The role of faculty in institutional governance has been the subject of much debate, argument, and angst on campuses across the nation. This has been especially true in recent years as educational institutions have faced financial challenges tied to the economy, increased market competition, and increasingly centralized governance (Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis 2003; Lee 1991; Mortimer 1971). Faculty participation in shared governance has traditionally been institutionalized in a senate or similar body. While some had predicted that the senate model would wane with the advent of campus unionization, faculty senates have endured. For example, Birnbaum (1989) found that as late as the 1980s, 60 to 80 percent of campuses had senates or similar bodies. However, the effectiveness of faculty senates continues to be questioned.

Effectiveness of Faculty Senates

The role of faculty in institutional governance has been the subject of much debate, argument, and angst on campuses across the nation. This has been especially true in recent years as educational institutions have faced financial challenges tied to the economy, increased market competition, and increasingly centralized governance (Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis 2003; Lee 1991; Mortimer 1971). Faculty participation in shared governance has traditionally been institutionalized in a senate or similar body. While some had predicted that the senate model would wane with the advent of campus unionization, faculty senates have endured. For example, Birnbaum (1989) found that as late as the 1980s, 60 to 80 percent of campuses had senates or similar bodies. However, the effectiveness of faculty senates continues to be questioned.

Effectiveness of Faculty Senates

The mission statement stakes the faculty's claim in the institutional decision-making process.

by Derrick E. D’Souza, Terry L. Clower, Kim F. Nimon, Elizabeth A. Oldmixon, and Frances S. van Tassell

Developing a Mission Statement for a Faculty Senate

Derrick E. D’Souza is professor of management at the University of North Texas (UNT). He has served as associate dean for graduate programs in the College of Business at UNT. His research interests include strategic planning and dynamic capabilities of organizations and the efficacy of technology in education (e.g., wikis and clickers). His work has appeared in Journal of Operations Management, Production and Operations Management, Decision Sciences Journal, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, Information Systems Management, Information Strategy, and Journal of Managerial Issues, among others. He is co-author of a textbook on strategic business integration.

Author biographies continued on page 24
senate, is commonly characterized as inept, vestigial, weak, ineffective, and unresponsive.2

The effectiveness of faculty senates has been discussed in the literature. However, there is a paucity of quantitative studies that dispassionately examine the degree to which faculty senates effectively contribute to institutional governance and/or the characteristics that can be associated with the effectiveness of these bodies. Minor (2003) is a notable exception. In a survey of 763 institutions, he examined the perceived effectiveness of faculty senates and the characteristics and activities that contribute to effectiveness. He found that faculty involvement is the most important factor contributing to faculty senate effectiveness.

As their perceived legitimacy diminishes, faculty senates may face existential threats from a variety of stakeholders. For example, Boston College disbanded its faculty senate in the mid-1970s as it reformed its governance structure in the wake of financial pressures. Given the faculty senate’s lack of efficacy, Helms and Price (2005) noted that this “was not a contentious move. Indeed, many faculty members supported it” (¶ 4). In 2001, the University of Notre Dame’s faculty senate voted to disband itself because of its lack of influence (Kellogg 2001). Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute’s provost suspended its senate in 2007, and in 2008 the president of the University of the District of Columbia attempted to disband its senate shortly after taking office (Moran 2008).

If faculty senates want a place in the modern university, then they must be both effective and viewed as such.

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing faculty senates is apathy among the faculty about their activities and role in shared governance (Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis 2003; Kezar and Eckel 2004; Minor 2003). Kezar and Eckel (2004) listed several factors that almost all faculty can relate to as barriers to participation in faculty senate activities or, more broadly, shared governance. They also considered the challenges a senate faces in influencing important external constituencies such as state legislators. Addressing these barriers in a meaningful way requires clarity of purpose, competency in action, and a level of responsiveness appropriate to a changing academic environment. These characteristics, when combined with factors that have been associated with senate efficacy, point to critical elements that must be embedded in a faculty senate’s mission statement in order to promote its effectiveness.

