

2016 Report on The University at Albany Student SURVEY ON SHARED GOVERNANCE

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Introduction

As written in the charter of the University Senate (section X.1.3.), the Committee on Assessment of Governance and Consultation, a standing committee of the Senate Governance Council (GOV) is charged to “develop and regularly administer assessment instruments, conduct data analysis and report findings to the Council.” To this end, the Committee developed a survey to evaluate the effectiveness of governance in representing its constituencies, transparency of institutional communication, and quality of joint decision making in the fall of 2015. The survey was sent to the University community – teaching and professional faculty, librarians, and in an amended form to graduate and undergraduate students in March of 2016. The survey was sent to all teaching faculty and staff, and a sample of 5,000 graduate and undergraduate students.

The survey instruments were developed based on the 2014 survey conducted at the University as well as the guidelines developed by the American Association of University Professor’s (AAUP) *Evaluation of Shared Governance Survey*. In addition, the Committee solicited feedback from the Governance Council as a whole as well as from the Office of the President. The current survey is the result of a collaborative effort to determine how best to strengthen shared governance at the University at Albany.

The committee revised the 2016 survey design in order to address challenges and weaknesses in the format of the 2014 survey, as described in the final report of that earlier survey. The changes were made in order to improve the response rate and quality. To this end, the 2016 survey included fewer questions than the 2014 survey; with a total of 12 questions, it is roughly one third of the length of the earlier survey. A second change was that the 2016 survey has branching questions, allowing for more concise and accurate responses (for instance, if a survey taker responded “no” to a question about his/her involvement in the Senate, the survey would skip those sub-questions related to involvement in specific councils and committees). The third change in the 2016 survey was the introduction of comments

sections for most questions, and the addition of a question eliciting the “top three University or Higher Education-related issues that [the survey taker] would like the Senate and/or Administration to engage.”

Quantitative Analysis of Questions 1 to 7

Summary of overall student descriptors:

A total of 625 students responded, representing a response rate of 12.3% for the 2016 survey (N = 5,000). Of those responding, 406 were undergraduate students, and 219 graduate students (109 M.A. students, 104 Ph.D. candidates, and 6 students of other advanced graduate degrees); 248 (39.7%) were male, 377 (60.3%) were female. Our current student body decomposition by gender is as follows. Undergraduate: 51% male, 49% female. Graduate: 39% male, 61% female. Combined total: 48% male, 52% female. The survey selected students randomly obtaining a representative sample of the total student population. A higher percentage of females (60.3%) responded to the survey, exhibiting a gender skewedness that is typical of similar surveys (O’Rourke & Lakner 1989). Of UAlbany students, 75% are undergraduate and 25% graduate. Compared to these proportions, there were higher response rates among graduate students than undergraduates: 65% of respondents were undergraduates and 35% were graduates. Among graduates, there was an even split among master students and doctoral students, both about 17%. The response rates by race or ethnicity followed closely the race or ethnicity rates of the full UAlbany student body, except for Non-resident aliens that responded at a rate twice their presence in the whole student body. Response rates by education level for undergraduates followed the corresponding decomposition of the full UAlbany student body with response rates a little below the corresponding UAlbany category rates, while graduate students responded in percentages larger than their presence among the whole student body. Master students responded at a 1.25 larger rate and doctoral student at a rate almost twice as large.

Table 1: Student Responses by Classification & Status. Frequency of respondents, percent of respondents, (percent of UAlbany students in category).

