

## Leadership during a Budget Crisis and Its Impact on Academic Programs, Teaching, and Research

Kim Song and Patricia Boyer

### Abstract

This mixed methods study investigated how faculty members at a Midwestern university perceived shared governance in decision-making as it relates to budgetary distribution and its impact on academic programs, teaching, and research. A survey administered yielded a 31.1 percent response rate of tenured and tenure-track faculty, who participated in the study by answering twenty-one quantitative and qualitative survey questions. For the findings, most of participating faculty reported that university leaders did not practice shared governance properly. This resulted in a greater faculty workload, a less flexible course schedule, and less trust by faculty of university leaders and their decisions. Qualitative data analysis found two recurring themes; “lack of shared governance” and “outcomes of lack of shared governance.” Both quantitative and qualitative data analyses revealed that faculty considered the university leadership to be unfair and believed that the administration mismanaged faculty input into shared decision-making, particularly with respect to budget distribution and academic program changes.

Colleges and universities in the United States are experiencing many problems due to decreased enrollment and reduced state funding, which have resulted in a budget crisis felt throughout academia (Boyer and Song 2019). This budget crisis has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to further reductions in financial support. Even during this crisis, however, universities need to practice shared

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governance and cooperative action among administrators, faculty, and staff according to guidelines recommended by the AAUP, the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities, and Colleges (AGB) (AAUP 2020).

Most higher education institutions have a governing authority organization such as the board of trustees; they are accountable for their institutions' academic quality, fiscal and academic integrity, academic planning, assets, and financial health (AAUP n.d.). The collaborative and inclusive sharing of these governing responsibilities is intended to "foster constructive joint thought and action, both within the institutional structure and in protection of its integrity against improper intrusions" (AAUP 1966). Shared governance, thus, should be constructed based on mutual understanding, cooperative effort, and interdependence among administrators, faculty, staff, and students.

It is important that faculty input on financial planning and budget decisions be taken into account. Faculty senates should establish regular standing budget priority committees that make regular recommendations, especially during times of budget cutting or other extraordinary events (ASCSU 1999). The academic senate of the California State University also argues that its Faculty Budget Priority Committee should review not just overall university budget priorities and reports, but also college-level budget information.

The financial difficulties brought about by decreased student enrollment and reduced state funding have led to an ongoing debate in higher education about how to allocate now limited funds (Boyer and Song 2019). When states reduce their funding of higher education, outsiders do not realize how much damage these cuts can cause (Capaldi 2011). Meanwhile the institutions need to maintain accountability and do more with less state funds. In this process, students, faculty, and staff may be losing their voices, academic freedom, and shared governance (Boyer and Song 2019). The purpose of this mixed methods study is to investigate how faculty members at a Midwestern university perceived (1) the university's shared governance in decision-making as it relates to budgetary distribution and (2) its impact on academic programs, teaching, and research.

## Literature Review

Shared governance, as a way to generate agreement between faculty and administration in governing the university, is defined in various ways. James Flynn (2005 4), for example, describes shared governance as "shared responsibility between administration and faculty for primary decisions about the general means of advancing the general educational policy determined by the school's charter." The AAUP's definition of shared governance includes faculty participation in governance and academic freedom in such areas as budgetary and salary matters, financial exigency, and retention (AAUP n.d.). Gary Olson (2009) sees shared

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governance as a complex and delicate balance between faculty participation in the planning and decision-making of institutional issues on the one hand, and administrative accountability, on the other. Shared governance is also defined as a set of disseminating practices under which college and university faculty and staff participate in a significant decision-making process to serve the university mission more effectively (Reed 2009).

Faculty members are crucial and seemingly irreplaceable partners in offering a quality education. Thus, the question is, “Should all faculty be given equal power related to decision-making and the institution’s future?” (Olson 2009). The AAUP (1966, 4) notes that “budgets, personnel limitations, the time element, and the policies of other groups, bodies, and agencies having jurisdiction over the institution may set limits to realization of faculty advice.” Joseph Simplicio (2006) declares that “administrators cannot make decisions in budget distribution and academia among themselves and it is essential for open and active communication”: It is therefore crucial that faculty members, administrators, staff, and students participate in making budget decisions. Effective and responsive shared governance is even more vital during budget crises (Bahls 2014). Sometimes academic programs and the quality of student learning are harmed by administrators’ decisions in such moments, especially when faculty input is limited or ignored.

