

Philosophy Underlying a Democratic and Participatory Model of University Governance

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ABSTRACT

The *College of The Bahamas* is at a crossroads as it contemplates its imminent transformation into the new *University of The Bahamas*. At the heart of this transformation is the necessity to adopt a compatible mode of governance, one that is most suitable for a university situated and operating within the unique physical and cultural environment of The Bahamian Archipelago. In the general context of university governance, a discussion of the doctrines of *separation of powers* and *responsible leadership* is undertaken, further informing the choice of mode of governance. Some of the clear-cut advantages and disadvantages of both philosophies are probed. The structure and decision-making processes of the second-level governing bodies of an innovative model of university governance are partially outlined.

Keywords: University, Governance, Management, Democratic, Participatory

RESUMEN

El Colegio de Las Bahamas está en una encrucijada como contempla su inminente transformación en la Universidad nueva de Las Bahamas. En el corazón de esta transformación es la necesidad de adoptar un modo compatible de gobernabilidad, que es más adecuado para una universidad situada y funcionamiento dentro del entorno físico y cultural único del archipiélago de las Bahamas. En el contexto general de la gobernanza de la Universidad, se realiza una discusión de la doctrina de separación de poderes y liderazgo responsable, informar más a la elección del modo de gobernanza. Algunas de las claras ventajas y desventajas de ambas filosofías son sondeados. Parcialmente se describen los procesos de estructura y toma de decisiones de los órganos rectores del segundo nivel de un innovador modelo de gobernanza de la Universidad.

Palabras clave: Universidad, gobierno, gestión, democrático, participativo

1. INTRODUCTION

All throughout the African Diaspora and Africa, people are contemplating the way forward for higher learning, tertiary education and research. Recently, the Nigerian Government established a *National Science, Research, Technology and Innovation Fund* to support research in the country (JohnKingsley, 2012). Last year, the Higher Education Development Unit of the Barbados Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development hosted the 3rd Barbados International Conference on Higher Education (The Higher Education Development Unit of the Barbados Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, 2012), one of its sub-themes being "*Breaking with the past: In pursuit of transformational leadership*," precisely the topical issue facing the College of The Bahamas (hereafter COB, the Institution, etc.) as it prepares to transition itself from a 2- and 4-year degree granting college to a fledgling university, positioned strategically for future rapid growth and development. No doubt, The Bahamas Government, the custodian of this national public Institution, wants to do this right; and doing it right requires the correct, tenable answers to stocktaking questions such as the following:

1. Will the new University be culturally relevant?

2. Will it have an identity?
3. How will it govern itself, or how will it be governed from the outside? Will it be wise governance? What will be the nature and structure of its organization and the leadership of that organization?
4. Will it have the wisdom and foresight to permit and achieve all of the above and more?

The last two numbered items of the above set of questions, which concern university governance, wisdom and foresight, strike at the root of this important undertaking, for governance is the locus of power and control and it directs and controls all of the University's affairs, and makes its intended future either possible or impossible, while effective leaders must, by definition, govern with some degree of wisdom and foresight. This particular subject matter—efficient, effective university governance—is the focus of this paper.

Yes, COB is today at a decision crossroads betwixt the present College of The Bahamas and a viable new University of The Bahamas (hereafter also UOB, the University, or the Institution) that is a new catalyst and leader/educator for major social, political, economic and technological advancement/change and improvement of the status quo (The College of The Bahamas, 2012c). In this uncynical transition exercise, the future governance of the new University of The Bahamas will be one of the most important and fundamental considerations. The framers of the University must express confidence in their own intellectual abilities and understanding, and be cognizant of the various successful/fruitful models of university governance that exist around the world, and avoid a *reinvention of the wheel* as necessary. They must be cognizant of the nuances that have worked well for institutions in different climes. They must be aware of The Bahamas' own culture and local environment, aspects of them that may be changeable as well as those that are unchangeable, and their potential impacts on the proper functioning of the new University. The framers must consider the advantages and disadvantages, relevance and irrelevance, of a model replica, an adaptation and an entirely new institution, and wisely choose from among them. Considerations must be long, serious and deliberate, and not relegated to the thought processes of just one, two or a few. There has to be a meaningful, in-depth conversation, a mind opening dialogue. Big thinkers and researchers with 20/20 vision are obligated to get on board and provide enlightenment as bright new trails are about to be blazed; at the end of which, when all has been hashed and rehashed, searched and researched, said and done, a vote is taken, a decision made, and a move forward begins the building of a viable new Institution.