| Sex | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Male | Female | |
| 248, 39.7% (48%) | 377, 60.3% (52%) | |
| Admitted as | | |
| Freshmen | Transfer | Grad |
| 277, 44% (49.6%) | 129, 21% (24.7%) | 219, 35% (24.6%) |

| Degree | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Bachelor | Cert. Grad Study | Master | Cert. Advance Study | Doctorate | | | | |
| 406, 65% (74%) | 5, 0.8% (0.67%) | 109, 17.4% (14%) | 1, 0.2% (0.33%) | 104, 17% (9%) | | | | |
| Undergrad/Graduate | | | | | | | | |
| 406, 65% (75.4%) | | | | 219, 35% (24.6%) | | | | |
| Level | | | | | | | | |
| Fresh | Soph | Junior | Senior | C. Grad Study | Master | C. Adv. Study | PhD | |
| 57, 9.1% (11.7%) | 90, 14.4% (17.5%) | 110, 17.6% (21.9%) | 149, 23.8% (24.3%) | 5, 0.8% (0.7%) | 109, 17.4% (13.6%) | 1, 0.16% (0.3%) | 104, 16.6% (8.9%) | |
| Ethnicity | | | | | | | | |
| White | Black | Hisp | Asian | Amer Indian | Pacific Islander | 2 or more | Non-res | Unknown |
| 314, 50% (51.3%) | 71, 11% (13.6%) | 67, 11% (12.6%) | 34, 5% (7.3%) | 0, 0% (0.2%) | 0, 0% (0.1%) | 19, 3% (2.6%) | 100, 16% (8.8%) | 20, 3% (3.5%) |

Note: Percentages in parentheses are for the university as a whole.

Students of the university community who took the survey have been at UAlbany for differing periods of time: 183 (30%) have been at the university for less than 1 year; 204 (33%) for 1-2 years, 192 (31%) for 3-4 years; 32 (5%) for 5-9 years, and 8 (1%) for 10 or more years.

Familiarity and Experience with the Senate and Senate Councils and Committees

440 (70%) respondents indicated that they are “not at all familiar;” 162 (26%) that they are “somewhat familiar” with the University at Albany’s Senate and its Councils, while 22 (4%) indicated that they are “very familiar” with the Senate and its Councils.

Table 2: How familiar are you with the University at Albany's Senate and its Councils?

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Not at all Familiar | 440 (70%) |
| Somewhat Familiar | 162 (26%) |
| Very Familiar | 22 (4%) |

When those who had responded with “somewhat” and “Very familiar” were asked to describe the degree to which the survey taker feels the Senate addresses their concerns, 112 (68%) responded “somewhat well” and 8 (5%) “very well”, while 44 (27%) responded “not at all well.”

Table 3: Generally speaking, how well do you feel the Senate addresses you concerns?

| | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Not at all well | 44 (27%) |
| Somewhat well | 112 (68%) |
| Very well | 9 (5%) |

192 or 32% of the students who took the survey have been involved in leadership positions in their college or academic/administrative unit.

Table 4: Have you been involved in leadership positions in your own college or academic/administrative unit?

| | |
|-----|-----------|
| Yes | 192 (32%) |
| No | 406 (68%) |

When asked a related question about experience with the Senate or its Councils, 64 (39%) report that they have not served in the Senate or any of its committees or councils and have not voted in Senate elections, while 87 (53%) have not served in the Senate or any of its committees and councils, but have voted in the Senate. 6 (4%) have served on a Senate committee or council, and 8 (5%) have served as Senator.

Table 5: In what ways, if any, have you been involved in the University Senate?

| | |
|--|----------|
| I have not served in the Senate or any of its committees or councils, and have not voted in Senate elections | 64 (39%) |
| I have not served in the Senate or any of its committees or councils, but have voted in Senate elections. | 87 (53%) |
| I have served on a Senate committee or council | 6 (4%) |
| I have served as Senator. | 8 (5%) |

Of those 14 students who had served in the Senate, 57% had served on one council or committee, 29% had served on two, and 14% had served on 5 or more.

Table 6: How many Senate Councils or Committees have you served on?

| | |
|------|---|
| None | 0 |
|------|---|

| | |
|-----------|---------|
| 1 | 8 (57%) |
| 2 | 4 (29%) |
| 3 | 0 |
| 4 | 0 |
| 5 or more | 2 (14%) |

Among those respondents who had served as a Senator, nearly two thirds (63%) had served 1 year.

