The central problem at the University of South Carolina Upstate is not the lack of an effective system of shared governance, as the chancellor and opponents of a no-confidence vote contend ("Faculty delays no-confidence vote on USC Upstate chancellor," Jan. 17).

Shared governance is the idea that faculty and administrators share responsibility in the decision-making process. USC Upstate has mechanisms in place by which the faculty influences academic matters and provides input into other areas of campus life. The Faculty Senate and standing committees allow the faculty to approve changes in academic programs, give advice about budgeting for those changes, assess those programs and evaluate our peers for tenure and promotion.

Our campus is also backed by policies and procedures from the larger USC system. For example, changes in university centers must go through a shared governance process where the faculty initiates the change; centers cannot be modified unilaterally by upper-level administrators.

This is what galvanized us last summer to oppose the decisions to close the Center for Women's and Gender Studies and the Burroughs Child Development Center. Both of these centers have an academic purpose and play an important role in furthering the educational mission of the university. USC Upstate administrators announced those closures without seeking relevant input from faculty or bringing proposals before any formal faculty governance body. The announcements also came after students and faculty had left for the summer, making shared governance impossible.

The problem at USC Upstate is a lack of leadership and a disregard for the established system of policies and procedures governing university affairs. We don't need philosophical debate about shared governance. We need leadership that honors it.

-Dr. Lizabeth Zack-
-Associate professor of sociology,