The Key Role of a Faculty Senate’s Mission/Vision Statement

Clearly, if faculty senates want to maintain a place in the modern university, then they must be both effective and viewed as such by faculty, administrators, and other campus stakeholders. One way to shape faculty senate efforts and to advocate for the senate’s role in the university community is to create and adhere to a clearly defined mission statement. As Meacham (2008) noted, university mission statements identify “a campus's rationale and purpose; its responsibilities toward students and the community; and its vision of student, faculty, and institutional excellence” (¶ 1). As such, they serve as useful tools for agenda setting, decision making, and discriminating among priorities. This is equally true for faculty senate mission statements.

The mission statement stakes the faculty’s claim in the institutional decision-making process.

The faculty senate is the agent of the faculty, and its mission statement stakes the faculty’s claim in the institutional decision-making process. It is in this context that the chair of the faculty senate at a large southwestern state university tasked an ad hoc committee (comprised of the authors) with writing its inaugural mission statement. The committee approached this task with the strong sense that developing a mission statement was an important step in establishing the faculty senate’s role in shared university governance. In this article, we document the structure, process, and content of the developmental activities that led up to the acceptance of the mission statement by our faculty senate. We begin with an overview of mission statements in organizational activity. Then we review prior research, offer a theoretical framework for the creation of a mission statement, and operationalize the construct. Next, we use theory to develop a four-step, committee-driven, technology-assisted process to customize a mission statement for a faculty senate. Finally, we offer our own experiences...
as evidence of the viability and effectiveness of applying the four-step process. In the review and recommendations section, we answer three fundamental questions: (1) Does the exercise represent time well spent? (2) What was our experience like as we implemented the four-step process? and (3) What recommendations could we offer to faculty senates at other universities?

Theoretical Framework

A mission statement is a proclamation of how an organization sees itself (purpose and raison d’être) and how it wants others to see it (Pearce and David 1987). Because of the multiple purposes served (Baetz and Bart 1996), mission statements should be articulated in the values and beliefs prevalent in the organization (Collins and Porras 1991; Raynor 1998). In addition, the organization's mission statement and vision statement must be in agreement. Prior research (e.g., Collins and Porras 1991) consistently refers to developing frameworks that “bookend” the mission statement, with values and beliefs at one end and the vision at the other. The following sections provide a brief description of each component in the framework.

**Mission statement.** Attributes commonly addressed in a mission statement include customers, products/services, location, technology, concern for survival, philosophy, self-concept, and concern for public image (Pearce and David 1987). There is evidence that mission statements are widely used in higher education (Palmer and Short 2008; Shirley 1983), and a study of 299 business schools conducted by Orwig and Finney (2007) found support for these eight attributes of a mission statement. Another study of 408 business schools (Palmer and Short 2008) found evidence of seven of the eight attributes in their mission statements (all except “use of technology”). Recognizing that our intent was to develop a mission statement for a faculty senate in which the emphasis on technology was low, we chose to adopt seven of the eight attributes proposed by Pearce and David. To simplify our mission development process, we grouped the seven attributes into three broad dimensions: raison d’être, value generation, and domain of operation. This classification scheme is presented in figure 1.

**Values/beliefs.** Organizational values/beliefs represent benchmarks for what is good or bad for the organization and are shared by individuals in the organization. Research suggests that values/beliefs must display six characteristics if they are to have the greatest impact. They must be viable, shared by all, believed to be authentic, viewed as being well balanced, seen as affording platforms for good behavior at work, and integrated into strategic business processes (Hultman 2005; Thornbury 2003). In addition, values/beliefs typically have been found to address five areas: employees, customers, processes, collaboration, and integrity/trust (Elliott 2004).

