

Why is it difficult to get faculty to volunteer for shared governance service in universities and what are some potential solutions

It's difficult to get faculty to volunteer for **shared governance** service in universities due to a combination of heavy workloads, skepticism about the system's effectiveness, and a lack of proper recognition and support for the service.

Challenges to Faculty Participation

Faculty face several significant barriers that discourage them from volunteering for shared governance roles (e.g., faculty senate, university committees):

- **Workload and Competing Demands:** The primary responsibilities of faculty are **teaching, research, and service**. The pressure to produce **high-quality research** and secure **grants** for tenure and promotion often outweighs the incentives for governance service, which is time-consuming and can detract from scholarship.
- **Perception of Ineffectiveness:** Many faculty members feel that their time and effort in governance are ultimately **not valued** or lead to little impact.
 - **Advisory Role Only:** Faculty recommendations, even on academic matters where they are meant to have primary oversight, can be **overridden or dismissed** by the administration or governing board, leading to frustration and the feeling that participation is a "waste of time" or merely a "rubber stamp" process.
 - **Lack of Transparency and Trust:** Decisions may be made in secret, without full disclosure of financial or strategic information, leading to a **breakdown of trust** between faculty and administration/boards.
- **Lack of Training and Resources:** Few institutions invest in preparing faculty for their roles and responsibilities in governance. Faculty members often lack the necessary **training** to understand complex institutional finances or high-level strategic planning.
- **Shifting Workforce:** The increasing reliance on **non-tenure-track (FTNTT) and part-time faculty** complicates shared governance. These faculty members often have limited (or no) opportunities or incentives to participate, or they may be hesitant due to a lack of job security.
- **Structural Barriers:** The governance process itself can be slow, cumbersome, and bureaucratic, which is ill-suited for the rapid changes and competitive demands of 21st-century higher education.

Potential Solutions to Boost Involvement

To improve faculty engagement in shared governance, institutions need to address the structural and cultural issues that undermine the practice:

- **Foster a Culture of Trust and Respect**
 - **Increase Transparency:** Administrators and boards should commit to **timely and open communication**, sharing clear, digestible information on institutional finances and strategic goals early in the decision-making cycle.
 - **Clarify Roles and Authority:** Clearly articulate the specific areas of **primary responsibility** for the faculty (e.g., curriculum, degree requirements) and how disagreements between stakeholders will be resolved.
- **Value and Reward Service**
 - **Incentivize Service:** Ensure that participation in shared governance is **meaningfully recognized and rewarded** in the **promotion and tenure** process, especially for junior faculty.
 - **Reduce Workload:** Provide **concrete compensation** for significant committee work, such as course releases, stipends, or dedicated service leave, to balance out research and teaching demands.
 - **Acknowledge Contributions:** Publicly and frequently acknowledge the hard work and impact of faculty governance leaders and committees.
- **Improve Structure and Process**
 - **Provide Training:** Offer training and workshops for faculty on institutional finances, legal issues, and effective committee leadership to equip them with the necessary skills.
 - **Streamline Committees:** Periodically review and consolidate committees to eliminate redundancy and make the service more focused and efficient.
 - **Involve All Faculty:** Ensure that policies related to FTNTT and part-time faculty are inclusive and offer appropriate pathways for their participation.

Three Examples:

1. Committee Consolidation and "Sunset" Reviews

A common complaint is the sheer number of committees, many of which are redundant or lack a clear charge. Faculty senates can lead the effort to streamline this structure.

- **Implement Periodic Review:** Establish a formal "**Committee on Committees**" charged with a **Sunset Review** process. Every few years, every committee's charge, membership, and effectiveness are evaluated.
 - **Action:** If a committee's original purpose has been fulfilled, or if its work overlaps with another group, it is either **merged** or **disbanded** (sunsetting).
- **Consolidate and Clarify Charges:** Proactively consolidate small, single-purpose committees into larger, more strategic ones. For example, merging a "Library Advisory Committee" and an "IT Policy Committee" into a single, high-level "Information and Academic Resources Committee."
- **Define Clear Outcomes:** For every standing committee, faculty leadership should work with the administration to define **measurable annual performance goals** and clear reporting guidelines, ensuring the work is focused and impactful.

- **Reforming Representation Rules to Reduce Committee Sizes:** Not every committee needs equal representation from all Schools and colleges. Committees should comprise of the willing and appropriately skilled faculty members. Sufficient representation will happen at the Faculty Senate level.

