

## **A Brief Overview & History of Institutional Shared Governance**

Updated Spring 2017

### **BACKGROUND**

A Sinte Gleska University “council system” has evolved to provide opportunities for staff, faculty and students to participate in institutional governance and to contribute in decision-making throughout the University.

Pursuant to the self-study process conducted during the 2015 spring semester, the SGU president and his administrative leadership determined that the University’s shared governance structures needed to be strengthened. The existing framework had provided opportunities for faculty and students to offer input through a Faculty Council and Student Association. Expanded collaboration pathways were assessed to bring more stakeholders into the circle and to address a variety of issues.

Two shared-governance mechanisms were added to expand opportunities for involvement in other functions of the University. Collectively, these were:

1. **Student Association** – involved with planning and coordinating student affairs.
2. **Faculty Council** – involved with curricula development, instruction, student learning assessment and professional development. (Note: For administrative purposes, a Department Chairs Council was already in place for academic department management purposes.)
3. ***Tokatakiya Okolakiciye* – “Going Forward Society”** (new) – involved with assessing institutional effectiveness and strategic planning.
4. **General Council** (new) – involved with institutional policy formulation, program development and special events (e.g.; Founders Week program, annual commencement exercise).

Under this upgraded Council system, the stakeholder groups were to meet regularly as open meetings with chair and vice chair positions taking leadership

roles. A secretary or recorder was designated to keep minutes as evidence of issues addressed. These minutes were maintained in digital form.

As a general guideline, Council membership is open to all SGU employees who were expected to serve on at least one Council as a voting member. Participation on the Councils could be switched upon approval of the supervising vice president. New employees would be assigned to a Council after orientation. Students participating on the Councils would be selected by the Student Association based upon student interest. Membership on all Councils was to be set by September 1<sup>st</sup>.

To ensure communications between the SGU President and the Council groups, the SGU vice presidents serve in ex-officio capacities as follows:

- VP Academic Affairs to the Faculty Council
- VP Community Development to the Student Association.
- VP for Finance & Resource Development to the General Council.
- Chief of Operations serves as chair of the *Tokatakiya Okolakiciye* for the first year, and a chair is selected thereafter.

Committee work was focused upon “charges” or issues to be identified by the SGU President, the President’s Council or by an individual Council. Each charge was to be documented in council minutes along with the progress of committee work. Those charges were to be routed to the President’s Council for attention. If the Council work involved institutional policy, the President was to present these to the SGU Board of Regents.

In the event that certain Council work or outcomes had significant impact upon all staff, ad hoc working groups would be established subject to the approval of the President. With more definitive work or tasks, a Council would request assistance from the members of another Council that had expertise in the area/issue being addressed.

Each of the four Councils also had the option of forming sub-groups to work more closely to a specific council task or charge. There was an option to establish regular standing sub-committees to carry out Council work. For example, the Faculty Council could opt to form a permanent subcommittee on the assessment of student learning.

This structure and functions of the SGU Council system were approved by the SGU President’s Council on April 7, 2015.

## **HLC ACCREDITATION NOTICE 2015**

In late April 2015, Sinte Gleska University was evaluated through an on-site campus visit by a Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation team. This event was scheduled as the University was implementing the new or updated governance and administrative plans to strengthen the University. The HLC team report acknowledged these efforts of the University. But the findings noted there were concerns due to the lack of evidence or due to the insufficient amount of time to assess the effectiveness of new or updated assessment measures. These concerns were identified for Criterion Two through Criterion Five; the most significant areas were related to academic programs under Criterion Three and Four.

Prior to official HLC action on the site team's findings, SGU also completed a substantial amount of work in the area of strategic planning. The SGU Chief of Operations formed the *Tokatikiya Okolakiciye* ("Going Forward Society") as the expansive stakeholder group to measure institutional effectiveness and to explore the mission and future of the University. Through a number of structured activities, the University was able to update its strategic plan around four (4) updated goals that, in part, began addressing recent accreditation findings while maintaining the focus on the core mission of the institution. The updated SGU long-range strategic plan was approved in July 2015.

In November 2015, the HLC took official action placing Sinte Gleska University on "Notice" regarding its accreditation status. The findings provided a major impetus for the University to examine how the shared governance Council system could address accreditation concerns. The next HLC focused visit was tentatively scheduled in April 2017.

## **MAJOR TRANSITIONS IN 2016**

There were some major events in early 2016 that impacted how Sinte Gleska University could move forward with leadership and shared governance. The SGU Chief of Operations and the Vice President of the Business Office resigned to pursue professional advancement opportunities. Thereafter, two long-time employees, the Vice President of Student Services and the Financial Aid Director, passed away due to health reasons.

Through strategic external and internal processes, the University was successful in recruiting a Sicangu Lakota Tribal member to assume an elevated SGU Provost/COO position. Another Tribal member and SGU employee stepped into the role of VP of Student Services. The same internal process was implemented for the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and the Financial Aid director positions.

By the end of March 2016, the SGU Provost Leadership Team was formed with the vice presidents and the CFO to implement a transition plan for institutional management, assessment, budgeting, and strategic planning. The Provost Office continued to be responsible for general institutional planning and development which included the lead role in the University's accreditation activities. The work of the existing shared governance structure continued to be carried out through the President's Council, Department (academic) Chairs, Faculty Council, Student Association, and *Tokatakiye Okolakiciye*.

The University engaged an external consultant as the SGU Assessment Coordinator in April 2016. The initial priority was accelerating the work on academic program reviews. Through professional development activities and departmental group sessions, faculty were guided to complete the reviews and make adjustments in curricula. These included revamping a syllabi template and reducing credit loads where appropriate.

What became evident in the on-going assessment process was the need for stronger oversight of curricula and curricular outcomes. The Department chairs group was primarily concerned with department administration and management. The areas of curricula and co-curricular assessment were to be handled by the busy Faculty Council. The Fall 2016 semester data derived from course evaluations and the student services survey supported the need for more concerted oversight of general assessment, curriculum and co-curricular activities. As a result, three new committees were established for the Fall 2016 semester, expanding SGU's shared governance system to seven groups beyond the President's Council (general administration), the Provost Leadership Team (day-to-day operations) and the Board of Regents (policy-making).

## **2017 INSTITUTIONAL PROGRESS**

The SGU Provost/COO Leadership Team now serves as the primary institutional clearinghouse for management and evaluation of operations, student learning assessment, budgeting, and strategic planning. These functions are encompassed

within a formal agenda for each team meeting held at least twice each month. The Provost/COO reports directly to the SGU president and to the board of regents.

The University has strengthened and expanded the structure of institutional committees to address more definitive areas of assessment, planning and evaluation of academic programs and curricula. The SGU Assessment Office provides the lead to collaborate with an Assessment Committee that is responsible for collecting data based on key performance indicators. A Curriculum Committee works to review and evaluate the alignment, consistency and rigor of student learning objectives and teaching methodologies. A Co-curricular Committee now assessed how co-curricular activities of the University impact student learning experiences and ultimately contribute to the “nation-building” element of the University’s mission.

An SGU Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) has emerged as the “committee of committees” composed of the University’s vice presidents and the chairs of the other committees. The IEC has taken the place of the General Council. This Committee provides oversight of the data, methodologies and systems related to measuring the institutional effectiveness of the University. The immediate work of the Committee is focused upon the assessment of progress in meeting accreditation standards. The more long-term goal of the Committee is to continue strengthening institutional effectiveness, communications, transparency and shared decision-making by ensuring the sustainability of committee work.