Figure 1 **Attributes of Mission Statements in Higher Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Raison d’être (reason for being)</td>
<td>• Specification of key elements of the organization's philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identification of the organization's self-concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identification of desired public image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Value generation</td>
<td>• Identification of principal product/service responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Expression of commitments to growth, survival, and performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Domain of operation</td>
<td>• Identification of geographic domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Specification of target customers and markets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figure adapted from Pearce and David (1987, p. 1) and applied to the higher education context.
**Vision statement.** A vision statement is future-oriented; it portrays the desirable future state of an institution (Raynor 1998). Building on prior developments by Senge (1990), Baum, Locke, and Kirkpatrick (1998), and others, Kantabutra (2009) synthesized seven common attributes of vision statements: brevity, clarity, future orientation, stability, challenge, abstraction, and desirability/ability to inspire. There is no evidence to suggest that the attributes of vision statements for higher education institutions should be different. Hence, we chose to adopt Kantabutra’s (2009) seven-attribute characterization of a vision statement.

**Mission Statements at Peer Institutions**

Building on this theoretical framework, we reviewed the mission statements of 22 peer institutions (identified by our university’s administration) to identify common themes. All 22 peer institutions had university mission statements. However, we could find specific evidence of faculty senate mission statements for only a few. While there was little common language to be found, six themes discovered through a word-search process appear to be related to senate missions and/or visions (see figure 2). These themes focus on the activities of faculty senates, and they provide a general idea about how faculty senates view their role in the university or how institutions view their faculty senates.

**Developing the Faculty Senate Mission Statement**

In this section we provide details on the four-step process that was used to develop the mission statement for a faculty senate. To place the development process in context, we begin with a brief description of the organizational context in which this exercise was undertaken.

**Context.** Our mission statement development process was undertaken at the flagship institution of a public university system in the southwestern United States. With 15 schools and colleges and more than 1,000 faculty members, the institution offers over 90 bachelor’s, 100 master’s, and 40 doctoral degree programs to over 36,000 students, making it the most comprehensive university in the region. For the past 14 years, the university has been named one of “America’s 100 Best College Buys” by The Princeton Review (University of North Texas 2010). The faculty senate at this institution comprises a maximum of 48 voting senators, with defined representation from each of the academic areas. The senate is headed by a chair and a vice-chair who serve one-year terms.

**Process.** In fall 2009, the faculty senate chair established an ad hoc committee tasked with developing its mission statement. Committee members came from diverse disciplines including business, economics, education, learning technologies, and political science. The committee agreed on a time frame (16 to 20 weeks) in which to complete the project and accomplished the task in four steps.

- **Step 1.** The committee reviewed mission statements and charters of faculty senates from local and regional universities. It also reviewed articles related to the process of creating a mission statement to ground the development in appropriate theory.
- **Step 2.** The committee drew on the efforts of Collins and Porras (1991) to structure the work, design a data collection process, and solicit input from university faculty. It then developed four “anchor” questions to drive the collection of data that would feed into the

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**Figure 2 Themes Identified in Faculty Senate Mission Statements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td>The senate serves as an advisory body to the administration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td>The senate is a representative body that links faculty with administration and the greater public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3</td>
<td>The senate serves as a legislative body regarding academic issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4</td>
<td>The senate is a deliberative body that reviews issues related to faculty and academics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5</td>
<td>The senate addresses issues related to university academics and faculty concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6</td>
<td>The senate deals with issues related to academic freedom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Figure culled from the mission statements of faculty senates at peer institutions of a public university in the southwestern United States.*
Establishing a Mission/Vision Statement for the Faculty Senate

In Fall of 2009, the Chair of the faculty senate tasked an ad hoc committee to develop a mission/vision statement for the faculty senate. The committee began by reviewing statements from other senates as well as reviewing best practices for creating such statements. The committee then formulated four questions to guide the creation of the faculty senate’s mission and vision statements:

- Why does a Faculty Senate exist?
- What are the values and beliefs of a Faculty Senate?
- What should the Faculty Senate be?
- What does success look like for our Faculty Senate?