Table 7: How many years have you served as Senator (total number of years)?

| | |
|----------------------|---------|
| 1 (or in first year) | 5 (63%) |
| 2 | 1 (13%) |
| 3 | 1 (13%) |
| 4 | 0 |
| 5-9 | 0 |
| 10 or more | 1 (13%) |

When asked about the familiarity or interaction with Senate councils or committees, the largest number of students mentioned that they “have not heard” or only “heard of” any of the councils. Among the councils students have interacted with, GAC is the most frequently mentioned (14), followed by GOV (8), LISC (7) and UAC (7). Respondents reported the lowest interaction with CPCA, COR, CERS and CAA. GOV and UPPC were the councils on which the largest number of respondents had served (3).

Table 8: Please indicate your highest level of familiarity or interaction with each of the following Senate councils or committees.

| | I have not heard of this Council | I have heard of this Council | I have interacted with this Council | I have served on this Council | Total |
|----------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| CAA | 98 | 50 | 1 | 2 | 151 |
| CAFFECor | 101 | 43 | 5 | 1 | 151 |
| CERS | 73 | 75 | 2 | 1 | 151 |
| COR | 80 | 67 | 3 | 1 | 151 |
| CPCA | 106 | 40 | 4 | 1 | 151 |
| GAC | 75 | 60 | 14 | 2 | 151 |
| GOV | 73 | 68 | 8 | 3 | 152 |
| LISC | 87 | 54 | 7 | 1 | 149 |
| UAC | 60 | 82 | 7 | 2 | 151 |

| | | | | | |
|------|----|----|---|---|-----|
| ULC | 85 | 59 | 5 | 2 | 151 |
| UPPC | 77 | 64 | 6 | 3 | 150 |

Which Senate Councils or Committees Function Effectively?

Only those respondents who reported serving on or interacting with Senate councils and committees were asked about council or committee effectiveness, representation, and consultation with constituents. Asked about which of the Senate councils or committees were functioning effectively, students rank GAC (6), GOV (4) and UAC, ULC and UPPC (each 3) the highest. GOV, LISC and UPPC have the highest overall response on this question. UPPC (5) and CAFFECOR (5) lead the list of councils and committee that are not functioning effectively.

Table 9: In your opinion, which of the following Senate councils or committees are functioning effectively?

| | This council is functioning effectively | This council is not functioning effectively | Don't Know | Total |
|----------|---|---|------------|-------|
| CAA | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| CAFFECOR | 2 | 4 | 0 | 6 |
| CERS | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| COR | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| CPCA | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| GAC | 6 | 5 | 5 | 16 |
| GOV | 4 | 1 | 6 | 11 |
| LISC | 3 | 3 | 3 | 8 |
| UAC | 3 | 3 | 2 | 8 |
| ULC | 3 | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| UPPC | 3 | 5 | 1 | 9 |

How Well Does the Senate Represent and Consult with Its Constituencies?

Asked about how well the full range of University Senate constituencies are represented in the Senate, the councils and committees, students responded that contingent faculty and contingent part time faculty are the least adequately represented. 5 out of 13 indicate that full time contingent faculty and part time contingent faculty, respectively, are “not at all well”

represented, followed by undergraduate students and emeritus faculty (each 4). 7 out of 13 respondents judged faculty to be represented “very well”, with undergraduate students in second rank (5) and graduate students and librarians next (4).

Table 10: How well are the following constituencies represented in the Senate, its councils and committees?

| | Not at all well | Somewhat Well | Very Well | Don't Know | Total |
|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Undergraduate Students | 4 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 13 |
| Graduate | 2 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 13 |
| Contingent FT | 5 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 13 |
| Contingent PT | 5 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 13 |
| Faculty | 1 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 13 |
| Professional Fac & Staff | 3 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 13 |
| Librarians | 3 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 13 |
| Emeritus Faculty | 4 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 13 |

Asked how effectively the Senate consulted with its constituencies, respondents indicated that faculty and undergraduate students are most effectively consulted, while graduate students are least effectively consulted. Out of a total of 13 respondents, 6 judged the Senate as “very effective” in consulting faculty, with undergraduates again in a second tier (5). 8 described the Senate as “not effective” in consulting with contingent part-time and full-time faculty, and 5 viewed the Senate as “not effective” in consulting with graduate students.

