Integrating Academic and Corporate Values:
Challenges for University Governance

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I'd like to dedicate this talk to Phil Hogue—University trustee, valued G-6 colleague, and straight-shooter *extraordinaire*—who because of illness was unable to participate in several recent G-6 meetings and is not here today. To Phil, continued best wishes for a speedy recovery.

The key challenges for university governance often spring from what Cathy Potter has called "flashpoints" of conflict.   These flashpoints are produced by people—trustees, administrators, faculty—who bring to the table different sets of cultural values (what we've termed "corporate" and "academic") and different ideas about how decisions are best made.   As Cathy notes, these flashpoints provide an opportunity to test the effectiveness of university governance, and to consider ways of improving it.

In this talk I'll describe some of the more common governance flashpoints in the modern university, and identify a few flashpoints here at DU that are of a piece with national trends. Some of the common flashpoints have been woven into the scenarios that we'll consider in this morning's second session.   I'll also review some of the more useful suggestions that have been made about how to secure the future of shared university governance in a rapidly changing higher education environment.

Governance Flashpoints in the Modern University

Just about any issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* will address one or another flashpoint of conflict created by the clash of corporate and academic values.

There are numerous examples of both blitz and stealth tactics by Governing Boards to appoint chief executives, consolidate power for chief executives, and accomplish other goals by suspending time-honored courtesies of faculty consultation. These power plays range from the University of California Regents voting to abolish affirmative action in university admissions, hiring, and contracting, to efforts by Howard University trustees to unilaterally redefine tenure in that institution's faculty handbook.   Such moves are often justified as a way to maximize institutional flexibility and response time in an increasingly competitive environment. However, they leave in their wake an angry, disenfranchised, and demoralized faculty, which can't possibly be good for student learning.

A second flashpoint is around donor gifts. There are numerous examples of universities taking money from corrupt corporate entities and individuals with unsavory reputations.   My favorite quote from a university president justifying the acceptance of such money basically says that "Carnegie shot unionists and Rhodes stole from black

people, but it was all done in a historical context and people make mistakes, so why sweat it?" Of course there are excellent moral and ethical reasons for sweating it, and that's why it's unsettling to read that many believe the fight for greater accountability in university giving and receiving is destined to be an uphill battle.

A third flashpoint is around the corporate model's view—nicely described by Eric Gould—of students as consumers to be satisfied, and knowledge as a commodity to be bought and sold. This re-conceptualization started as an arguably well-intentioned move to meet public demands for greater accountability in university teaching and learning. This view is accompanied by an emphasis on quantifiable short-term goals, more efficient modes of instruction, and measurable outcomes. This view collides with faculty views of students as largely undeveloped intellects still lacking the wherewithal that enables informed consumption, and a view of knowledge as a process rather than product. The corporate model also stands to breed in students a sense of entitlement to the commodity that they're paying for (often expressed, in my experience, as an expectation of high grades in required general education courses), and potentially lowers academic standards.

Knowledge conceptualized as product rather than process invites a fourth flashpoint that stems from a corporate view of faculty as a resource to be defined, directed, and deployed according to consumerist demands. What some have termed "adjunctification"—the increasing use of contingent, part-time, and non-tenure track faculty—is the central bone of contention. Justified by governing boards as a cost-effective way to run the shop and maintain adaptive flexibility, adjunctification is akin to the kind of "scientific management" of work that characterizes many modern industries. And, as with those industries, the risk is devaluation of large areas of academic and curricular life (especially in the humanities), and the "deskilling" of faculty as they fill specialized and interchangeable roles on the educational assembly line. For faculty, adjunctification compromises both the teaching and research mission of the university, the expressed ideal (especially here at DU) of integrating teaching and research, and the overall climate of learning. It establishes unsavory "class divisions" among faculty, and trades loyalty and commitment for quick payoffs—something that is not in the best long-term interests of university.

The fifth flashpoint is, of course, a logical outgrowth of adjunctification—the assault on tenure codes. As part of an effort to maintain an institution's flexibility to respond to market forces Governing Boards have shown an interest in exploring alternatives to tenure and/or expanding the criteria for eliminating tenured positions. Some of these criteria reach beyond financial exigency and program termination to fuzzier criteria of institutional "need" that can invite capricious application. Sometimes this change is justified so as to make academic employment more like other kinds of employment, a point I'll return to below. Faculty, of course, see tenure as the best guarantor of academic freedom and a learning environment that truly values experimentation, thinking outside the box, envelope-pushing, and diversity of thought and action. We faculty also cherish it because tenure's effects can radiate outward so as to help protect students and staff. In short, tenure is indispensable for creating the kind of "affirmative authority" for faculty that allows shared governance to work.

