As an organization, the SUNY University Faculty Senate began in 1953, and is included in the Board of Trustees. This poster highlights both the challenges to and benefits of shared governance in the SUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS) and how members have learned to capitalize on the benefits of systemness – within campuses, as well as across the system, to advance shared governance throughout the University. By incorporating the voices of campus governance leaders (CGLs) as well as the University Faculty Senators at the UFS plenary meetings, campus faculty and unique campus concerns are represented. Through the involvement of the Chancellor at these plenary meetings, an administrative perspective is incorporated. The end result, in many cases, is the ability to capitalize on the resources available, while being respectful of the different campus needs and characteristics. And yet, it is the uniqueness and the idiosyncrasies of the individual campuses that have created the experiences, perspectives and voices that have contributed to SUNY’s dynamic processes of shared governance. It is the challenges faced by individual campuses as well as the System that foster the use of all the options discussed. In this way, “System is bigger than the sum of its parts.”

### Challenges: Holes in the “Shared Governance” Model

- **Structural Holes:**
  - Faculty, staff, administrators and others have different – sometimes contradictory – perspectives or priorities.
  - Idiosyncratic campus needs and structures make it difficult to benefit from others’ solutions.

- **Interpersonal Holes:**
  - Lack of trust and/or collegiality.
  - Lack of credible leadership.
  - Academic inquiry, fundamental to faculty, may be anathema to administration.

### Shared Governance: The Benefits of Systemness

**SUNY’s Shared Governance Transformation Team offers this definition of shared governance:**

Shared governance in higher education refers to the structures and processes through which faculty, professional staff, administration, governing boards and, sometimes, students and staff participate in the development of policies and in decision making that affect the institution. As an organization, the SUNY University Faculty Senate began in 1953, and is included in the Board of Trustees (Policy, Article VII, Title A): §1. Name. There shall be a University Faculty Senate of State University of New York.

§2. Purposes. The Senate shall be the official agency through which the University Faculty engages in the governance of the University. The Senate shall be concerned with effective educational policies and other professional matters within the University.

This poster highlights both the challenges to and benefits of shared governance in the context of systemness. Systemness provides challenges to shared governance; however, members of the SUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS) have learned to capitalize on the benefits of systemness – within campuses, as well as across the system, to advance shared governance throughout the University. By incorporating the voices of campus governance leaders (CGLs) as well as the University Faculty Senators at the UFS plenary meetings, campus faculty and unique campus concerns are represented. Through the involvement of the Chancellor at these plenary meetings, an administrative perspective is incorporated. The end result, in many cases, is the ability to capitalize on the resources available, while being respectful of the different campus needs and characteristics. And yet, it is the uniqueness and the idiosyncrasies of the individual campuses that have created the experiences, perspectives and voices that have contributed to SUNY’s dynamic processes of shared governance. It is the challenges faced by individual campuses as well as the System that foster the use of all the options discussed. In this way, “System is bigger than the sum of its parts.”

**Structural Options**

UFS brings people together at Plenaries Meeting three times annually, these forums serve to enable members to not only develop shared perspectives, but also to hear how other campuses are approaching challenges. There are opportunities to hear from the entire membership, as well as engage in small group discussions with counterparts (e.g., sector members). After hearing up-to-date information about SUNY issues and resources from System leaders, Senators can discuss priorities, and options that pertain to both their own campuses, and others throughout the system.

For the past 9 years, all CGLs have been invited to the UFS Plenaries. Financial support is provided by the UFS. The CGLs are given the same opportunities as Senators to meet to discuss “issues of concern” and report them to the entire Senate body, and the presence of the Chancellor. The CGLs are also able to interact and share ideas via an active listserv. These avenues of interaction have fostered shared governance through the entire SUNY System:

- The CGLs are given the opportunity to share “best practices” in promoting faculty engagement in shared governance and improving the effectiveness of campus governance.
- The work of the Governance Committee is more closely aligned with the needs and concerns of the CGLs.
- Discussions during UFS plenaries are more robust with the insights and inputs of the CGLs.
- The collective intelligence and governance experience of the CGL group, and/or the UFS and/or the System can be mined to facilitate solutions to challenges to faculty governance, big and small.

**Visitation**

In the event of a serious, prolonged conflict about faculty governance between faculty and the university administration, and where there is serious consideration of a vote of “no confidence” it is strongly recommended that the campus president and the campus faculty governance leader(s) jointly request the help of the University Faculty Senate in resolving the dispute via a visitation. They make this request in the form of a letter of invitation to the President of the University Faculty Senate and the SUNY President to render assistance by appointing a Visitation Committee to come to the campus.

**Filling in the Holes: Systemness Solutions**

#### Participation in UFS, and in systemness, establishes trust

Although each President of the UFS has a unique style, all strive for an atmosphere of transparency and openness. Effective leadership empowers members’ participation, via large group forums for information sharing, or action (debate and discussion of resolutions).

Gallos (2009) recommends a collaborative approach toward governance. The SUNY University Faculty Senate has successfully created the kind of forum Gallos describes. It draws members from throughout SUNY into the governance process – into a beginning level of involvement (e.g., committees, representation of campuses within the Senate (e.g., University Faculty Senators), to serving in a leadership role within the Senate (e.g., both Sector Representatives and Committee Chairs serving on the Executive Committee) and to serving as a liaison to the SUNY Board of Trustees (e.g., as President of the University Faculty Senate). Members of the SUNY University Faculty Senate are able to hear directly from the SUNY Chancellor, as well as other members of System Administration. The development of trust is seen across multiple years, as members identify one of their own to serve as President of the University Faculty Senate. Trust is essential in that election, as the President not only represents the Senate throughout the state in multiple forums, but represents faculty throughout the system with a non-voting seat on the Board of Trustees.

**Interpersonal Options**

#### Participation in UFS and Systemness provides on-the-job leadership training

Different levels of engagement (committee membership, elected University Faculty Senate(s) from each campus, UFS officers, Executive Committee positions), provide for progressively more advanced leadership opportunities as well as role models for effective leadership. At the same time, term limits established by UFS for committee membership, senators, and officers, provide opportunities for more experienced faculty members to reverse their trajectory and bring their leadership and knowledge back to their campuses and other organizations within the SUNY System.

**Systemness capitalizes on the academic spirit of inquiry**

As Gallos (2009) offers an inspiring approach to governance, the University Faculty Senate aspires toward this model: “University senates become forums for shared understanding, not battlefields for campus control: places where faculty and administration regularly come together to suggest, listen, and learn – and where both look forward to the exchange.” It is therein that the benefits of in-depth analysis, which faculty members bring to their work, can be transferred to the governance process and prevent re-inventing the wheel.

1Dr. Cramer currently serves as the Parliamentarian for the SUNY University Faculty Senate. Both Drs. Cramer and Mozlin have served as Chair of the SUNY University Faculty Senate Governance Committee, Dr. Cramer, 2007-2010, and Dr. Mozlin 2011-present. Both have served in numerous roles as governance leaders, on their campuses and within SUNY.

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**Sharing Shared Governance: The Benefits of Systemness**

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