Table 11: How effective is the Senate in consulting each constituency?

| | Not Effective | Somewhat Effective | Very Effective | Don't Know | Total |
|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------|----------------|------------|-------|
| Undergraduate | 2 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 13 |
| Graduate | 5 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 13 |
| Contingent PT | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 13 |
| Contingent FT | 4 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 13 |
| Faculty | 2 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 13 |
| Professional Fac & Staff | 2 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 13 |
| Librarians | 2 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 13 |
| Emeritus | 2 | 3 | 1 | 7 | 13 |

Asked about the effectiveness of different constituencies’ participation in the Senate, its councils and committees, the results of the student survey indicate that undergraduate students, contingent part time faculty and contingent full-time faculty do not have an effective

participation (4 out of 13 responses in each category were classified “not effective”). Conversely, “very effective” participation in the Senate, its constituencies and committees is reported most for faculty (7 out of 13), followed by graduate students (5 out of 13).

Table 12: How effective is the participation in the Senate, its councils and committees of the following groups?

| | Not Effective | Somewhat Effective | Very Effective | Don't Know | Total |
|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------|----------------|------------|-------|
| Undergraduate | 4 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 13 |
| Graduate | 2 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 13 |
| Contingent PT | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 13 |
| Contingent FT | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 13 |
| Faculty | 1 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 13 |
| Professional Fac & Staff | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 13 |
| Librarians | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 13 |
| Emeritus | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 13 |

How Transparent is the Senate?

When asked how transparent the Senate is, two-thirds (95 or 65%) gave a qualified “somewhat transparent,” and one-third (43 or 29%) said “not at all transparent.” Only a small number (8 or 5%) describe the climate as “very transparent.” However, when comments provided on this question are considered, a more complex picture emerges, as is discussed in the qualitative analysis section of this report.

Table 13: How transparent do you feel UAlbany's Senate is?

| | |
|------------------------|----------|
| Not at all transparent | 43 (29%) |
| Somewhat transparent | 95(65%) |
| Very transparent | 8 (5%) |

How Well Does the Senate Communicate?

A follow-up question on transparency asked how well the Senate communicates with its constituencies. Half of student respondents indicated that it was difficult to find information (71 or 49%), while the other half (72 or 50%) indicated that it was “easy to find information about some issues” that the Senate is considering.

Table 14: How well does the Senate communicate the issues it engages to its constituencies and community?

| | |
|---|----------|
| It is not easy to find information about the issues the Senate is currently considering | 71 (49%) |
| It is easy to find information about some issues the Senate is currently considering but not all. | 72 (50%) |
| It is easy to find information about all issues the Senate is currently considering. | 2 (1%) |

How Often Does the University Administration Consult with the Senate?

When asked whether the university administration (the President, Vice Presidents, and Deans) take consideration of faculty and senate recommendations regarding the core faculty issues of curriculum and tenure and promotion, the pattern of responses did not vary much between the different areas addressed, including those of primary faculty responsibility, budgeting, long-term planning, physical resources and facilities. About 40% (between 57-61) of the 140-146 students responded that they did not know. About 22% (between 31-40) chose “sometimes”; while 10% chose “rarely”; and 9% “never.”