In some universities, administrations have responded to budget crises by altering or dismantling academic programs, without faculty input. Often faculty and programs managed by fractious personnel are targeted. Discontinuing programs can be perceived by faculty as a way of getting rid of undesirable faculty protected by tenure (AAUP n.d.). During the current COVID-19 pandemic, some institutions are using the budget crisis to increase faculty workload, increase the percentage of faculty on contingent contracts, or lay off tenured faculty (Zahneis 2020); decisions are generally made without respecting shared governance. On occasion, therefore, “faculty feel they do not have a voice in the budget process, but university leaders feel they include faculty at every stage” (Archibald and Conley 2011). In a survey conducted for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, few faculty agreed that the shared governance at their institutions was healthy (Anft 2018). Faculty are committed to teaching, research, and service; they are also committed exercising an independent voice grounded in expertise and commitment (Rhoades 2010). Faculty expect to have a meaningful voice in the future of their institutions (Boyer & Song 2019).

### Scarce Resources and Shared Governance

The role of faculty, staff, and students is deteriorating in higher education’s prolonged financial crisis because administrators are making decisions without input from the constituents. Although faculty members do not usually control the resources, they tend to influence day-to-day activities. Faculty tend to control promotion,

tenure, and the curriculum, while administrators control budgets, hiring decisions, and enrollment (Woessner and Kehler 2018). Given these distinctive roles, faculty and administration are not always in agreement on how to govern the university. Faculty desire quality academic programs and students, while administrators prefer efficiency and expediency (Archibald and Conley 2011). They prefer to hire adjunct or non-tenure track faculty to teach courses instead of hiring costlier tenured or tenure-track faculty. From an administrator's perspective, this may seem practical and efficient, but academic freedom and a tenure system affords institutional quality and value in the long run.

Peter Eckel (2000) indicates that shared governance is an essential tool to making difficult decisions. And yet, the faculty voice finds itself diminished, disregarded, and under attack (Rhoades 2010; Daniel 2014), especially during a budget crisis. Rodney Redmond (2007) argues that trust and honesty between faculty and administration are important to creating an inclusive campus climate, but that it may be challenging to maintain the inclusive environment when budgets come under pressure. Maintaining the inclusive environment is challenging during the pandemic. One example is for the universities to decide if they want to have onsite or virtual classes in fall 2020. Many professors feel that they're being left out the decision-making process, especially where it concerns the classroom, virtual or otherwise in fall 2020 (Flaherty 2020).

Scarce resources at any institution increase political tensions and decrease collegiality, confidence, respect, and trust in institutional equity (Boyer and Song 2019). Eric van Dijk and David De Cremer (2006) argue that campus decision-makers tend to allocate resources in ways that benefit themselves rather than the broader community. Ineffective leadership intensifies infighting for these scarce resources. Discriminatory practices also become evident, especially if leadership appears to oppose the faculty's academic freedom or seems eager to dispense with an academic program. A faculty member's professional expertise in scholarship and teaching entitles him or her to participate in college and university governance (Gerber 2015). For this reason, some administrators welcome faculty input, since faculty are the experts in courses and programs, and they welcome shared governance to resolve issues and to maintain a relationship of respect with faculty (Ekel 2000). Too often, however, administrators use financial exigency to justify reaching decisions without faculty input (Boyer and Song 2019).

The weakened faculty morale brought by continuous budget cuts, salary reductions, furloughs, forced early retirements, and increased workloads can cause long-term damage if budgets are not arrived at with faculty input and collaborative shared governance (A Crumbling Ivory Tower 2010). Once lost, reestablishing the faculty's trust and faith in leadership can be difficult. In short, administrators cannot afford to be indifferent to faculty views and concerns.

