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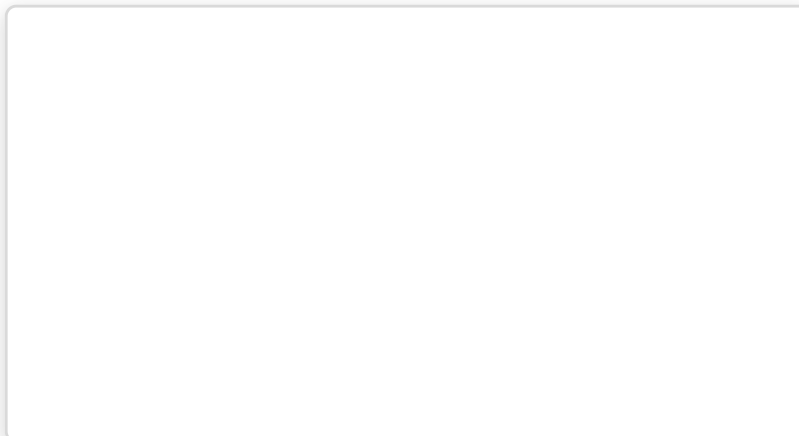
Faculty Issues [Shared Governance](#)

March 28, 2024

University of Kentucky President Proposes to Strip Faculty Body's Power

Eli Capilouto released a “draft of principles” Wednesday that would dissolve the University Senate and replace it with an advisory group.

By [Ryan Quinn](#)





The University of Kentucky’s president has proposed dissolving the institution’s University Senate.

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The University of Kentucky’s president released a proposal Wednesday to do away with its University Senate and transfer the faculty-dominated body’s policy-making power to the Board of Trustees.

The senate, which first met in 1918, has considerable power in educational policy at the university. According to university spokesman Jay Blanton, that includes setting the academic calendar and minimum admissions requirements, along with the authority to shoot down proposed new degree programs. Now, President Eli Capilouto has proposed transitioning the university senate to a faculty senate, which Blanton said would have advisory power. Capilouto's plan would also create an advisory President’s Council, which would include three faculty members in its dozen members.

Efforts to reduce faculties’ role in shared governance have become something of a trend nationally. An Arizona bill that’s near passage, for instance, would change current law that says public university faculty members there “shall participate in” or “share responsibility for” governing, academic and personnel decisions. Instead, they could only “consult with” university leaders on such decisions. And Florida’s legislature passed a law last year that says public university presidents—and the administrators to whom they delegate hiring authority—are “not bound by the recommendations or opinions of faculty or other individuals.”

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DeShana Collett, chair of the University Senate Council, the current senate's executive body, said "the new proposal takes authority away from faculty, staff and students. No vote equals no voice." She said it made sense that the board has entrusted the senate "to ensure that degree program proposals that reach the board of our state's flagship university are of high academic quality."

Capilouto's "[Final Draft of Principles for Campus Review](#)," which he released Wednesday, stresses the preeminence of the board. "Principle 1: The University of Kentucky's Board of Trustees is the institution's ultimate authority for all policy matters, which should not be delegated," he wrote.

The senate doesn't adequately represent students and staff members, the president wrote, and "is not organized to focus on the overall health and well-being of the whole university, nor is it positioned to establish or convey an overarching mission."

In a Wednesday email to faculty members, Capilouto said that the university's governing regulations, or GRs, "delegate what is often called educational policy to the University Senate. This has been interpreted broadly, not simply for the content of courses, but a host of other matters that are not about the curriculum. I am recommending potential revisions to our GRs to make clear the board's sole role and authority as the representatives of the people of Kentucky who we serve."

Blanton told *Inside Higher Ed* that "this is actually strengthening shared governance—we have a University Senate body right now that has a very small number of votes for students and has no votes for staff." Collett said that the current senate does have both students and administrative staff members with voting privileges.

The University Senate is composed of 94 elected faculty senators, 18 students, 19 deans, the chair of the Staff Senate "and a number of administrators," including the president, according to Collett.

At a Feb. 23 board meeting, the trustees passed a resolution directing Capilouto to "move quickly to formulate recommended changes to our Governing Regulations for this board's consideration at the next meeting." Among other things, the board asked for changes that "clearly articulate a shared governance structure that is in greater alignment with institutional benchmarks and that clearly recognizes the board's primacy as the institution's policymaking body."

Since then, faculty members have been expressing concern about where the board and administration were heading—and how fast they were heading there.

Collett said earlier this month that she told Capilouto “quickness does not equal quality.” Her council previously passed a resolution urging the president and board “to uphold the existing, clearly delineated role and responsibility of the Senate in matters concerning educational policy.”

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Philipp Rosemann, president of the American Association of University Professors' UK chapter, said early this month that “events are very, very fast moving and perhaps that is actually the main problem at this point.” He said “the University Senate is being short-circuited here.”

On Wednesday, he told *Inside Higher Ed* that he had only received Capilouto's “Final Draft of Principles for Campus Review” earlier that afternoon. “On the face of it, it seems alarming,” Rosemann said, adding that his AAUP chapter needs time to process it.

“It is more sweeping than I thought,” he said. “What I'm seeing is a transformation of shared governance into a top-down structure in which all authority is vested with the board of trustees and the administration.” He said he didn't think the president had taken faculty concerns into consideration.

Capilouto is asking for comments on his “Final Draft” by April 3. Blanton said the board of trustees won't do a “first reading” of the specific policy revisions that emerge from the process until its April 25–26 meeting. After that, the university will solicit feedback from the campus for another month, with the board set to meet again in June to vote on final approval.

“I don’t think the idea of moving quickly and thoughtfully are mutually exclusive,” Blanton said. Further, he said the board endorsed a strategic plan for the institution over two years ago, and dialogue leading up to these changes has been ongoing for that long.

“This isn’t a question of what’s wrong,” he said, “it’s a question of how to accelerate what’s right.”

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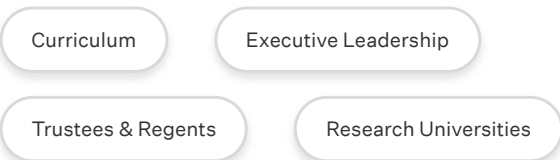
Written By

Ryan Quinn

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