Table 15: How often the university administration (a) takes into consideration faculty or Senate recommendations in areas of primary faculty responsibility (e.g. curriculum, tenure and promotion) and (b) seeks input from faculty for issues in which faculty has an appropriate but not primary responsibility (e.g. budgeting, long-term planning)?

| Admin consideration of Senate | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Always | DK | Total |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------|-----------|-------|--------|----|-------|
| Faculty primary | | | | | | | |
| Responsibility | 11 | 13 | 40 | 17 | 5 | 60 | 146 |
| Long-term Planning | 13 | 15 | 36 | 18 | 5 | 57 | 144 |
| Physical Resources | 18 | 13 | 38 | 11 | 2 | 59 | 141 |
| Budget | 19 | 18 | 31 | 12 | 2 | 61 | 143 |
| Select. Mngm. Conf. | 13 | 16 | 35 | 11 | 6 | 59 | 140 |

Qualitative Analysis of Questions 8b, 9b, 10b, 11 and 12

Results

The same analytic approach as discussed in the faculty staff report was employed in this report. The presentation differs in part because of a different number of student responses. In particular, there were significantly lower responses to question **8b** (3 student, 16 faculty responses), **9b** (35 student, 75 faculty) and **10** (13 student, 60 faculty), though equivalent rates occurred for **11**, the large response item (660 students, 771 faculty) and **12** (80 student, 73 faculty). In this situation, writing teams chose to use somewhat different strategies.

The team preparing the student report chose to present each question separately, with less direct quotation of responses, whereas the faculty team chose to group questions, focusing on 9, 11, and 12, providing more direct quotation of responses, and with separate appendices providing further analysis and data on the questions of Senate transparency and communication (9b) and on the voluminous responses regarding the most important issues facing the University at Albany and higher education. In the following section, responses are organized by individual question and recommendations are made on a question-by-question basis.

Q8b: How effective is the participation in the Senate, its councils and committees of the following groups?

Number of responses: 3

The admittedly few responses point out recent positive changes and describe that Senate leadership has made serious efforts to include the graduate student voice. One respondent mentions that *“I have noticed several graduate students being empowered by the GSA and their departments to address and represent graduate student needs and departmental needs at the Senate level.”* Another comment is more cautionary, criticizing that *“too many times I have found out after the fact that a graduate student was asked by an administrator to serve on a committee because they did not care to reach out to the GSA for a delegate.”* The respondent highlights the need of a formal consultation process with the GSA, instead of an informal “reaching out” to available students by administrators.

Q9b: UAlbany’s climate for governance. Please provide details on your views on transparency in the Senate.

Number of responses: 35

17 respondents express clear discontent with the overall climate for governance. Among points being criticized is first the lack of transparency (13), followed by a critique of certain modes of communication (8). Respondents point out that Senate minutes or agendas should be available

more easily, and mention that *“publicity may assist in providing transparency.”* One respondent describes that, *“a lot of students do not know that a University Senate exists. They are only familiar with the Student Association Senate.”* This lack of familiarity may have influenced the responses to this (as well as other) questions, as several responses seem to rather have criticized the Student Association Senate, and not the UAlbany Senate. Three respondents mention an increased transparency of the Senate.

Q10b: How often does the University Administration seek meaningful input from faculty?

Number of responses: 13

All six detailed responses to this question are critical; the spectrum goes from an observed series of *“cracks in th[e] consultation”* to an outright lack of any consultation. The comments address situations at different colleges and academic units; they mention the fact that in the context of the creation of the National Center for Security and Preparedness (NCSP) and College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cybersecurity (CEHC), *“the offices of the President, the Provost and other Vice Presidents have allowed for agencies and organizations outside the University to have direct influence on decisions made.”* One respondent points out that the School of Education does not seem to be adequately consulted. Another describes the relationship from the Senate to the administration to be one-dimensional instead of mutual. A third one highlights the fact that *“the resource analysis and planning committee, or the facilities committee on UPPC have not been populated or used in years”* as examples of situations where consultation has been dormant for too long.

Q11: What are the top three University or Higher Education-related issues that you would like the Senate and/or Administration to engage?

Number of responses: Issue 1: 270, Issue 2: 220, Issue 3: 170

Question 11 directly asked participants to identify their top 3 primary concerns. This question received by far the most substantial responses. After an initial tabulation of the number responses in each category, two team members took responsibility for reviewing the written responses and identifying main themes. The five primary issues, in quantitative order, that emerged were: 1) comments regarding cost of attendance, mostly tuition, 2) comments reflecting concern regarding diversity and inclusion, such as racism and sexism on campus, or the challenges faced by international students, 3) quality of food on various campuses, 4) wages and benefits of Graduate Teaching Assistants and 5) working conditions and pay of contingent faculty.