## Methods

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine how the higher education leadership during a budget shortfall influenced shared governance and academic freedom at one Midwestern institution, which we will refer to in the rest of this essay as “Midwest.” We posed the following research question: “How did the faculty members perceive shared governance and its consequences in academic programs, teaching, and research?” The results of the twenty-one survey questions, which produced quantitative and qualitative data, were used to report the findings.

### *Survey Instrument*

We developed a twenty-one-item survey based on research on shared governance, especially during a budget crisis in higher education. The survey had five questions (or items) for participating faculty’s demographic information, fifteen items on shared governance and consequences during the budget crisis which was a quantitative data source (see table 2), and one open-ended item for comments, a qualitative data source. The first five items were demographic questions about gender, tenure status, race or ethnicity, and length of employment. The role of the participants in this study was to complete the online survey, which took approximately fifteen to twenty minutes. The researchers received Institutional Research Board approval from Midwest in March 2017.

### *Data Collection and Instrument*

We sent the survey to all 209 faculty members who were identified as tenured and tenure-track in the university’s data system. Sixty-five of the 209 faculty members (31.1 percent) responded with the completed survey, and they became the study’s participants. The survey was administered using Qualtrics, an online survey software. All survey participants taught in Midwest’s College of Arts and Sciences or its College of Education. We chose these two colleges because they were the largest of the five colleges and two schools at the university.

The participants responded to the fifteen survey items by indicating their opinion about each statement using the four-point Likert scale, from 1 for “strongly disagree” to 4 for “strongly agree.” Among the fifteen items on shared governance were four on the faculty’s input in decision-making during budget crises in general (items 1 and 6), academic program changes (item 9), and policy changes (item 11). Two items corresponded to outcomes of shared governance: the faculty’s academic freedom (item 10) and their workload (item 3). There was one item on staff’s input in decision-making (item 2); one on faculty, staff, and students’ input in decision-making (item 5); and one on students’ voice in decision-making (item 8). Two

items focused on changes to and dismantling of academic programs (items 13 and 14); two items on the quality of academic programs and flexible course offerings (items 4 and 7); and two items on trust and inclusive campus climate (items 12 and 15). In summary, the survey items included nine items on administrators' use of shared governance that included or did not include faculty, staff, and students; four items on the consequences of scarce resources for faculty and students; and two items on the importance of trusting relationships and an inclusive campus climate (see table 2 for quantitative survey items). Item 21 was for open-ended comment, additional facts, opinions, and experiences. We used these responses as the study's qualitative data.

### *Data Analysis*

The data source for this study was the responses to the twenty-one-item survey. The first five items were about the participants' demographics: their department, gender, ethnicity, tenure status, and length of employment. Fifteen items asked how the participating faculty perceived university leadership during the budget crisis, and one item (Item 21) was an open-ended one for faculty comments. We used frequencies and percentages to report the findings from the fifteen Likert-scale items, and they were to examine how the participating faculty perceived leadership by university administration during the budget crisis in terms of shared governance.

We conducted the grounded theory's open coding (Charmaz 2010) to analyze the faculty's comments on an open-ended survey item 21 to support the research question, and coded them to come up with the key codes through an open coding process. The axial coding scheme, then, was developed and guided by the main research question of how the university administration's leadership during the budget crisis influenced faculty, staff, students, and the campus climate. This iterative analysis, triangulated through our individual and collective coding processes, revealed the main themes: (1) the failure of shared governance and (2) the impacts of the failure of the shared governance. The key codes from the analysis included increased student tuition, the reduced number of faculty with more administrative work, lack of academic program quality and flexibility, and lower scholarly research.

### **Findings**

The goal of this mixed methods study was to examine how the faculty members in two colleges at Midwest, the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Education, perceived the university leadership during the budget crisis. The university also has three other colleges (Business Administration, Nursing, and Optometry) and two schools (Social Work and Fine & Performing Arts). One research question guided this study, "How

did the faculty members perceive shared governance and its consequences in academic programs, teaching, and research?”

Findings from the quantitative study were based on twenty of twenty-one questions in the survey. The survey’s twenty quantitative items included five questions for demographic information and fifteen asking for opinions on shared governance during the budget crisis. The twenty-first question was an open-ended item asking for the comment that was used for the qualitative study.