Committee members formulated their own responses to the questions and then met as a group to synthesize responses. At this point in the process, the committee is soliciting input from two additional groups:

- Faculty Senate members
- Faculty members who do not serve on the senate and perhaps have never served

The committee will use the input collected to develop a mission and vision statement for the faculty senate that is representative of the data collected.

What you see below is the committee’s collective responses to the four questions plus responses from other individuals who are participating in this task. The committee asks that you do the following:

- Review the questions and responses
- Edit existing responses
- Add your individual responses
- Provide other comments that you would like the committee to consider

This Wiki has been setup with anonymous logins, so your input will be anonymous unless you identify yourself. If you have any questions, please contact the committee chair at _____.

The committee thanks you for your time in providing this information.

Why does a Faculty Senate exist?

- Represent the faculty to university and community stakeholders
- Ensure that academic freedom is encouraged and protected
- Manage curriculum to promote and ensure student learning through a rigorous course of study
- Support faculty research endeavors
- Lead faculty interests in fulfilling faculty responsibilities in the shared governance of the University
- Inform faculty about university policies and procedures
- Make recommendations to the President on issues regarding faculty personnel issues
**Faculty Senate Mission Statement**

The mission of the Faculty Senate is to lead faculty in fulfilling their responsibilities in the shared governance of the University and to represent faculty interests to University and community stakeholders. The Faculty Senate is responsible for exercising its vested authority in ensuring that academic freedom is encouraged and protected, and for acting as a guiding body to oversee curriculum that promotes student learning through a rigorous course of study. The Faculty Senate serves as a liaison between faculty and administration. This encompasses: (a) developing and implementing the strategic plan of the University; (b) informing faculty about University policies, procedures, and substantive changes made by the administration; (c) making recommendations to the President regarding faculty personnel issues; and (d) making recommendations to faculty and administration on policies to improve the work environment.

**Faculty Senate Vision and Beliefs**

The Faculty Senate pledges to carry out its mission and strive towards its vision while maintaining a set of core values and beliefs.

*The Faculty Senate values:*  
- Scholarly research and creative activities  
- Academic and research integrity  
- Integrity of the faculty-student relationship  
- Collaboration in all functions of the University  
- Shared governance

**The Faculty Senate believes that:**  
- Curricula must be rigorous, effective, efficient, innovative, and creative.  
- Academic freedom is at the heart of a relevant, well-functioning university.  
- Faculty rights should be protected and respected.  
- The tenure system provides the best protection for academic freedom.  
- University administrators should hear and respect faculty concerns.  
- The faculty, as a body, is responsible for presiding over the academic curriculum.  
- All faculty members have rights and responsibilities in shared governance.  
- Faculty members are obligated to act in the best interests of the students and the University.  
- Interactions among faculty members should be professional and collegial.

**Faculty Senate Vision Statement**

The Faculty Senate will be seen by University and community stakeholders as a valued partner in the fulfillment of the University’s mission. It will establish itself as an efficacious champion of academic quality, as the authority for the delivery of education services, and as the source of advice and support for University administration. The Faculty Senate will be perceived by faculty and administrators as a well-respected representative body that has a substantive role in University governance. The work of the Faculty Senate will be seen as highly relevant to the daily endeavors of faculty and to University decisions that affect academic affairs.

The committee recognized that these four questions do not relate to topics regularly considered by the faculty. Hence, to further improve the data collection process, the committee decided to post a few sample responses to each question to help stimulate faculty participation and enhance their thought processes.

- Step 3. The four anchor questions and the committee’s consolidated responses were posted to two wikis (see figure 3) in order to solicit input from both faculty members who served on the senate and those who did not serve (and who had possibly never served). The data collected from the two wikis helped the committee consider a broad range of perspectives.
regarding the roles of the faculty senate. Responses received from both sets of faculty members were compiled and transformed into a set of mission, vision, and values/beliefs statements.

