

Executive Summary

This State of Faculty Shared Governance report evaluates the state of shared governance across CU Denver. The report assesses bylaws, faculty governance structures across schools, colleges, and the Auraria Library, and incorporates faculty insights with an eye on compliance with University of Colorado Board of Regents laws and policies.

Originating from a dialogue between Faculty Assembly (FA) and the Office of the Provost, the report exemplifies a successful faculty-administration collaboration to advance shared governance principles. The Office of Faculty Affairs played a pivotal role in coordinating organization and ensuring smooth collaboration. Researched and written by Associate Professor Peter Anthamatten, a former FA chair, the report reflects his shared governance experience, intimate understanding of faculty perspectives, and meticulous research.

The first section of the report incorporates a thorough review of bylaws across CU Denver's schools, colleges, and the library (excluding CAM bylaws, which are under revision). This review shows that some college-level bylaws define committees and structures with a clear delineation of roles between faculty and administration, while others need more clarity, updating, and stronger shared governance structures. Some colleges demonstrate alignment with Regent policies, while others lack clarity or specificity in articulating faculty authority. A key issue highlighted in the bylaws review is faculty representation: the selection processes for faculty representatives vary across colleges, with some having clear mechanisms for faculty involvement in governance bodies, and others lacking explicit procedures.

This part of the report includes several key recommendations from Peter Anthamatten:

1. Ensure that a faculty governance body is represented in each college, one that provides a structured platform for faculty involvement in decision-making; three models were recommended: CAP's College Governance model, the Auraria Library's elected Faculty Chair and elected Faculty Secretary model, and CLAS Faculty Council model
2. Include bylaw provisions for faculty voting on any bylaw revisions to ensure transparency and inclusivity

3. Clarify and strengthen faculty authority over governance areas specified in Regent policies, ensuring alignment with institutional values
4. Ensure that bylaws describe mechanisms for faculty to submit recommendations on faculty matters, fostering a collaborative decision-making process
5. Institute periodic review mechanisms for bylaws to ensure ongoing alignment with institutional values and best practices in shared governance

The second section covers a March 2024 survey on faculty members' experience with and perceptions of faculty shared governance at CU Denver. Key findings reflect a nuanced landscape of opinions and experiences within the university community. Quantitative analysis of about 250 rostered faculty survey responses revealed a generally positive outlook regarding the level of support from schools, colleges, and library administrations for faculty governance. Survey respondents acknowledged a degree of administration respect for faculty authority in crucial areas such as pedagogy, curriculum development, and faculty evaluations. However, concerns emerged among faculty regarding the clarity and efficacy of governance processes, indicating a need for improvement in communication and transparency between school, college, and library administrative leadership and faculty.

Faculty members expressed mixed sentiments about their satisfaction with faculty governance. While there was acknowledgment of the impact of shared governance on policies and decision-making processes, there was also a notable undercurrent of dissatisfaction, particularly concerning the extent of influence faculty wield in shaping broader institutional direction. One of the most significant findings pertained to the perceived lack of campus-level administrative support for faculty. Faculty members voiced concerns about a disconnect between the administrative leadership and the faculty body, citing instances in which decisions seemed to have been made without adequate consultation or consideration of faculty input.

The third section is based on 11 meetings conducted in March and April, interviewing deans, associate deans, and faculty leaders, with around 50 participants. Three major themes came up in these interviews:

1. Faculty struggle to engage in governance due to heavy workloads, hindering their ability to serve on committees, stay informed, and fully participate in meetings. Addressing workload issues is crucial to fostering meaningful engagement in governance activities.
2. Regularly updated bylaws are crucial for strong governance, facilitating faculty empowerment, participation, and effective decision-making processes within academic units. Clear and periodically revised bylaws are essential to ensuring transparency and accountability. Likewise, governance structures vary across units and need periodic review to align with shared values, address challenges, and achieve common goals.
3. Departmental and campus-level governance and administrative support for governance must be strengthened to support college-level governance. University administration plays a crucial role in shaping policies that impact shared governance practices across units, emphasizing the need for stronger governance at all levels to reinforce effective decision-making and collaboration.

Peter Anthamatten marshalled admirable scholarly research, precision, and analysis to produce the report. Yet assessing the current state of faculty shared governance is not an academic exercise. It serves as a starting point for our collective efforts—involving the Provost's Office, deans, faculty from schools, colleges, and the library, as well as Faculty Assembly and UCDALI—to strengthen faculty shared governance at CU Denver. To achieve this goal, we will work collaboratively in the Fall Semester to develop actionable recommendations based on the report's insights.

I want to thank everyone who made this report possible—including participating in the survey, providing feedback and criticism, and participating in interviews. Your contributions have been invaluable in shaping our understanding of faculty shared governance and charting a path forward for improvement.

Turan Kayaoglu
Associate Vice Chancellor of Faculty Affairs