

## DECISION MAKING AT WESTMONT COLLEGE

Westmont College's decision making structure is based on a model of shared governance, which is the norm for higher education institutions. As the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) indicates: "The variety and complexity of the tasks performed by institutions of higher education produce an inescapable interdependence among governing board, administration, faculty, students and others."

Here is a brief summary of Westmont's approach to shared governance, followed by a description of the primary decision making processes at the college.

### AN OVERVIEW OF SHARED GOVERNANCE

**Final Authority.** The Westmont College **Board of Trustees** is legally responsible for the governance of the college. As a result, it has final authority over institutional purposes, policies, and programs. The Board normally exercises its responsibility on campus through the President.

**Chief Executive Officer.** The **President** of Westmont College is hired by, and serves at the pleasure of, the Board of Trustees. The President exercises all executive powers not explicitly reserved to the Board of Trustees; this includes final review and final administrative approval of college plans, budgets, and policies and to submit appropriate items to the Board of Trustees for adoption. Presidential responsibilities and authority include overseeing the operations and development of the institution as a whole, and supervising the vice presidents in the performance of their duties.

**Primary Responsibility for Curriculum and Instruction.** The **Faculty** of Westmont College exercise primary responsibility for curriculum, instruction, faculty status, and any policies for student life which relate to the educational program. Faculty recommendations in these areas are reviewed and then presented by the chief academic officer and the president to the Board of Trustees, which has final authority. Procedures for making curricular and academic policy decisions are included in the Faculty Handbook.

**Shared Responsibility.** Faculty and administrative officers share responsibility for developing standards and policies for the recruitment and admission of students.

**Appropriate Involvement.** Faculty also are authorized and expected to be involved in the formulation of other college policies, including those in student life, public relations, institutional budgeting, and long-range planning. Likewise, student and staff representatives<sup>†</sup> are authorized and expected to be involved as appropriate in key areas of college governance, including policy development, institutional budgeting, and long-range planning.

**Administrative Coordination.** Communication and coordination of college governance issues occurs most frequently at meetings of the **Executive Team** (comprised of the President and vice presidents), as well as on a regular basis at President's Council meetings (comprised of the Executive Team and representatives<sup>†</sup> of the faculty, staff and student body). Governance updates are provided periodically at faculty meetings and at staff forums.

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<sup>†</sup> Representatives are expected not only to contribute their personal perspectives but also to serve as liaisons of perspectives and information between the constituency group and the governance body.

## PRIMARY DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

To various degrees, handbooks for faculty, staff and students contain information about several decision making processes on campus. Some of the primary decision making processes pertain to:

***Academic Programs, Policies and Personnel.*** The Faculty Handbook specifies the processes used to make decisions regarding such academic matters as:

- The addition or deletion of majors and fields of study;
- Establishing or changing requirements for general education and graduation; and
- Hiring, promoting, and granting tenure to faculty.

***Capital Improvement Projects.*** Each year, the college budget provides some funding for capital improvement projects. Funding for a capital improvement project (CIP) can be requested from any member of the Executive Team. Because requests greatly exceed available funding, the President's Council uses a CIP Subcommittee (comprised of President's Council representatives from both the program and operations sides of the college) to review all requests and bring recommended priorities back to the Council for discussion. The President considers any advice received from President's Council before making the CIP funding decisions each year.

***College Budget.*** The President is responsible for developing an annual budget recommendation to the Board of Trustees. The budget development process typically begins in the Fall, with recommendations for increases in student charges formulated by late January and recommendations for expenses made by early April. Each division has its own process for receiving and prioritizing budget requests. (*For details about the process within your division, please contact your vice president.*) During the budget development process, periodic updates are given to the President's Council, which is available as an advisory group to the President on budget priorities. Most of the advice received by the President on budget priorities comes through Executive Team meetings, where representatives from all divisions are present.

***College Policies.*** Primary responsibility for developing and approving academic policies rests with the faculty. Responsibility for developing and approving policies pertaining to the recruitment and admission of students is shared by faculty and administrative officials.

In all other cases, the President has the responsibility to develop and approve college policies. The President is expected to secure appropriate involvement of campus constituencies in the development and review of proposed policies – for example, seeking faculty input on college policies pertaining to student life, public relations, institutional budgeting, and long-range planning. As a general rule, the President also will seek the advice of the President's Council (which includes faculty, staff and student representatives) on proposed college policies.

The President may choose to delegate to other administrators the responsibility and authority to develop and approve department or division policies.

***Fundraising Priorities.*** Fundraising priorities consistent with the strategic plan are approved by the Board of Trustees following a recommendation from the President. At a minimum, the President will seek input from the Executive Team and from faculty, staff, and student representatives on the President's Council before making a recommendation to the Board of Trustees. Additional input from Faculty Council and Academic Senate may be sought on specific fundraising priorities.

***Strategic Planning.*** The two groups with primary responsibility for strategic planning are the Strategic Planning Committee (consisting of trustees, faculty, staff and administrators) and the Planning Committee of the Board of Trustees. The Strategic Planning Committee makes recommendations on strategic priorities to the trustee Planning Committee. The Planning Committee then makes recommendations to the Board of Trustees, which has final authority for determining these priorities.

***Student Processes.*** The Westmont College Student Association (WCSA) blog site gives access to application forms for student clubs and for WCSA funding of student events; WCSA determines which student clubs to authorize and which student clubs and events will receive WCSA funding. In accordance with the Student Handbook, a student fundraising committee reviews applications and determines which student ministries may solicit funds to Westmont (thus generating tax-deductible receipts for gifts).