*Findings from the quantitative data analysis*

The findings from the first five items on the participants’ demographics showed the following: more males (57 percent) responded to the survey than females (43 percent), the majority of the participants were white (89 percent), and approximately 59 percent stated their length of employment as fifteen years or less. This represented the racial demographics of the university faculty, which is 73.1 percent white. However, the findings do not represent the gender composition of the university faculty, which is more female (58.1 percent) than male (41.9 percent). In addition, about 60 percent of the faculty were not tenured in the fall semester of 2018. However, in this study, more tenured faculty ( $n = 50$ ) responded to this survey. Table 1 illustrated the number, that is, frequency, and percentage of the participating faculty members ( $n = 65$ ).

**Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of Variables ( $n = 65$ )**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	35	56.5
Female	27	43.5
Tenure status		
Tenure-track	13	20.6
Tenure	50	79.4
Race/ethnicity		
White	55	88.7
Another race/ethnicity	7	11.3
Length of employment		
≤ 7 years	13	25.5
8–15 years	17	33.3

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16–25 years	10	19.6
25+ years	11	21.6

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*Quantitative findings from the fifteen items*

The participating faculty used the Likert scales when responding to the survey items, from 1 for “strongly disagree” to 4 for “strongly agree.” In order to measure faculty perception of the university’s shared leadership during the budget crisis, the percentage of participants was used. We decided to relocate the responses by having 1 (strongly disagreed) and 2 (disagreed) as “disagreed”, and 3 (agreed) and 4 (strongly agreed) for “agreed” to measure binary perspectives of the faculty’s responses.

Of the fifteen survey items, participants stated they disagreed with five questions and agreed with nine questions, while one question had an even percentage of responses. The five questions participants disagreed with were “Midwest leaders seek input from faculty” (item 1, 53 percent); “Midwest leaders seek input from staff” (item 2, 71 percent); “Midwest leaders encourage shared governance among faculty, staff, and students” (item 5, 67 percent); “Faculty input is valued and regarded when deciding program changes” (item 9, 63 percent); and “Faculty input is valued by Midwest leadership when making policy changes” (item 11, 64 percent). These five items that the participating faculty disagreed with were those that measured shared governance. The results of the percentage study showed that more than 63 percent of the faculty disagreed that the administration practiced shared decision-making procedures that involved faculty, staff, and students. Item 1 showed that 53 percent of the faculty disagreed that the administration encourages input from faculty, which might mean that only about half of the faculty disagreed with this item. However, in the qualitative data results (responses to item 21), comments from the faculty indicated the existence of a website that allowed faculty, staff, and students to provide input, but respondents indicated that administrators did not use what the faculty posted in budgetary decision-making. This might be why 47 percent of the faculty agreed with this item.

The majority of faculty participants agreed with the following nine questions: “Faculty workload has increased” (item 3, 96 percent); “The quality of students’ education has diminished because of budgetary decisions” (item 4, 81 percent); “Midwest faculty voice has been stifled or disregarded in the budgetary decision-making process” (item 6, 62 percent); “Course schedules have become less flexible in meeting the needs of students” (item 7, 61 percent); “Midwest’s students’ voice has been stifled and disregarded in the budgetary decision-making process” (item 8, 64 percent); “It is challenging for faculty to reestablish truth and faith . . . when shared governance is not practiced” (item 12, 88 percent); “Students should have a voice when



changes are being made to academic programs” (item 13, 86 percent); “The student voice should be considered prior to dismantling academic programs” (item 14, 81 percent); and “An inclusive campus climate is essential for establishing shared governance” (item 15, 96 percent). On one question, “My academic freedom in teaching and research has not been influenced by the budget crisis” (item 10), 51 percent of the participants disagreed and 49 percent agreed (see table 2).