2. A BRIEF ACADEMIC HISTORY AND FUTURE POTENTIAL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE BAHAMAS

In 1967, after the advent of Majority Rule in The Bahamas, under a new government, things began to change for the masses of Bahamian citizens (Craton & Saunders, 1998; The National Congress of Trade Unions, 2012); eventually secondary education began to be made available to more and more Bahamians (Turner, 1968, p. 237). In 1974, the establishment of COB marked the beginning of the determination to also bring tertiary education to a greater proportion of the local population (The College of The Bahamas, 2013a & b). The Institution began with program offerings at the Certificate, Diploma and Associate degree levels. In recent years, COB passed the major milestone of providing opportunities for both local and foreign students to pursue and obtain Bachelor's degrees in a variety of subject areas, and a number of Master's degrees, the majority of the latter offered jointly with other foreign institutions (The College of The Bahamas, 2012a & b). Today (2012-2013) COB stands poised for yet another major transformation—that of becoming a university, offering more of its own graduate degree programs and increasing its involvement in academic research, and community consultation and development (The College of The Bahamas, 2012c).

As in 1967, by which time governance had become the most major issue facing the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, governance is also the central issue now facing the Institution of COB as it pauses at the crossroads leading towards university status. The success of the University, in whatever it endeavors, will depend critically on visionary leadership and effective governance. The Country of The Bahamas being endowed with many good, remarkable qualities, the place of residence of this soon-to-be new university, and though nonchalantly referred to at times as “laid-back” and a “lazy group of islands” (The National Congress of Trade Unions, 2012), with traits that can perhaps be “relaxingly” parlayed into unique and invaluable benefits and strong suits at the frontiers of knowledge, academic study and learning, it would be an incredible boon for the new University of The Bahamas

to reflect and take full advantage of these unique gifts as it evolves into a full fledged, viable and productive institution of higher learning.

The builders and framers of the new University of The Bahamas, starting from small beginnings, have the unique and celebrated opportunity to think outside the proverbial box. They should do so boldly and confidently when obliged, with the assurance of ultimate satisfaction and success, sloughing off the stereotypical skin of self-doubt that too often compels persons in this locale to always look cynically outwards for solutions and not within, and in so doing, dramatically enhance the productive and educational capacity and technological capabilities of the citizenry of The Bahamas and other interacting regions of the world. This will no doubt be one of the greatest accomplishments and most lasting, cardinal legacies of the new University of The Bahamas.

3. ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP ISSUES

Rules of governance and a modality of leadership should be adopted that are amenable to the particular culture, environment and mindset of The Bahamas and its people, i.e., rules, procedures and a modality that will have the greatest probability of being most effective in the Bahamian environment. (Author)

The foundation of the structure of the University of The Bahamas System in the unique environment of The Bahamas will benefit greatly from an in-depth examination of the relevant issues in organizational leadership and governance. As does any other university, the UOB will function as a system or collection of processes that operate on given or controlled inputs to produce desired outputs. For example, one such input will be students entering the University from high school, and another, the fees they pay for their education. One output will be graduates of the University in their chosen disciplines. The path to the development and implementation of a suitable system of governance consists, in part, of the decisions that are necessary to establish the foundation upon which the new University will stand and continue to grow, consistent with the cultural base or environment in which it will exist, evolve, develop and mature, even as the culture of the community surrounding it evolves, changes and grows.

Some models of leadership are based on the doctrine of the *separation of powers*, which is the crux of an effective liberal democracy (Spindler, 2000). More than just demarcations between the legislative, executive and the judicial branches of government, or the prevention of absolutism and unchecked corruption or concentrations of power (ibid.), this basis is also essentially rooted in the highly successful philosophy of the *division of labor*, which was so aptly articulated by Adam Smith (1776); this philosophy, via increased process efficiencies, has greatly facilitated modern mass production to satisfy the needs of the burgeoning populations of the modern era. Without it, many useful and important products would be in short supply indeed. If this form or model of governance works well, it would be a very efficient model indeed.

