

The Roar

UFF/Saint Leo University Chapter

A man's mind, stretched by new ideas, may never return to its original dimensions.

-Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

President's Message

by Valerie Wright

I have been thinking a lot lately about the concept of shared governance. This was one of the overarching reasons cited by administration and the Board of Trustees in deciding to no longer recognize the Union and the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Somehow, in order to attain shared governance, we need to get rid of the Union, the CBA, and the University Senate? This is the false dichotomy they presented. We have had shared governance here for the past 44 years.

In case you have forgotten, here are some of their comments:

"As a Benedictine Catholic higher education institution, we at Saint Leo University see this decision as an opportunity to move toward our goal of increasing unity, transparency, and flexibility between the university's faculty and administration."

This quote projects a false narrative that there has been no flexibility between faculty and administration. When was the last time faculty have been inflexible? In fact, I think we demonstrate an amazing ability to adapt and change when asked. This past year is the most recent evidence of that.

With regard to transparency, that still does not exist. A perfect example of this is the recent creation of a new School of Computing, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, and Data Science. Faculty were completely blindsided by this, including those who will be most affected by this decision.

Do any of us feel more unified? We are, in fact, less unified than before October 23rd. How can faculty feel a sense of community



Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it.

-Albert Einstein



Spring adds new life and beauty to all that is.

-Jessica Harrelson

when administration unilaterally decided to take away our bargaining rights? In the midst of a pandemic. When we could not gather and discuss this face-to-face. When they refused to respond to questions about this decision. When they knew they could do this without having to look us in the face.

“Withdrawing recognition from the union at Saint Leo and transitioning to direct communication with all faculty and working through a shared governance model is consistent with principles of Catholic social justice teachings regarding respect for individual human dignity in the workplace.”

When do we ever experience direct communication from administration? If anything, the Union has communicated directly with faculty as we negotiated specific articles during the past two years. The Union held a breakfast and lunch meeting every month to get faculty feedback on the new contract topics which were being negotiated – salary, outside employment, faculty schedules, overloads, etc. I still have the handouts with the faculty’s written comments and suggestions that I carried to each negotiation meeting to demonstrate to administration the fact that we had the support of faculty.

The most puzzling assertion is that having a contract or union somehow goes against Catholic social justice. This is absurd. If you know anything about Catholic teachings, then you know that the Catholic faith supports labor unions and their workers. In fact, Catholic doctrine states:

“There is no good society without a good union, and there is no good union that isn’t reborn every day in the peripheries, that doesn’t transform the rejected stones of the economy into corner stones” (Pope Francis, June 28, 2017).

“The board has authorized the university to develop a shared governance model in which the faculty will be at the table with administration to make important decisions about academic standards, working conditions, compensation and benefits, as well as strategic planning.”

This is another mistaken assumption. Faculty, staff, adjuncts, and center personnel have had a voice through a variety of committee appointments on the University Senate. For example, decisions regarding curriculum, academic standards, and the

The Church fully supports the right of workers to form unions or other associations to secure their rights to fair wages and working conditions. This is a specific application of the more general right to associate. In the words of Pope John Paul II, “The experience of history teaches that organizations of this type are an indispensable element of social life, especially in modern industrial societies.”

-Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986



You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives.

-Clay P. Bedford

university budget have been part of shared governance for over 20 years.

What we actually see is a change from shared governance to a top-down approach – the exact opposite of what administration was saying. Examples of this are plenty:

- Members of the committee(s) to work on the Interim Faculty Handbook were hand-picked by administration
- Members of these committees were told to not discuss the process or how the handbook was created (We were informed that the handbook had already been created and was given to the committee to review)
- Creation of the new School of Computing, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, and Data Science happened without faculty input

So, why did the Board of Trustees and administration vote to no longer recognize our CBA or Union? We may never know. What we do know is that the Union represented ALL faculty, whether they were paying members or not. All voices were heard. The University Senate and its committees have also always been extremely flexible when asked by administration. It was a complete sign of disrespect to unilaterally decide against these effective institutions, and for no discernable reason.

Questions?

Where does the University Senate stand on all of this? Are their voices being heard? The VPAA stated on October 23rd that a new faculty senate would be created. A "Faculty Senate" is also cited many times in the Interim Faculty Handbook, but we have not yet learned anything more about it.

Did you know?

Our administration has revised the university mission? What other decisions will be made before the new shared governance/faculty senate is put into place?

Join the Fight to Uphold Catholic Social Teaching

To help with our drive to convince the Board of Trustees to reconsider their decision, we have put together an online Action Network email campaign. Please use the link below to send an email to the three religious leaders who hold a position on the Board. A prewritten email is available for your use, but we encourage everyone to add their own personal response as well.

https://actionnetwork.org/letters/uphold-catholic-social-teaching-at-saint-leo-university?source=direct_link&

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