, but challenging for both the evaluators and those being evaluated. Many PACs and heads opted to conduct observations through recorded Zoom sessions, an approach that offered grace and flexibility all around. A new voluntary section of the evaluation file asked faculty to share how COVID challenges impacted their teaching (e.g., pedagogical limitations resulting from social distance or non-traditional classroom space) for evaluators to take into account.

One final noteworthy COVID response related to teaching was the relative flexibility offered to faculty in terms of the mode of instruction. Faculty with underlying medical conditions at higher risk were generally granted accommodations to teach online. Although the university was committed to teaching face to face, the university also committed to empowering individual faculty to make temporary decisions in response to contextual factors in their classes, such as moving a course temporarily online when a large proportion of the class was in quarantine and experimenting with various forms of hybrid instruction. For faculty, knowing one had that control in a situation that was otherwise completely out-of-control was important whether one used it or not and communicated trust in faculty judgement and care for their safety.

COVID Challenges and Responses in Evaluation of Scholarship

Our scholarship was also affected as a result of COVID-related isolation. Access to research sites and participants was severely limited, which sidelined many faculty members' plans for field research. Some conferences were cancelled and numerous journals suffered delays in peer review. Due to COVID-related losses and resulting budget constraints at our own institution, funds available for research support were limited.

In response to these challenges, our university did our best to practice our Deep Care principle and to allocate our limited research funds to the most vulnerable faculty. Specifically, we provided an option for probationary faculty to extend their tenure clock for one year. Further, faculty can invoke this option throughout their probationary period at UNI -- they did not have to make the election during the 2020-21 academic year. We also provided an option for probationary faculty to delay their third-year review for one year. In addition, all faculty members were encouraged to include a COVID impact narrative statement in their evaluation materials for the 2020-21 academic year.

Finally, two of the most important vehicles to support faculty research at UNI are Summer Research Fellowships and Professional Development Assignments, our version of a sabbatical. These are offered on a competitive basis and awarded on the merits of a written proposal, evaluated by qualified faculty from across the university. Summer Research Fellowships can be normally 4 weeks or 8 weeks, whereas Professional Development Assignments can be 1 semester at full pay or 1 year at half pay. For many reasons, including that travel and data collection during the isolation period was limited, Professional Development Assignments were rescheduled. For reasons primarily related to COVID-induced budget constraints, eligibility for Summer Research Fellowships was limited to probationary faculty and only for 4-week awards. Once again, these arrangements were decided among the shared leadership team, including elected faculty leadership, administrative faculty, as well as consultation with the Faculty Handbook Committee.

COVID Challenges and Responses in Evaluation of Service

Related to service, the challenges that emerged appeared to be either—1) extensive amounts of service as faculty collaborated with administrators to serve on COVID related task forces or 2) fewer service responsibilities as a result of many "formal" service activities being put on hold.

One service challenge that emerged and became more pressing was the emotional labor required of faculty to care for and support students who were struggling, as well as additional advising as a result of complexities related to

COVID. To account for these challenges, a differentiated portfolio option was offered, as well as an opportunity to add a narrative to one's evaluation materials.

COVID Challenges and Responses in Faculty Work/Life Balance

In the previous sections, we've talked about the challenges and responses to the formal areas of evaluation in academia: teaching, scholarship, and service. However, COVID revealed another dimension that has always impacted our productivity, but never so clearly evident. That is, all the other demands and challenges in our life and how we balance those in our work. Our survey of the faculty found that while a strong majority of faculty rated the institution highly in terms of support provided to them in their teaching, research, and service overall, only 36% believed the university had done well in supporting their work/life balance needs. Faculty cited childcare and caregiving demands, mental health issues, and increased stress and burnout resulting from balancing these demands on top of increased work demands. In addition, it is important to note that many of these factors disproportionately impacted women, especially in childcare, and that both women and people of color were disproportionately impacted in terms of emotional labor supporting students and colleagues, especially with the racial trauma that compounded the COVID impact (Deryugina, Shurchkov, & Stearns, 2021; Gonzales & Griffin, 2020; Skinner, Betancourt, & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2021).

While our responses may not have been sufficient for the needs, both faculty and administration were careful in all communications to demonstrate deep care and appreciation for faculty and students, to highlight existing support resources in mental health, and to encourage showing grace and flexibility. We also created a new section of the online evaluation files for faculty to articulate how outside factors relating to COVID had impacted their work, so that this could be taken into account in evaluation. We recognize that some faculty may not have felt comfortable sharing personal details in this statement, especially those related to family or mental health, and so the narrative was strictly voluntary. We hope that these statements helped evaluators to give context to degree of difficulty, not to lower standards but to give credit for the degree of difficulty of the work.

Discussion and Conclusions

The closing section summarizes our learning regarding shared leadership processes as they unfolded throughout the COVID crisis, and chronicles new initiatives and challenges currently emerging on our campus as a result.