The percentage results showed that the majority of the faculty (61–96 percent) agreed that faculty and students needed to have a voice in decision-making on the budget and programs, and that a trustworthy and inclusive campus climate is essential. For the academic freedom item (item 10), 51 percent of the faculty agreed that the budget crisis could influence the faculty’s academic freedom. The faculty might not be able to claim their academic freedom in response to the administration’s decisions during the budget crisis because their input was ignored or because their voice was not heard. Regarding the study’s research question, “How did the faculty members perceive shared governance and its consequences in academic programs, teaching, and research?”, the results of the percentage analysis showed that most of the faculty members (61–96 percent) perceived that university leaders did not practice shared governance properly, and that this resulted in greater faculty workloads, less flexible course schedules, and less trust of the administration and its decisions. In addition, the majority of the faculty (96 percent) agreed with the importance of having an inclusive campus climate. Table 2 illustrates the descriptive data, that is, the frequency and percentage, of the faculty who agreed or disagreed with each of the fifteen items in the survey.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Frequency and Percentage to the Fifteen Survey Items ( $n = 65$ )**

	Disagree	Agree
1. Midwest leaders seek input from faculty when making budgetary decisions during the crisis.	28 (52.8%)	25 (47.2%)
2. Midwest leaders seek input from staff when making budgetary decisions during the crisis.	34 (70.8%)	14 (29.2%)
3. Faculty workload has increased due to the budget crisis.	2 (3.7%)	52 (96.3%)
4. The quality of students’ education has diminished because of budgetary decisions made by Midwest leaders during the crisis.	10 (19.2%)	42 (80.8%)

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5. Midwest leaders encourage shared governance among faculty, staff, and students when making budgetary decisions during the crisis.

34 (66.7%) 17 (33.3%)

6. Midwest's faculty voice has been stifled or disregarded in the budgetary decision-making process.

20 (38.5%) 32 (61.5%)

7. Course schedules have become less flexible in meeting the needs of students because of budgetary decisions made by Midwest leaders.

21 (39.3%) 32 (60.4%)

8. Midwest's students' voice has been stifled and disregarded in the budgetary decision-making process.

17 (36.2%) 30 (46.1%)

9. Faculty input is valued and regarded when deciding program changes during the budget crisis.

32 (62.7%) 19 (37.3%)

10. My academic freedom in teaching and research has not been influenced by the budget crisis.

27 (50.9%) 26 (49.1%)

11. Faculty input is valued by Midwest leadership when making policy changes during the budget crisis.

33 (63.5%) 19 (36.5%)

12. It is challenging for faculty to reestablish truth and faith in Midwest's leadership when shared governance is not practiced.

6 (12.0%) 44 (88.0%)

13. Students should have a voice when changes are being made to academic programs during the budget crisis.

6 (11.8%) 45 (88.2%)

14. The student voice should be considered prior to dismantling academic programs.

10 (19.6%) 41 (80.4%)

15. An inclusive campus climate is essential for establishing shared governance during the budget crisis.

2 (3.9%) 49 (96.1%)

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*Findings from the qualitative study*

The data source for the qualitative study was the participating faculty's responses to item 21, which was open-ended. Of the sixty-five faculty members who responded to the survey (31.1 percent of the faculty at the two colleges), twenty-four (36.9 percent) responded to the open-ended question. We collected all of the

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comments in Word as a separate file. After the open coding and axial coding, we found two paths in the faculty's comments and opinions about the administration's leadership during the budget crisis. The two recurring themes, or paths, were (1) lack of shared governance and (2) outcomes of lack of shared governance. We also noticed that the first path, lack of shared governance, might be connected to the second path, outcomes of lack of shared governance in the budget crisis. More details were reported to answer the research question, "How did the faculty members perceive shared governance and its consequences in academic programs, teaching, and research?"

#### *Lack of shared governance*

Most of participating faculty considered the university leadership to be unfair or "mismanaging" in terms of collaborative or shared decision-making with faculty and staff input. This qualitative finding complemented the quantitative findings described above. One faculty member noted that upper administrators of the university had received raises (van Dijk and De Cremer 2006), while "faculty and staff have not gotten raises while taking on more responsibilities" due to the reduced number of full-time employees. Another faculty member also mentioned "unfair" cost distribution between the administrative and overall budget: "If they [administrators] can't protect the rest of us, they shouldn't be allowed to protect themselves; upper administration has not borne the [financial] effects of its decisions." In addition, it seemed that the administrative cost cut was not cut exactly as much as the overall cut.