- Step 4. The chair of the committee presented the draft mission, vision, and values/beliefs statements to the faculty senate chair and the faculty senate executive committee. The final version of the statements was brought to the floor of the faculty senate in April 2010, where the vote passed unanimously. The statements will be incorporated into the senate bylaws in spring 2011 and will be evaluated for inclusion in the senate charter in fall 2011. The adopted mission statement and the associated vision and values/beliefs statements are provided in the sidebar, “Faculty Senate Mission/Vision Statement.”

Review and Recommendations

Researchers have highlighted the impact of a mission statement on faculty senate effectiveness. In this article, we have synthesized a theoretical framework to anchor and guide the development of a faculty senate mission statement. We followed the synthesis of the literature with a description of a four-step process to create a mission statement. This process is generalizable to any higher education institution, and it leverages the capabilities of wiki technology. Finally, we now offer our own experience with implementing the process as evidence of its viability and effectiveness.

Was it time well spent? We think so—for two reasons. First, our faculty senate did not have a formally constituted mission statement. Hence, our efforts addressed a critical need. It is our hope that in the coming years, the faculty senate will judiciously refine the statement to better reflect its values/beliefs, its mission, and its vision. Second, we now have a four-step process that can be employed to undertake such a refinement exercise.

Faculty support for the creation of the document and participation in the wiki exercise was high. Faculty members willingly devoted time to respond to questions on the wiki. In addition, the faculty senate body liked the mission statement that was developed and enthusiastically accepted and ratified it.

We believe that the lack of a clearly defined mission statement may have resulted in the perception by faculty and administrators that the senate was somewhat unfocused in the execution of its charge. We also believe that the mission statement now in place will help the faculty senate address this shortcoming and bridge any gaps that may have existed between administrators and faculty. We are confident that such efforts will enhance the reputation and standing of the faculty senate in the university community.

Such an enhanced reputation and standing will likely empower the faculty senate. When this occurs, the mission statement will offer a structured pathway for future action. As we realized when we began this process, the absence of a mission statement makes it hard for outsiders (including faculty and administrators) to identify with the faculty senate’s raison d’être.

Our experience with the development process. The ease with which we completed the assigned task surprised most of the committee members. Coming from different disciplines, we expected to find differing views on how best to approach our task. However, we quickly learned to take advantage of our complementary skill sets. After completing the task, we all agreed that it was a satisfying experience. By leveraging new technology (e.g., wikis), we were able to quickly complete tasks that otherwise would have taken considerably longer. In addition, by gathering information from a judicious mix of faculty who both had and had not served on the faculty senate, we were able to extract a diverse yet relevant set of faculty perspectives.

The entire process was efficient. The committee met in-person only five times. The first meeting took place in December 2009. The mission statement was ratified by the faculty senate in April 2010. From the committee’s point of view, the task of developing a mission statement was accomplished within the timeline established at the onset of the project. The expeditious turnaround can be attributed to several factors, including (1) the use of a structured four-step process, (2) the willingness of all committee members to do their part and meet deadlines, and (3) the use of technology (wikis and e-mail communication) that supported the efficiency needed to quickly complete the task.

In particular, the wiki provided a convenient and efficient tool for gathering information. By pairing the wiki with routine e-mail communication, we accomplished the collaborative work more readily than we would have without those technologies. In addition, the wiki insured that we all worked from one common document rather than sending repeated edits back and forth via e-mail.

Recommendations for faculty senates at other universities. We believe that it is in the best interest of any faculty representative body to develop and use a
mission statement. Unfortunately, research indicates that
the record of faculty senates creating such statements is
spotty at best. Perhaps it is the perceived complex nature
of the statement or the absence of a structured framework
to guide their efforts that has restrained faculty senates.
We offer one approach to address these challenges that is
anchored in theory and easy to implement. In addition, we
believe that our four-step process is not situation-specific;
it can be replicated at any university. The process worked
well for us, and we urge faculty senates that do not yet
have a mission statement, or those that would like to
revisit/retool their existing statement, to use the four-step
process to address their own needs.

