

## OPEN GOVERNANCE RESOLUTION

Administrators, faculty and staff are individual citizens as well as employees of a great university. The members of the Senate-Assembly, its boards and committees are individual members of the faculty who have been elected to serve the university's interest. Faculties participate in Boards, Committees and Special Taskforces as appointed members. Many administrators are also faculty at the university. Thus, University governance is a collaborative and shared responsibility conducted by the key constituencies at the university – faculty, administrators and staff and our Board of Regents.

However, the election or appointment of representatives does not end the general faculty interest in how the business of the university is conducted, nor does it end the faculty's right to be involved in university decision-making. The university is stronger when faculty understand and participate in the governing process, have access to good, clear information, and are able to place confidence in their administrative partners.

Faculty members believe that university governance serves the university's interest and the faculty's interest best when it operates openly. Openness in government is the basis for accountability, improved decision-making, faculty and administrator trust, and informed participation. The faculty believes that open governance consistently follows six basic principles:

- 1. Open governance provides the faculty and staff easy access to information that educates and informs.**
- 2. Open governance has administrators listening to all the people affected by its actions. No person or group affected by university actions has a greater right to be heard than anyone else.**
- 3. "Sunshine" and transparency are critical to better morale, higher performance and mission accomplishment.**
- 4. Open governance sees the faculty and staff as sources of creative ideas and effective solutions.**
- 5. Open governance follows its stated processes, is truthful, and welcomes accountability.**
- 6. "Open" administrators, faculty and staff disclose their conflicts of interest to the public.**

Open governance requires that each of these six values be embodied in the culture and mindsets of all administrators, faculty and staff. The faculty believes that administrators can affirm, expand, and protect the University of Michigan's culture by asserting open, inclusive, transparent, responsive, and accountable government.

Following are ten principles essential to achieving "open" governance:

**1) Provide complete and understandable information to the faculty and staff.**

Access to information is the foundation for transparent university governance. Open governance requires that faculty and staff have complete information in a format which they can understand and use. As the first directive of this policy, all administrators shall aim to provide complete information to the faculty whenever possible, recognizing that privacy must be respected whenever appropriate. In addition, Administrators shall work to ensure the faculty is able to understand, or reasonably should be able to, the information provided without special legal or other expertise.

The same principle applies within the university. Information must be freely shared between and within departments, between faculty and administrators, subject to privacy and other concerns, so that UM employees can work together efficiently and effectively and without faculty having blinders on and kept on the outside of administrative decision-making.

**2) Plan for and incorporate faculty input at the beginning of each major action.**

University governance clearly and tangibly affects the faculty, staff, students, and visitors' daily life. A commitment to open governance provides people with an opportunity to share their views and provide input early in the decision making process, at a time when the input can shape the decision. University administrators are encouraged to actively seek out and provide for opportunities where broad faculty participation is available early in the process to complement the work of administrative staff.

The Administrator's decision documents should reflect how faculty input affected the decision.

**3) Let the faculty know "why" decisions are made.**

The reasons behind administrative decisions are often as important as the decisions themselves. Letting the faculty know why decisions are made ensures honest, reasonable, fair, and open governance. It also protects the faculty from arbitrary administrative interference or worse. Administrators shall work to document any significant facts and criteria guiding a decision of broad impact on the faculty, staff or students and make the justification publically available early-on in the decision-process.

**4) Go above and beyond the requirements when providing information to the public and employees.**

University rules and procedures provide public notice for major decisions that affect faculty lives. These regulations shall be considered a floor and the University shall seek to expand and proactively provide additional information to the faculty whenever financially and logistically feasible. In addition, university Administrators shall seek to use active noticing measures, such as physical meetings, emails, mailings, and phone calls in addition to passive techniques, such as web pages, agenda posting, and etc. of notices of proposed changes.

**5) Make the information on [www.umich.edu](http://www.umich.edu) easily searchable, accessible, and understandable.**

The use of technology - solutions is commonplace for all administrators at the University. To the extent feasible, administrators shall make its data, records and decisions available online in an accessible, searchable, and understandable format to appropriate faculty. Online materials shall also be intuitively organized in a manner someone without administrative expertise can navigate and search. These principles again hold true for faculty access to information affecting their employment and/or benefits.

**6) Ensure the university's public processes are understandable and fair to all parties involved.**

U of M has numerous processes designed to ensure that faculty, staff and students have the opportunity to voice their perspective on decisions that affect their daily lives. However, the members of the university community are often only aware of one step of the entire process, meaning they do not participate when their participation would be most valuable and have serious consequence.

In order to expand the openness and inclusiveness of university governance, Administrators should seek to develop clear, consistent, and equitable processes, and to make the broader university community aware of their existence. The same principles apply to the university internal processes impacting faculty and staff. The faculty's and staff's need for understandable and fair internal policies is no less important.

**7) Encourage candor and protect against retaliation.**

Constructive criticism is vital to a great university. The university community must be able to state their beliefs without fear of retribution. At the same time, beliefs must be honestly stated in a constructive manner, free of personal animosity.

**8) Practice the principles of open governance in your interactions with faculty and staff.**

The faculty and staff are affected by the administrative decisions just as much as the broader public. Administrators should make every attempt to communicate and practice the principals outlined in this policy internally with their employees as they do externally with the faculty, staff and public.

**(9) Complaints about violations of these openness principles should be directed to the Chair of SACUA with respect to faculty matters.**

**(10) These principles shall apply to all campuses, units, departments and programs of the University of Michigan.**

**Approved: Budget Study Committee, April 8, 2010  
Senate Assembly, January 23, 2012**