The 2024 AAUP Community College Shared Governance Survey: Findings on Faculty Authority by Decision-Making Areas

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I. Introduction

For more than a century, the AAUP has conducted or sponsored national shared governance surveys at four-year colleges and universities, including the 2021 AAUP Shared Governance Survey, which assessed the perceived level of faculty authority across twenty-nine areas of institutional decision-making.[1] Each of these surveys provided a snapshot of the state of shared governance at the time it was conducted, and together they provide vital information about the historical development of academic governance in the United States over the past one hundred years.

In 2024, the AAUP, in partnership with the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, conducted an inaugural shared governance survey focused on community colleges, the institutions educating nearly 40 percent of all undergraduates in the United States.[2] The survey instrument mirrored the one used for four-year institutions, examining faculty authority across twenty-six areas of institutional decision-making. (Three areas included in the 2021 survey instrument did not apply to community colleges.) Findings from this survey provide insights into areas of faculty authority and administrative collaboration in the nation's public community colleges and allow for a more robust understanding of shared governance across American higher education.

Public community colleges have a variety of governance structures. Indeed, the Association of Community College Trustees identifies fifty different models of community college governance, falling into four broad categories: a local community college board, a state-level community college board, a state-level higher education board (which includes other postsecondary institutions), and a university governing board that encompasses some or all of a state's community colleges. Table 1 lists community college state-level governance models by state.

This variety of governance structures, as well as the fact that nearly 70 percent of community college faculty are employed part time, has major implications for community college shared governance structures and policies. Furthermore, community colleges are a highly unionized sector of higher education: Just over half of all community colleges have collective bargaining agreements in place, covering 52 percent of full- and part-time faculty members.[3] These collective

1. Hans-Joerg Tiede, "The 2021 AAUP Shared Governance Survey: Findings on Faculty Roles by Decision-Making Areas," *Academe* 107, no. 3 (Summer 2021): 82–96.

2. American Association of Community Colleges, "Fast Facts," 2024, https://www.aacc.nche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Fast_Facts_2024.pdf.

3. William A. Herbert, Jacob Apkarian, and Joseph van der Naald, "2024 Directory of Bargaining Agents and Contracts in Institutions of Higher Education," *National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions,* 2024, https://research-data.hunter.cuny.edu/ncscbhep/2024DirectoryofBargainingAgentsandContractsinInstitutionsofHigherEducation.pdf

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