Administrators did not use the faculty's input in their budget decision-making even though the university had a website to get faculty input. One faculty member wrote, "It appears as leadership seeks input from faculty, staff, students at website for comments. The issue is whether or not those comments are being integrated into [the administration's] decision making." Having a website to collect the input was a "formality" rather than a demonstration of intent to use that input "when making decisions." This faculty member continued, "The one thing I resent is that my input doesn't matter: it is being asked, only to have it ignored."

In summary, it seemed that the faculty perceived that the university administration did not reflect input from the university community or partners—that is, faculty, staff, and students—in its decision-making. According to the faculty comments, administrators did not practice shared governance, a conclusion also reflected in the quantitative findings.

#### *Outcomes of lack of shared governance: From salary to campus climate*

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Respondents also commented on the lack of salary increases for faculty and staff, the reduced number of the faculty and staff, and high tuition for students. For example, the lack of raises led some respondents to express concern about their quality of life in this city, and one faculty member feared that “our very best mid- and early- career faculty may be considering leaving if the university cannot improve the climate, raise pool, and intangibles such as sabbaticals soon.” Two faculty members wrote that their department faculty lines were not being filled for the positions of the retired faculty. As a result, they were concerned about their research mission being nonfunctional or in peril, “as more advising, teaching and leading tasks were required of faculty time.” A faculty member also shared concerns about academic programs: “Some programs were slowly bleeding to death due to repeated budget crises. There had long been an established policy of cutting programs and colleges equally during budget cuts, despite the productivity and value of each program. . . . Students who have, in good faith, enrolled in a course of study, have every right to assume that the said- course of study is adequately supported, i.e. that all course offerings are routinely offered and provided by competent and majority full-time faculty.”

Having smaller departments with fewer faculty members, the university offered fewer options to students, much less flexible course schedules, a lower quality of academic programs, and program death at the end. A faculty member wrote that these negative consequences might have been resulted because faculty and students were not involved in the decision-making process. One faculty member said, “It [The administration] has made unilateral decisions without faculty, staff, student input, and has forced these groups to bear the brunt of its poor decisions.”

Some faculty members wrote, however, that eliminating the underperforming departments and faculty could be the only remaining viable option. Instead of punishing all of the departments and programs, one said, “it is absolutely time to cut and eliminate departments and majors that are consistently losing money and providing little benefit to the University. This should have happened long ago.” Another faculty member wrote, “It would be better to be a 4-year institution than a crappy research institution.” The university where this study was conducted is a research institution, with undergraduate, masters, and doctoral programs, and the faculty have to demonstrate their scholarship as well as teaching and service. This faculty member was saying that since the current governance did not provide the resources needed for productive scholarship, the university should focus on undergraduate teaching only. Another faculty member said that the current administration needed to define the vision and “the long-term plans [of supporting faculty’s scholarship] for this campus to keep the status of ‘research institute.’” The faculty member also asked if administrators were capable of searching for “the strategies to alleviate the budget crisis.” The faculty comments did not reflect much trust in the administration.

## Discussions and Implications

This pilot case study explored how tenured and tenure-track faculty perceived administration leadership in shared governance during a budget crisis and the consequences of that leadership for academic programs, teaching, scholarship, and campus climate. The data source was the collection of responses to the twenty-one-item survey: five items for participating faculty demography, fifteen items on shared governance and its consequences, and one open-ended item for faculty comment. The descriptive statistic, percentage, was used to report the quantitative data findings for the first twenty items. Item 21, the open-ended request for faculty comment, was used for the qualitative data. The findings from both the quantitative and the qualitative data analysis showed that the faculty did not perceive the administration to be practicing “fair” and shared governance in deciding budget distribution and academic program changes. The faculty also mentioned increased workload due to the new hiring freeze, the low quality of academic programs, and the low production of scholarship due to the scarce resources during the budget crisis. A majority of the faculty (96 percent) agreed that the campus needed to maintain an inclusive climate by practicing shared governance, and the faculty (88 percent) agreed that it would be challenging to regain trust and faith in administration. One faculty member commented: “I started at this university because this was a research university in a good city with functional connections to neighboring institutions. Due to layoffs and faculty reductions, however, these relationships have been strained and non-functional. The research mission of this institution is in peril.”