If a faculty senate intends to undertake such an
exercise, then it should assemble a cross-disciplinary team
to widen the committee’s perspective and promote broad
legitimacy across campus. Of course, it helps if some of
the team members have served on the faculty senate and
if one or two is a past office holder. Having a member
already familiar with (or designating a member to become
familiar with) the underlying theoretical framework of the
mission statement can also help. In our case, one member
was experienced in developing mission statements using
the framework of Collins and Porras (1991). The lack of
such experience can be bridged by examining existing
mission statements and identifying their strengths and
weaknesses as well as specific elements that could be
incorporated to fully describe the organization’s guiding
philosophy and tangible image. Finally, using a previously
tested process makes the group’s work much less stressful.

Wikis are increasingly mainstream in academia,
and committees planning to undertake this process are
couraged to use wikis to their advantage. Wikis are
simple to set up and operate and are quite user-friendly.
There are over 200 commercial wiki platforms available on
the market. Google Docs™ is one such popular platform.
Most wiki platforms are available at no charge; others
charge a modest fee. We used the wiki offered by PBworks
(www.pbworks.com) because our university had already
procured a user license and would provide us with
infrastructure support. Finally, even though all committee
members may not be familiar with a wiki (as was true in
our case), the learning curve is slight and the ease of wiki
use encourages participation.

**Conclusion**

As we reviewed our work, we were pleased to note
that the mission statement developed for our faculty
senate addresses most, if not all, of the theoretical
dimensions of the three constructs of interest (i.e.,
mission, vision, and values/beliefs), as well as most of
the mission “themes” found at peer institutions. While
our faculty senate would undoubtedly have continued to
accomplish good things if the status quo were maintained,
we believe that a well-crafted mission statement enhances
communication and can clarify actions that will improve
faculty senate effectiveness. We, as a committee, are happy
that our efforts have culminated in a ratified statement of
what our faculty senate deems important. We encourage
faculty senates at other institutions to develop comparable
statements that reveal what is truly valued at their institutions.

We would be remiss if we did not recognize that the
development of a mission statement and its inclusion in
the charter are only the first steps toward enhancing the
effectiveness of our faculty senate. The mission statement
must be institutionalized into the faculty senate’s culture
and decision-making process. Evidence from research
(e.g., Baetz and Bart 1996; Collins and Porras 1991;
Sheaffer, Landau, and Drori 2008) suggests that such
actions can further enhance the effectiveness of a
faculty senate.

We also recognize that the genesis, implementation,
and legitimacy of the mission statement can and will be
influenced by other institutional stakeholders, including
granting institutions, trustees, administrators, and sponsors.
In addition, adverse economic conditions and the increasingly
competitive educational landscape may diminish the efficacy
of the mission statement. However, we believe that the
establishment of a mission statement is an important step
in guiding faculty senates in turbulent times.

The authors are committed to advancing the leadership
of faculty senates through the creation of mission statements.
In the interest of brevity, descriptions of some of the
detailed processes were omitted from this article.
However, the authors stand ready to support universities
and their faculty senates that wish to pursue this activity
by sharing their expertise, technology, and experiences.

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A well-crafted mission statement
can clarify actions that will improve
faculty senate effectiveness.

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Derrick E. D’Souza, Terry L. Clower, Kim F. Nimon,
Elizabeth A. Oldmixon, and Frances S. van Tassell

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References


Notes


2. Birnbaum went on to argue, however, that senates fulfill important latent functions, and, in that sense, they are quite effective. He noted, “If senates did not exist, we would have to invent them” (1989, p. 440).
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