2. Shifting to a Strategic Agenda

Faculty senate meetings often become lengthy information-sharing sessions that could be handled via email or smaller meetings. To maximize the value of the full Senate's time:

- **Focus on High-Impact Items:** The Executive Committee of the Senate should be aggressive in setting the agenda, prioritizing only items that require:
 - **Faculty Legislative Action:** Voting on a new curriculum, academic standard, or faculty policy.
 - **Strategic Discussion:** Debating high-level proposals for the institution's future (e.g., new academic programs, budget priorities).
- **Move Information to Reports:** All routine updates from administrative offices, committees, and officers should be presented as **written reports** distributed well *before* the meeting. This allows Senators to review the information and dedicate meeting time only to questions and debate.
- **Time Limits and Procedure:** Enforce strict adherence to meeting procedure (e.g., Robert's Rules of Order) and implement **firm time limits** for reports and debate to keep discussions moving efficiently.

3. Empowering Sub-Committees and Task Forces

The full faculty senate is often too large and unwieldy to handle detailed policy drafting. Faculty leadership can delegate the heavy lifting more effectively:

- **Establish Action-Oriented Task Forces:** When a major issue arises (like crafting a new General Education curriculum or revising promotion standards), the Senate can charter a **small, time-limited *ad hoc* task force** of faculty experts.
 - **Benefit:** These small groups can meet more frequently, draft policies, and gather data much faster than a large standing committee.
- **Clear Authority to Act:** Grant sub-committees and task forces the **specific, delegated authority** to consult with administrators and stakeholders on a particular issue, empowering them to develop a fully researched proposal for the full Senate's final vote.
- **Recruit Based on Expertise:** Instead of relying on general volunteers, use the "Committee on Committees" to strategically recruit faculty with **relevant expertise** (e.g., an economist for the budget committee, a labor lawyer for the faculty welfare committee) to ensure the committee's work is high-quality and respected.

Specific Solutions Involving FTNTT Faculty

Integrating **full-time non-tenure-track (FTNTT) faculty** into shared governance is crucial for effective representation, as they often constitute a large, and sometimes majority, part of the teaching workforce. However, their participation is complicated by job security issues and high teaching loads.

Here are three specific examples of how universities can successfully integrate FTFTNTT faculty into shared governance:

1. Granting Voting Rights

The most fundamental step is ensuring they have a voice where decisions are made.

- **Dedicated Seats:** Establish a fixed number of **voting seats** on the Faculty Senate and key university-level committees (e.g., Curriculum, Budget) that are **exclusively reserved** for elected FTNTT faculty.
 - *Example:* If FTNTT faculty make up 40% of the teaching lines, dedicate a proportionate number of seats (e.g., 20-30%) in the Senate to their representation.
- **Equal Voting Rights:** Ensure that once elected or appointed to a governance body, FTNTT faculty have the **same voting rights** as their tenure-track (TT) colleagues on all matters, particularly those concerning academic standards, curriculum, and faculty welfare.
- **Defining the Electorate:** Clearly define which FTNTT faculty are eligible to vote for and serve in these roles. This often includes long-term or full-time FTNTT faculty (e.g., those with multi-year contracts) to ensure stability and commitment.

2. Professionalizing and Compensating Service

Since FTNTT faculty often have high teaching loads and less time for service, specific structural support is necessary.

- **Service Buyouts/Releases:** Provide a **course release** (e.g., one course reduction per year) or a **stipend** for FTNTT faculty who take on significant, time-intensive governance roles (like chairing a major committee or serving on the Senate Executive Committee). This compensates them for the time taken away from their primary teaching duties.
- **Recognition in Reviews:** Ensure that service on governance bodies is explicitly and positively recognized in the FTNTT faculty's **annual performance reviews** and contract renewal decisions. The criteria for renewal should clearly state that governance service is a valuable form of institutional contribution.
- **Dedicated Support:** Offer access to the same **training and resources** (e.g., budget documents, policy archives) provided to TT faculty participating in governance, ensuring they can contribute meaningfully.

3. Departmental and College-Level Inclusion

Integration must happen at the local level where many day-to-day decisions are made.

