

Governance: Mind the Gap

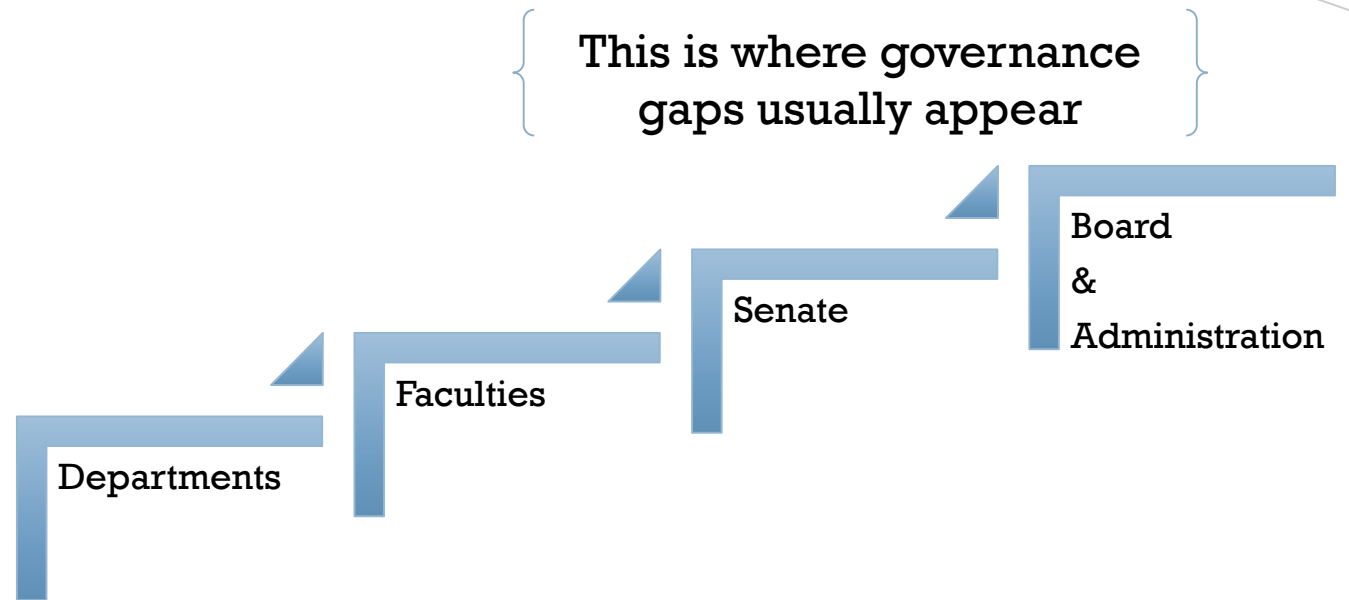
“If collegial governance lacks open communicative dialogue, all that is left is power — power that lays predominantly with the administration. Collegial governance only exists if it is exercised. My advice is to use it.”

--James Compton, outgoing CAUT President (June 2019 CAUT Bulletin)

Julia M. Wright, FRSC
Dalhousie University

julia.wright@dal.ca | [@JuliaMWrightDal](https://twitter.com/JuliaMWrightDal)