Experience demonstrates that effective governance by the separation of powers is very dependent on interpersonal and interdepartmental cooperation, accountability and wisdom, being facilitated by the existence of these qualities and complicated by their absence (Spindler, 2000). This separation in governance will work well when there is adequate representation in the separate branches of governance and mechanisms are in place for the manifestation of good and well represented decision making. Conversely, it will stagnate or become dysfunctional if the decisions being made are generally poor or unrepresentative, and good intentions, wisdom and cooperation between the separate bodies sharing control are lacking. This model symbolizes the inclusive ability of the people to participate more fully in the decision making processes that direct and control the growth, development and smooth operation of the institution/organization.

Some models of leadership are based on the alternative doctrine of *responsible government* or *responsible leadership* (Munroe, 2013; Spindler, 2000). As the roles and powers are not entirely separate, and as experience has shown, this model of governance is somewhat akin to a *jack-of-all-trades* type system of management, production and leadership. As a result, its effectiveness is inherently conditioned on a high level of leader self discipline, an uncanny ability to lead and self accountability. In other words, the people or individuals in charge must be highly responsible, visionary, motivational, possessing integrity and generosity, and capable of broad

understanding, hence the label *responsible leadership or government*. There are few intrinsic and systemic day-to-day external checks and balances on leadership intentions and integrity. The executive branch of government/leadership is responsible to the legislature, but often the two are effectively controlled by one and the same monolithic political party, a seemingly unavoidable or natural outcome of the modern political party system that can be mitigated to some extent through bicameralism in the form of a second independent house of government that is also given legislative authority, e.g., an upper house or a senate (Spindler, 2000). Representation in the decision-making process may not also be as clearly evident as in the separation-of-powers model, particularly if too many of the significant and powerful members of the leadership/governance/management are narrowly appointed as opposed to being widely elected. The responsible-leadership model works best and is designed for situations in which subordinates are not expected to contribute much to the final major decisions or it is not desirable or necessary for them to do so. This model encourages the establishment of exclusive lines of authority and control extending all the way from top to bottom throughout the organization.

The logic of an assembly- or manufacturing-line pin production facility observed and reported on by Adam Smith (1776, pp. 10-12) and its numerous successes down the road to the modern era have proven by analogy that an efficient, well-oiled, power-separated, role- or domain-based system of governance can have a far greater potential for success in increasing productivity and production, and achieving rapid growth and development than the more individualized responsible-leadership model of governance, particularly in the context of a large university, where so many knowledgeable and skillful people, with deep and specialized understanding, work. Democratically led organizations with fluidly cooperating and well-intentioned governing bodies, can grow as large as the collective minds of the leaders or the people (plural) will permit, while the growth of autocracies or authoritarian regimes (Cherry, 2012; Johansen, 2012) will be limited to the extent of the vision of the leader (singular). Thus, large universities, which are complex organizations indeed, tend to share the responsibilities of governance democratically, though to differing degrees. Even when the model of responsible leadership works well and it is highly autocratic or oligarchic, one finds, more often than not, that the leaders have actually invoked a high degree of external participation and relied heavily on the expertise and good advice of others around them, mimicking, in essence, some of the finer points of a democratic separation-of-powers model. Nevertheless, in line with the saying that *two heads are better than one*, the chances of success, among cooperating, commonly motivated intellectuals, especially in an intricate organizational setting, are always greater under a democratic system of shared responsibility, wide inter-departmental accountability, and clearly defined and delimited governance roles/domains and responsibilities.