- **Mandatory Inclusion in Departmental Committees:** Require that all departmental committees (e.g., curriculum planning, assessment) include at least **one FTNTT faculty member**.
 - *Crucial Distinction:* While FTNTT faculty may not participate in decisions about tenure and promotion, they **must** be involved in matters of curriculum, scheduling, and resources, which directly impact their work.
- **Open Departmental Meetings:** Ensure all departmental meetings are open to FTNTT faculty. While voting rights may vary by institution and topic, their **right to speak and contribute** to the discussion must be protected.
- **Establish FTNTT Focus Groups:** Some institutions create a specific "**Non-Tenure Track Faculty Advisory Committee**" that reports directly to the Senate or the Provost. This provides an organized, dedicated channel for FTNTT concerns without relying solely on their participation in the broader, often TT-majority, Senate.

Successful integration requires a commitment from both the administration and the TT faculty majority to formally acknowledge the value and expertise that FTNTT faculty bring to institutional decision-making.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

Foundational Governance and Policy

These sources establish the widely accepted principles of shared governance and the ideal roles of faculty, administrators, and boards.

- **American Association of University Professors (AAUP). (1966). Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities.**
 - *Relevance:* This is the foundational document for shared governance in the U.S. It defines the respective **primary responsibilities** of the faculty (curriculum, academic standards), the administration (execution of policy), and the governing board (final authority). It is essential for understanding the gap between the *ideal* and the *reality* of faculty power.
- **AAUP. (1995). The Role of Faculty in Budgetary and Salary Matters.**
 - *Relevance:* Directly addresses the need for **financial transparency** (a key solution discussed) and the faculty's right to participate in developing budget and salary policy.
- **Kezar, A. (2015). How Colleges Change: Understanding, Leading, and Enacting Change.** Routledge.

- *Relevance:* Provides a broad analysis of institutional change in higher education, often highlighting the structural barriers and cultural mistrust that impede effective shared governance, linking it to the difficulties in implementing reforms.

Workload, Incentives, and The Professoriate

These sources address the practical challenges and competing demands that make service a lower priority for faculty.

- **Finkelstein, M. J., Walker, M. L., & Francis, M. O. (2014). *The Faculty Factor: The Rewards and Realities of Academic Life*.** Johns Hopkins University Press.
 - *Relevance:* Offers data and sociological context on faculty work priorities (research, teaching, and service) and how the increasing focus on **research productivity** often marginalizes time-intensive committee service, which directly relates to the difficulty in securing volunteers.
- **Schuster, J. H., & Finkelstein, M. J. (2006). *The American Faculty: The Restructuring of Academic Work and Careers*.** Johns Hopkins University Press.
 - *Relevance:* Documents the **intensification of faculty work** and the pressures of tenure, which explain the lack of time and incentive for faculty to engage in service without formal recognition or compensation (as discussed in the solutions section).

Non-Tenure-Track (NTT) Faculty Integration

These sources focus on the structural changes in the academic workforce and the corresponding necessity of integrating NTT faculty into governance.

- **AAUP. (2001). *Statement on the Status of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty*.**
 - *Relevance:* Provides the policy framework supporting the integration of NTT faculty, emphasizing that those with substantial institutional responsibilities should have a proportionate voice in governance, especially concerning their conditions of employment and curriculum.
- **Curtis, M. A., & Jacobe, L. (2018). *Faculty, Shared Governance, and the Changing Faculty Model*. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2018(182), 65–77.**
 - *Relevance:* Discusses the challenges and solutions for adapting traditional governance models to the reality of a workforce dominated by NTT faculty, directly supporting the need for **dedicated seats** and **compensation** for service.

Solutions for Effectiveness and Transparency

These sources focus on practical remedies to improve the function of governance bodies.

- **Chait, R. P., Ryan, W. P., & Taylor, B. E. (2005). Governance for a New Era: A College-by-College Guidebook for Trustees, Administrators, and Faculty.** Johns Hopkins University Press.
 - *Relevance:* While written primarily for boards and administrators, this book offers structural solutions to make governance meetings and committees more **strategic and efficient**—directly supporting the streamlining and strategic agenda solutions.
- **The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB).** (Periodically updated statements and reports on board-president-faculty relations).
 - *Relevance:* Provides guidelines on effective board operation, including the necessity of **transparency** and **trust** in working with faculty and administration, which reinforces the cultural solutions discussed.

CASE STUDIES:

1. Enhancing Efficiency and Fostering an Open Culture

The challenge of making governance more efficient and less burdensome (i.e., streamlining committees and improving communication) is often addressed during institutional crises or restructuring.