Overall, the study’s findings revealed that the participating faculty did not believe that faculty, staff, and student input was valued and regarded when deciding program changes and when making policy changes during the budget crisis (Boyer and Song 2019). It seemed that the administration might need professional development in participatory leadership, and serious consideration should be given to revising shared governance policies to include input from faculty, staff, and students in decisions on budget and program changes, especially during a budget crisis.

In order to acknowledge all voices at the table, the university needs to define its identity as one of the four campuses in the state university system. Effective university leadership during a budget crisis is necessary and beneficial. Even in the current COVID-19 crisis, Adrianna J. Kezar, codirector of the Pullias Center for Higher Education at the University of Southern California, has warned, administrators’ “responses in terms of a future faculty role [should not be] unthoughtful, short term, and just a reaction to a pandemic” (quoted in Zahneis 2020). Open, engaged, and frequent communication with faculty, staff, and students could lead to positive outcomes if the administrator models “transparency, accountability, and shared governance” (de Ferranti et al. 2009, 14). Faculty, staff, and students should share in ownership and help create the inclusive

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campus climate. For example, the university administrators need to encourage student engagement in the decision-making process by offering focus groups along with faculty, staff, and administrators before changing or dismantling programs. It is the marketplace or citizenry (that is, students in the universities) that determines the direction, and higher education institutions need to give their students ownership in decision-making (Eckel and King 2004). Faculty should have the final say about programs and program cuts, and administrators may need to provide professional development opportunities to educate faculty and students on operational and budget sides of colleges and universities (Woodhouse 2015). Faculty opinions and viewpoints need to be considered in decision-making procedures; they may provide information and strategies not previously considered by administrators (Archibald and Conley 2011). A few faculty in this study regretted that the administrators deciding the budget and program changes did not appear to have read the input that faculty, staff, and students posted on the website. The faculty and students need to be more proactive in making sure that their voices are heard. The AAUP's (2020) *Statement on COVID-19 and the Faculty Role in Decision-Making* argues that faculty should be consulted on how best to implement academic decisions in this challenging period. If we do not exercise our voice, we lose it, and in the process society loses (Rhoades 2010).

### Limitations and Future Directions

A couple of limitations should be considered when seeking to replicate the study. The survey was administered to tenured and tenure-track faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Education at one institution. It could be better to include the faculty on the whole campus and even additional universities to make this study more reliable. We developed the survey based on research to establish the content validity. In a replication study, the instrument should establish reliability and validity with more participants and validation procedures. We sent the survey to the 209 faculty members at the two colleges, and 65 (31.1 percent) of them responded; with the twenty-one-item survey from the 65 participants, it was hard to generate any theory that might be different from other empirical research. With a larger sample, future researchers could examine whether there is any significant difference in perception of administration between tenured and tenure-track (not yet tenured) faculty or if there is any gender difference. With respect to the research design, interviews of focus groups of university leaders, faculty, staff, and students may provide more authentic data sources. Future research should also revisit and analyze the survey items to establish content and construct validity, even though we tried to provide the content validity based on our research.

With these limitations, however, this preliminary exploratory study may contribute to understanding how the faculty perceive leadership by administration in this era of budget crises. It is also true that we have learned a lot about how other faculty view the current university administrators' leadership in this difficult time. We hope that other faculty members, who may not have given much thought to how the university is led, start participating more and contributing their voice to decision-making about program changes and budget distribution.

*Kim H. Song is professor in the Department of Educator Preparation and Leadership and principal investigator of the National Professional Development Grant (2017–2022) at University of Missouri–St. Louis. Her research interests include raciolinguistic ideologies, immigrant family engagement, technology-mediated teaching and learning, virtual coaching as professional development, and translanguaging as a pedagogy.*

*Patricia Boyer is associate professor in the Department of Education Sciences and Professional Programs at University of Missouri–St. Louis, and her specialty is higher education and policy studies. Her research agenda includes faculty issues such as workloads and research productivity and student issues such as GRE scores and minority students.*

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