Local Governance Flashpoints

Like every institution, DU is experiencing tensions in some of the common flashpoint areas just described.   Members of our community will identify and prioritize flashpoints differently.   The important ones for me emerge from my experience as a department chair for eight years, a member of the Faculty Senate for longer than that, a faculty representative on FEAC, SPARC, UPAC, and both the Undergraduate and Graduate Councils, and a member of way too many Core Curriculum committees for my own good. Since I've given more than my share of blood to the university in terms of service, I'm going to speak freely about the local flashpoints that strike me as most controversial and compelling.

Obviously, last spring's surprise appointment of a University President created a singularly dramatic and important flashpoint, one that has a lot to do with what has brought us together today. I don't mind mentioning it because I'm working with our new President on "Bridges to the Future" programming for this year and finding it to be a positive experience. Bridges planning has benefited from the intellectual synergy that springs from people of good faith bringing to the table different perspectives on how the world works. Thus, I share with our Trustees the confidence that the President position as currently— albeit poorly—defined will accomplish some good things for the university. But serious and legitimate worries remain about the precedent-setting nature of the appointment, the absence of a detailed job description, and the kinds of <u>programs</u> (existing <u>and</u> imagined) that the new President will be asked to <u>fund</u>. The funding concern is doubly worrying because I sense a gathering "feeding frenzy" for the President's favors that is partly borne of the competitive relations between units that Eric Gould described, something that may not be in best long-term interests of the university as a whole. Alternatively, it might be better to coordinate these lobbying efforts through an appropriately re-configured University Planning Advisory Council (UPAC), something I advocated in a recent issue of the *Faculty Forum.*

Several years ago we were close to a flashpoint around the assessment of student learning, a movement which many see as part of the corporate interest in quality control and consumer satisfaction. I recall merit raises being used as a stick to whip foot-dragging departments into shape. I freely admit that on my watch as chair the Anthropology Department was an assessment foot-dragger, for what I believe were legitimate practical and philosophical reasons. Certainly, several years of exit interviews with graduating seniors suggest that our majors haven't internalized the lessons of the discipline as fully as we would like, and hence regular program review is a good idea. But I also think that cultivating internalized knowledge—especially in the liberal arts, and given an understanding of knowledge as process—is a messy, unpredictable, and inherently inefficient enterprise. It depends upon, and is complexly overdetermined by, the particular dynamic between teacher, class, and context. It is best facilitated by opportunities to work with knowledge in particular circumstances, many of which can't be simulated at the university but are only encountered in "real life", and sometimes far down the road. I'm

radically uncertain about what I'm achieving in the classroom, but I think that's a good thing because it breeds experimentation, risk-taking, and humility.   I'm a believer in the argument that inefficiency is good for universities, and that we best ensure it with small classes, lots of writing, loads of constructive criticism, warrants to experiment without worrying about assessment, and smaller rather than larger teaching loads. DU is committed to some of these things as line items; it remains to be seen how committed we are to the total package.

The evaluation of faculty work is brewing as third local flashpoint, especially in light of last year's FEAC discussions around faculty sabbaticals.   In those meetings we entertained the notion that faculty sabbatical is the academy's equivalent of "employee development"—which in the corporate world means a short-term focus, establishment of specific concrete goals, and easily measurable outcomes. I'm not so sure this is a good analogue. It's important to view sabbaticals as opportunities to do things, but I also think it's important to view them as an opportunity to renew, recharge, recoup, and recover from what for many of us has been 6 years (or longer) of 60 hour (or more) work weeks.   Using sabbatical to sit and think would be just fine with me, and using it to just sit sounds even better. To me the sabbatical is another walk of academic life in which we should emphasize process as much or more than product, and in which we should accept that a large amount of inefficiency best serves the institution.

I'm well aware of the argument that sabbaticals are a "luxury" unavailable to workers in other industries. As part of my research I work with unemployed and/or impoverished former coal miners in southern Colorado so I've felt, perhaps more directly than most academics, the sting of working class hostility and resentment about my privileged status (something aided and abetted here in Colorado by the uninformed public pronouncements of governors and other political functionaries).   In my view the typical "real world" employment relationship that some would have us emulate is an unhappy, historically-contingent outcome of the insidious application of scientific management to the world of work. Instead of robbing professors of an opportunity for significant rest and renewal in their line of work, we ought to provide comparable opportunities for those in others.