What We Learned

Sapon-Shevin (1996) has described the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education as a disclosing tablet. If you remember from when we were young, we'd go to the dentist and place those lovely green or blue tabs in our mouths and they would brightly uncover the plaque. Plaque that had always been there. Sapon-Shevin posited that inclusion was not the problem, but disclosed problems that already existed within the structures of schooling. We say the same can be said for COVID-19. Generally speaking, the COVID crisis revealed already existing gaps and inequities, like a disclosing tablet: gender inequities, caregiving needs, student and faculty anxiety, mental health needs, racial trauma. All of these were present before COVID, but COVID magnified them. The following commitments are what we *needed* in order to survive a global pandemic as a campus and they are what we *continue to need* if we are to address the systemic issues brought to light.

Shared leadership fosters resilience. Our prior mutual commitment to practicing shared leadership helped us to survive the toughest pandemic-related challenges and was further deepened as a result. It was clear to us that faculty participation both strengthened decision quality and fostered broad faculty commitment. Complexity science explains the effect of shared leadership on improved decision quality, in that greater diversity in decision-making enriches our tool box for problem-solving (Page, 2008). On the other hand, procedural justice explains the effect on broad faculty commitment. Specifically, organizational citizenship behaviors, which are helping actions that benefit more than just the actor, are fostered by perceptions of procedural justice (Moorman, Niehoff, & Organ, 1993). However, faculty are committed to shared leadership initiatives only to the extent that they trust shared leadership, which is fostered when faculty leaders and administrative faculty routinely demonstrate mutual trust and respect, perhaps especially when we disagree.

A focus on shared aspirations resolves conflict. Such a condition of mutual trust and respect is largely a function of a demonstrated mutual commitment to strategic priorities that are necessary to maintain the long-term health of the University. Especially in difficult times, reference to our shared long-term priorities is an essential conflict management mechanism, reminding each stakeholder why we must subordinate each of our parochial interests to those that we share among all of us.

Deep Care for faculty translates to deep care for students. We are more likely to inspire and maintain a cultural commitment to Deep Care when it is continually demonstrated to faculty over time. Inequities can be a significant hurdle. Both faculty and students require grace with boundaries; and we must

recognize persistent sources of inequity by: 1) providing support for those affected; and 2) working to identify and remedy sources.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Our experience of the pandemic has changed the ways that we think about various impacts on the quality of faculty work and the inclusion of faculty in shared leadership. Our learning has resulted in new initiatives, recognition of new emerging challenges to faculty work and its evaluation, and our recognition of the potential for digital transformation of some of our work life, potentially providing expanded opportunities for flexible work arrangements.

We have created a Faculty Advancement Committee whose charter is to explore COVID's impacts on faculty, and to condense that learning into new policies that enhance faculty commitment, productivity, and development. This committee has only recently begun to meet and will examine faculty narrative statements regarding the impacts of the pandemic on faculty teaching, scholarship, and service. The committee is currently developing strategies for fair faculty evaluation by peers and department heads. We plan to continue this committee for years to come, as we see the pandemic continuing to impact our faculty, and those who are currently on the tenure track are especially vulnerable.

In addition, we are in the process of creating a new committee to revise our instrument for student assessments of teaching and learning. The need to revise the instrument is emerging in conversation with numerous participants across campus, for multiple reasons. One common objection, for example, is that student response rates for the assessment are extremely low and falling, especially for online courses. The sharp reduction in response rates seemed to coincide with electronic delivery of the instrument to students through campus email. Part of the committee's work will be to examine alternative means for administering the instrument, as students are increasingly averse to email as a communication medium.

There are new challenges that may require our attention in the near future. There may be a growing consensus that our recently revised evaluation system, first implemented during the last academic year, poses unnecessary and unintended difficulties. These need to be further investigated and addressed, if warranted. This will not be painless, as tribes have already begun to develop around those committed to the new status quo and those committed to further evaluation system refinements. Also, new ambiguity regarding the pandemic's status, especially pertaining to the potential threat of new variants, provides a new source of uncertainty which might threaten our plans to return to something resembling normalcy. Further, the local commitments and trust on COVID decision making we worked to achieve last year are complicated and challenged

by newer, and more structured, state-level regulations that limit our local decision-making.

We are recognizing that there are opportunities for more flexibility with online work arrangements, but we are also facing new legal obstacles with working from home in different states and cities. As we transition back to having a physical presence on campus, we are once again faced with a new calculus for managing work-life balance, especially for faculty and staff with school-age children. A non-trivial proportion of faculty are concerned about how stopping their clock or including narrative statements of COVID impact in evaluation materials may affect their performance assessments by peers and department heads. We are concerned that labor shortages plaguing other sectors may also come to visit higher education and our campus, as retirements and resignations are on the rise. The perennial challenge of organizational communication requires that we continually clarify (and exemplify) the practice of extending grace in appropriate ways, in order to institutionalize a culture of deep care. Because the lasting impacts of COVID are unknown, we must continue to build trust and honor vulnerability to foster widespread commitment to solving problems through authentic communication toward emergent solutions, as we have recently learned.

Although our institution continues to experience lingering challenges, we are seldom content to tolerate them, preferring instead to overcome them. We suspect that institutionalizing shared leadership is the mechanism needed to continue to address these and other difficulties. Shared leadership and responsibility foster the shared commitment that is needed to continue to identify obstacles to our success and to continually devise adaptive and sustainable solutions. As such, we view it as a crucial means to secure a vital future for our institution and its next generation of stakeholders, especially in light of the increasing complexity of the environment that we must navigate, and that they will inherit.

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