Levels of Governance



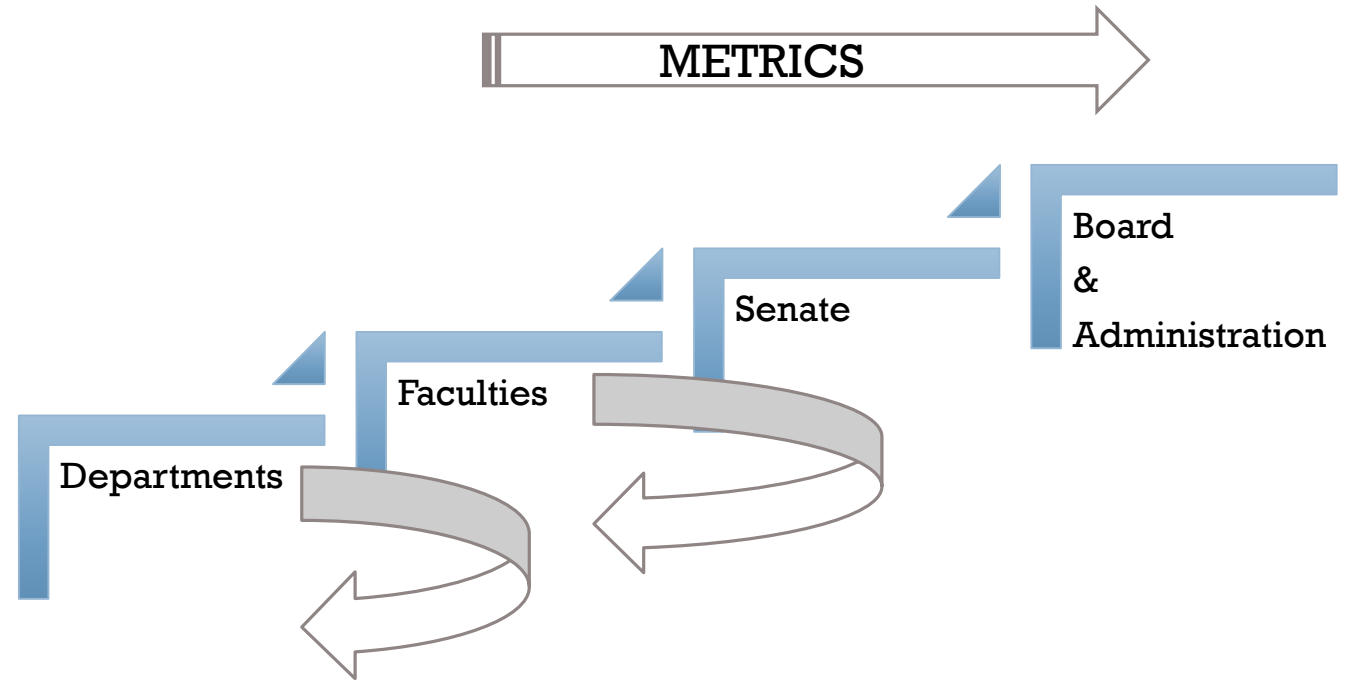
- At the department level, most faculty are involved in collegial governance and, aside from program reviews and budget constraints, with little day-to-day interference.
- At the faculty level, a much smaller proportion of faculty are involved in governance while decisions include critical matters such as the distribution of resources. But, still, a lot of decisions at that level remain collegial because they're unattached to corporate agendas and budgets.
- *Proper collegial governance involves and integrates all levels.*

Understanding the Wasteland



- VPs, Presidents, Deans, etc. have little to no academic freedom at many universities. They are sought by and exchanged through “executive search consultants.”
- Most of the employees who answer to these three groups have little to no job security: administrative staff, legal counsel, finance personnel. They have no freedom to dissent.
- These are *corporate working conditions*, and they do not foster transparency, accountability, or meaningful debate.
- **The “corporate university” is not just the effect of a top-down ideology; it is normalized by the use of corporate working conditions for more and more university employees.**

Information Flows



Some common means of information control:

- Control the agenda (too many items, run out the clock, send too much material on too little notice, control who speaks)
- Control who is at the table or in the meeting
- Gather advice from outside sources (consultants) to further break the internal flow of information
- Require more and more reporting: data for the sake of data, metrics, studies that won't be used, consultations that generate word clouds and little else.

Board

Collegium

Senate

Dr. Seuss, *Horton Hears a Who*

Making Change



Making Noise



**“We’ve GOT to make noises in greater amounts!
So, open your mouth, lad! For every voice counts!”**

What can Faculty Associations do?

Historicize, Prioritize, Organize

Historicize

- Look at Senate minutes and other governance documents from 20-30 years ago. You might be surprised what you find. Our Senate used to have the authority to scrutinize the operating budget, for instance. Precedent may have more force than “innovation” in governance.

Prioritize (where is the nearest gap?)

- The Board is the hardest to change because it's defined by government legislation. Senate-Board committees can be a way of manoeuvring around that obstacle.
- Senates can typically change their own constitutions, strike new committees, take motions from the floor—much easier to reform.
- Faculty councils also have more self-governance and so capacity to be reformed.

Organize

- Direct faculty to information on *Roberts' Rules of Order* (e.g. “point of information”); Senate constitution; Faculty Council rules; etc.
- Remind faculty of their protections under academic freedom for collegial governance.
- In general, be a resource on governance and a hub in the conversation.

What can faculty do?

- **Come to the Table Prepared**
 - Pay attention to calls for nominations. Mentor other faculty to help them be more effective on committees: e.g., know the relevant policies, terms of reference, and Collective Agreement articles; consult with colleagues (precariate included—what would help them?); ask for, and argue with, evidence.
- **Restore Internal Flows of Information**
 - Question the expense and the credibility of consultants performing tasks that faculty can handle (e.g., hiring of upper administrators, analyzing enrolment data, etc.). Share draft documents that don't include confidential material. Talk to each other, again including precarious faculty.
- **Resist Busy-Work**
 - Ask why it's required, and how it's worth the time involved. Make *them* spend time explaining why *we* have busy-work.
 - Use our tenure. Nothing dramatic—we have to do our jobs responsibly. But push back against uncollegially determined requirements that don't make sense to you and your colleagues.
 - Prioritize service time. Where can you do the most good?