Case Study	Solution Implemented	Reference
Augsburg College (Mid-sized, Urban)	Structural Reorganization & Reforecasting Roles	Shared Governance Case Study: Augsburg College (AGB, 2014)
	Following a period of conflict and organizational growth, Augsburg convened a task force to redefine decision-making and governance structures. The key change was clarifying and developing greater specialization of roles among the faculty, administration, and board. The process itself was highly inclusive and substantive (25 information-gathering sessions with over 600 participants), which helped restore trust and created a culture where stakeholders felt they had a voice, directly addressing the "agency" and "buy-in" problems.	

2. Improving Budgetary Transparency and Faculty Literacy

One of the most effective ways to improve shared governance is to grant faculty meaningful access to financial data, often through new budget models that decentralize financial responsibility and information.

Case Study	Solution Implemented	Reference
Temple University (Large, Public Research)	Shift to Responsibility Center Management (RCM)	Budgeting in Uncertain Times (Oracle/Higher Ed Consulting Report, 2018)
	Temple adopted an RCM-based model to decentralize financial accountability. This model inherently creates greater transparency because faculty and unit leaders can see what is driving revenues and costs (e.g., how tuition dollars flow to their colleges). Before the change, administrators conducted an extensive "campaign trail" of communication , meeting with small groups of faculty (10 to 12 people) to explain the model, demonstrating the vital role of sustained, intimate communication in addressing faculty concerns about major decisions.	
University of Missouri (Large, Public Research)	Adoption of RCM with Town Halls	Budgeting in Uncertain Times (Oracle/Higher Ed Consulting Report, 2018)
	As U of M adopted an RCM model, campus leaders (Chancellor, Provost, and CFO) held continuous presentations and town halls to explain complex details, such as how campus space would be "taxed" to individual units. This practice ensures that faculty and unit leaders are financially literate enough to offer	

Case Study	Solution Implemented	Reference
	informed input, a core requirement for meaningful shared governance in financial matters.	
Penn State University (Large, Public Research)	Data-Driven Budget Allocation Model	Navigating Financial Challenges: The Power of Data-Driven Decision-Making in University Budgeting (Marshall University IRP, citing Penn State)
	Penn State developed a new budget model that uses activity-based data (student headcounts, credit hours, research expenditures) to inform allocations. This approach is intended to create a clearer and more objective picture of the university's overall financial health, thereby aligning resource decisions with institutional mission and boosting accountability and trust by making the underlying data visible.	

3. Integrating Non-Tenure-Track (NTT) Faculty

While specific institutional policies are often found in local Senate bylaws, policy analysis shows a significant trend of formal inclusion, often driven by AAUP standards and a recognition of the NTT majority.

Case Study / Research Finding	Solution Implemented	Reference
General Institutional Trend	Granting Senate Participation and Voting Rights	Shared University Governance: Faculty Perceptions on Involvement and Leadership (ERIC, 2018, citing prior research)

Case Study / Research Finding	Solution Implemented	Reference
	In studies tracking the involvement of NTT faculty, approximately 50% of institutions were found to allow full-time NTT faculty members to participate in the faculty senate and other forms of formal governance , and 75% were allowed to participate in departmental affairs. This demonstrates that granting Senate seats and departmental inclusion is a prevailing, successful practice at a majority of universities.	
Analysis of Doctoral Universities	Formalizing Eligibility in Senates	Jones, W. A., Hutchens, N. H., & Hulbert, A. (2020). Shared Governance among the New Majority: Non-Tenure Track Faculty Eligibility for Election to University Faculty Senates. <i>Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management.</i>
	This study specifically investigates current standards across high research activity doctoral universities, finding that many have formally adapted their senate bylaws to recognize the growing NTT workforce. The <i>result</i> is that the dedicated seats and voting eligibility solutions (as discussed in the prior response) are the formalized standard in the bylaws of many research institutions, ensuring NTT voices are incorporated in university-level policy discussions.	

Case Study / Research Finding	Solution Implemented	Reference
Focus Group Recommendations	Compensating and Recognizing Service	Full article: Non-tenure track faculty in U.S. geography: strategies for support (NTTF Focus Group, 2025)
	<p>While a recommendation and not a specific case, focus groups of NTT faculty across diverse institutions consistently recommend that institutions compensate and recognize NTT involvement by creating institutional mechanisms for recognizing their labor (e.g., service awards, formal inclusion in departmental guidelines) and offering explicit invitations to participate in projects, supporting the "Service Buyouts/Releases" solution.</p>	