A fourth local flashpoint is bound to be adjunctification. DU has been slow, perhaps for a variety of legitimate reasons, to reveal the extent to which we use part-time and non-tenure track faculty. But a report is forthcoming. It will be interesting to see how we compare with national trends, and how we're going to deal with it if the comparison is favorable. We need to have a meeting of the minds on this one, and come up with creative ways to stem the tide if we want to preserve a faculty that is dedicated to the institutional mission and able to fulfill it.

Doing something about adjunctification may depend on how we handle my fifth and final local flashpoint, one that goes to the tensions that can be created within units as a consequence of decentralized budgeting and the resulting market-driven, inter-unit competition for resources and majors. Eric Gould nicely identifies the consequences of such a situation—we plan curriculum on the principle of competitive majors, embrace few

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integrative ideals that govern what we are trying to do with the knowledge that we produce, and generally forsake allegiance to anything larger than our discipline.

Many students in my Core classes are still maddeningly unprepared for advanced synthetic work, something that I believe is partly the result of the self-interested advising they receive in their home departments. Involvements in Foundations and Core teaching still seem to be justified first and foremost as a way to recruit majors rather than as a way to achieve some nobler educational ideal. My small department, and I suspect others, agrees to this competition in a way that I believe has negative impacts in other areas; e.g., on the diversity of courses we're able to offer in any one quarter at the graduate level, and on the availability of time for development of interdisciplinary majors and minors that, given a fighting chance, can potentially find a critical audience of undergraduates. Competition of the sort described often increases the need for adjuncts, producing a vicious cycle. I wonder how many other faculty care less about recruiting majors than exporting their particular knowledge to other fields where its desperately needed, or putting it in the service of those burgeoning "borderland" fields <u>between</u> established disciplines where the real action is to be found in contemporary intellectual life. In short, the current systems forces us to embrace and protect an archaic system of distinctions and priorities that is conceivably unsatisfying for many faculty, mind-numbing for students, and antithetical to the goals of synthesis and prioritization (and arguably the greater public good) discussed by Eric. Although I was lectured once by an administrator that "restructuring makes people uncomfortable", this seems a poor reason for not spending at least a little time imagining alternative organizational structures that might better accommodate innovations in intellectual life and our own faculty's evolving interests, while at the same time preserving the institution's ability to respond to market realities.

<u>Conclusion</u>

By way of conclusion I'd like to review some of the more relevant and compelling observations that have been made in the pages of national publications about how to reclaim and strengthen shared governance in the current environment of higher education.

Deepening corporatization is exacerbating old tensions and producing new ones. The intensity of these conflicts suggest that universities have some work to do around negotiating, and compromising between, different paradigms and perspectives. Negotiation and compromise is the essence of what it means to practice shared governance, and is also the essence of <u>democracy</u> itself. This year the university is sponsoring public discussions about democracy in the context of "Bridges to the Future" programming. Once again we have a chance to model and practice democratic governance within our own community while we preach about it to the public. I think we looked bad in missing that opportunity last spring, and we can't afford to miss too many more.

We need a strong system of shared governance—however we model it using Cathy's array of alternatives—to protect higher education from unsavory outside interventions and the ignorance that is inevitably associated with partial world views, be they corporate, academic, or political. We need it in order to preserve what distinguishes

the university as an educational institution and separates it from the other, more fractured industries that surround it. Shared governance is what positions the university to lead; anything less reduces it to a rather bad imitation of the corporate, hierarchical structures that already exist in more than adequate supply.

Better work must be done on both the Trustee and Faculty sides of the table. Governing Boards and Chief Executives need to understand that faculty aren't simply stakeholders in, or just another constituency of, the modern university. Instead they need to appreciate that faculty—because they produce, synthesize, and disseminate knowledge—essentially <u>are</u> the university. But faculty need to live up to the responsibilities and obligations that come with this status. Faculty senates often <u>are</u> guilty of the charge that they are slow to react and too reluctant to make difficult decisions to be players in governance. Faculty rank-and-file feed into this paralysis with the superficial engagement that often passes for Senate involvement. There's no excuse for this given what's at stake, and given the communication technologies that are available for transacting faculty business. Faculty need to strike a healthier balance between careful scholarly deliberation and aggressive political action.

More active engagement by the faculty in everyday governance and not just around flashpoints, and mutual respect and trust between all parties is the key. The G-6 Committee has made a good start toward building the kind of mutual respect and trust that is key to making shared governance work. We hope to deepen that respect and trust with this conference and the changed committee structures, decision-making processes, and attitudes that hopefully will result from it.