1) Cost of attendance/tuition

Tuition and other related campus fees, and the need for more financial assistance and scholarships was the most recurrent comment throughout the answers to this question, mentioned by 76 respondents. Most responses listed concerns in a few words, such as *“increasing tuition and its causes”, “rise of tuition costs”, “the high cost of attendance”, “textbook cost”* and *“tuition hikes”*. *“Cost of attendance”* was mentioned approximately 60 times. One response explained that *“... too many students have to work several jobs to go to school full time and it is compromising their mental and physical health, which should be the University’s top priority with its students”*.

As UAlbany plans to rely on rational tuition and admission of larger numbers of students in the near future, the fact that the cost of attendance is the most often mentioned challenge for students is significant. While our university may have a low tuition compared to other university centers, the cost of attendance is still often very hard to manage for an overwhelming number of students.

The problem of cost of attendance may be a relevant theme to several Senate Councils, most clearly the Council on University Planning and Policy (UPPC) and its subcommittee on Resource Analysis and Planning. Moreover, it may be appropriate for the University Life Council (ULC) and the Undergraduate Academic Council (UAC) to consider textbook costs, as it reviews proposals to new and changing units, and for the Council on Libraries, Information Systems, and Computing (LISC) to consider textbook costs in the same vein as open access discussion.

2) Diversity and Inclusion

The second most common theme mentioned was related to issues of social inequality, challenges to social justice, diversity and inclusion. Comments counted as part of this category covered a wide range of concerns tallying up to approximately 50 comments. In many cases, the response was a simple concern noted by one word or phrase, such as *“racism”, “diversity”, and “social justice.”* Other comments explained the plight of international student inclusion, and described the need of classes with a focus on social equality or called out a lack of support for departments that offered such classes. Comments included the following :

“Improve the sense of community for international students. Students from foreign countries with a different language may feel solitude...”

“making gender/sexuality course part of the general education curriculum”

“overemphasis on ‘identity’ and ‘diversity’, as the saturation of these topics only serves to drive individuals apart instead of highlighting commonalities.”

Several comments highlighted the racial diversity on campus, asking to *“not only focus on black and white, but also other race[s] and ethnicities.”*

Another comment points toward a need of mixed gender housing with a focus on LGBT related residents.

These and other comments call on both the academic and student affairs sides to be addressed. The University Life Council (ULC) is a key council to consider these issues in a broad sense. Many of the specific comments suggest that the Council on Academic Assessment (CAA) and both of its subcommittees in their general education and academic program reviews might make stronger recommendations to the administration regarding how issues of diversity, inclusion, and social justice could be better addressed and reflected in UAlbany's academic programs. Given the fact that one of President Jones' major stakes was the recruitment of international students and a growing internationalization of our campus promises to be part of the strategic plan, it is advisable for the UPPC and perhaps other councils to consider the concerns of international students.

3) Food

Approximately 40 comments mentioned food, most of them referring to poor quality, other to a lack of food choices. Some few called for "*less exotic choices*", while most often, respondents underscored the need for healthier and more diverse food options on campus. The four subthemes that emerged were isolation and limitations of healthy options, lack of overall choice, and cost of food. Comments indicate that this is an issue across all campuses and campus spaces.

"The Dining Hall food is very bad and if a better deal could be worked out with Sodexo, maybe higher quality food, it would be great."

"More healthier options in the campus center (Stalks and Stems is closed on weekends)"

"Bad dining hall food"

"Allow meal swipes to roll over from fall to spring"

This issue may be addressed by the University Life Council (ULC), specifically its health and safety subcommittee.

4) Situation of Graduate Teaching Assistants

With approximately 40 mentions, the next key theme mentioned under Q11 is related to the wages and benefits of Graduate Teaching Assistants. Even though the survey was sent to both graduate and undergraduate students, this concern, generally thought of as only a graduate student issue, emerged as commonly as the food concerns in both student groups.

Comments in the context are:

“Funding situation of graduate students (the current amount and length of funding make both professional and private life unstable).”

“Funding for graduate students. In my short time at UAlbany I have realized that funding is becoming a large issue, few students have funding and may also [be] forced to go without.”

“Making sure the administration is following through with the Blue Ribbon Panel recommendations for increased funding and support for GTAs/RAs and contingent faculty. Also actual career services for graduate students, not just undergraduates.”

“More research assistant positions for graduate students.”

The key council to take up this issue is the Graduate Academic Council (GAC), which was tasked in fall 2015 with overseeing the implementation of the Blue Ribbon Panel recommendations.

5) Situation of Contingent Faculty

The final emergent theme, with approximately 20 comments, was related to the working conditions of contingent faculty on campus. Again, this may be considered a non-undergraduate issue. However, the survey clearly shows that it is of concern to all stakeholders in higher education.

“Salary: People need to be paid enough to keep up with inflation so they can continue being capable teachers.”

“Living wages for contingent faculty”

“The adjunct experience – better support and services to make sure our adjuncts are trained well and supported and feel included in the University community.”

“Comprehensive remuneration and benefit packages for faculty, especially part-time and adjunct faculty.”

Given the fact that there is an implementation team monitoring the execution of the Blue Ribbon Panel recommendations over the next years, the key councils to be apprised of this concern are the UPPC’s Resource Analysis and Planning Subcommittee, the UAC and GAC as they consider new programs, and the CAA’s program review committee as it makes yearly recommendations to the administration. Since the plight of contingent faculty affects all concerns of the institution, it may be worthwhile for all Senate councils to evaluate how this issue is affected by their business and vice versa.

Additional comments, not included in the five emergent themes mentioned above were topics related to sustainability on campus, professional development for students, housing/quality of life issues, and problems with wifi on campus.

Finally, some students commented in broader terms on the following items:

“Refocusing the University on education and community rather than revenue-generation.”

“There should be more employment opportunities for students on campus because focusing on school is hard but it’s even harder if you’re trying to live off no money and don’t have access to a vehicle.”

Q12: Please share any additional thoughts you might have about governance at UAlbany.

Number of responses: 80

The clearly emerging theme of question 12 is transparency, or more precisely a lack of visibility. Governance of the University seems to be supplementary to the frameworks of academic life and student life. Very few students are briefed on the operations of the Senate during orientation sessions. While they are encouraged to join student organizations, this is not the case in the context of senate involvement. Student government’s access to the student body is limited to the point that their work is nearly invisible or their actions as part of a body such as the Senate will seem to be insignificant to their constituents.

Among representative responses were the following:

“I am very much in the dark on UAlbany governance and administrative issue[s]. I do not feel I can adequately comment.”

“I have little to no active knowledge about how the school is governed or what the government does. As a student there should be some easily known way to find out about the governance.”

“It is not easy to find information about governance at UAlbany. I am still not able to find the results from the most recent elections.”

“I wish there were regular emails about issues being spoken about within the student government not just when parts of the constitution are being changed.”

“Many people are most likely not interested or want to take the time to learn about the governance at UAlbany, however an email at the beginning of every semester can go out to explain a bit about it, and what it can do for those that are interested in learning would be helpful.”

Many comments seem to indicate a conflation of governance and administration, with a perception that both entities and processes operate behind closed doors. Students find it hard

to find information regarding governance at UAlbany. This results in disillusionment with student governments (a trend that was also surfacing in the 2014 survey), lack of engagement and breakdown in the student role in shared governance.

The comments under Q12 suggest that intentional steps should be taken to integrate and prioritize undergraduate and graduate students' roles in shared governance as a part of student life at UAlbany.

References:

O'Rourke, D. and Lakner, E., 1989, "Gender Bias: Analysis of Factors Causing Male Underrepresentation in Surveys," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, vol.1, issue 2, pp. 164 - 176.