Intellectuals are typically self motivated and often quite capable of charting, on their own, or collectively, the courses that are necessary to accomplish given goals within their fields of expertise. The best way to achieve this, in the absence of a “super” leader, is evidently through democracy, and not by other means such as limited-vision, or limited-scope, unilateral decree. In a separation-of-powers system, practically all final decisions of importance can be made in a totally democratic way. The utility of this concept can be justified by comparing it to the working of a well-oiled automobile. The automobile consists of many, many separate parts, none intrinsically “superior” to any other, but each having a clearly defined role or purpose within the automobile system, and each cooperating fully with all the other parts that are meshed or linked to it; and therefore, as long as all the individual parts are whole and well, the machine functions superbly. The decisions made in a well-oiled role/domain and responsibility based university system will more than likely reflect the best options for that university, its customers and stakeholders.

Differing governance structures, however, present a variety of advantages as well as disadvantages. As stated, autocratic or oligarchic leadership is ideal when the involvement of followers in the decision-making process is undesirable or untenable. In such cases, excellent, knowledgeable and visionary leaders with acute leadership and motivational skills can accomplish much and there can be considerable advancement of the organization as a result, even more than in a sluggish democracy. However, if this is not the case, or it is not warranted or likely, the result can be disastrous, giving rise to slow, zero or negative growth, as experience has shown. Participatory management typically gives leaders the extra help they need and tends to minimize leadership debacles due to poor or unjust decisions. A participatory structure often generates good advice, while a purely autocratic or

dictatorial structure, or one that permits an autocracy or dictatorship to exist, is restricted, in terms of its output, to the boundaries of the vision and understanding of the leader, and may also become counterproductive. In this regard, history is also fraught with dictatorships which in the end proved to be very counterproductive!

For the running of an organization as complex as a large free- and forward-thinking university, it would seem that a plethora of good ideas, suggestions and alternative points of view in practically every situation would be beneficial and superior, more often than not. Noticeably, successful autocratic leaders tend to have a certain largeness of mind and consult widely. Many university governance structures, on the other hand, are liberal, democratic and power-separated or shared, and feature the inclusion of a faculty, or an academic or university senate on the second level of governance, although the extent of the powers and involvement of the senate in governance in all cases are not necessarily equal (Hogan, 2006).

4. OVERVIEW OF THE LEADERSHIP PARADIGM

“... fostering wide and inclusive participation in decision-making processes.”
<http://www.cob.edu.bs/Council/uts/>

The proposed leadership paradigm for the new UOB is the common one based on a liberal, democratic and participatory separation-of-powers doctrine. Its cornerstone is as follows. It consists of well defined and delineated leadership and management roles/domains of authority at the penultimate top level of governance, just beneath the overarching Council level (Figure 1). There is, most importantly among these, a very large, representative, democratic, independent Senate, consisting of a proportional representation of all the University stakeholders—including the Executive Administration, the Office of the Ombudsperson, faculty, staff, students, alumni, the labor unions and all other valued partners and friends of the University.

This choice was made because, in a truly representative, democratic independent Senate, a fair decision can always be obtained, as all decisions are taken by majority vote, only after sufficient discussion and debate.¹ This fair process eliminates the negativity, unjustness, operant-conditioned cynicism and limited vision of minority or factional leadership and control. So, decisions will in general be representative of the majority of the stakeholders and, too, they will therefore most likely be the best ones for current operations as well as the future growth and development of the University. If mistakes are made, then they will be due to the blindness of the majority and not the bluster of the minority, and in that way less intolerable for many. The underlying and fair assumption in all of the above is that those who are intelligent and observant enough to participate in these processes at the tertiary educational level are also rational and responsible enough to be able to provide this kind of leadership.

The University of The Bahamas, though under public funding, will also continue to enjoy a high degree of autonomy, as does the College of The Bahamas, currently. Exercising its responsibilities of direction through its governing agent, the University Council, the Government of The Bahamas does not overly interfere in the management, control, leadership, growth, direction and development of the Institution, insofar as it is able to sustain its sovereign and universal resolution to continue to make higher education available and accessible to the nation and society (The Bahamas Government, 1995).

At the pinnacle control level, the University Council (Figure 1) has the final authority over all matters before the University and the decisions it may make. Council has the overarching responsibility of directing, ratifying, and delegating lower-level decisions on behalf of, and at the behest of the Government. It may also overturn any lower-level decision, at any time of their choosing. Council has delegated specific responsibilities to the second-level governing bodies, which have no innate authority beyond the extent delegated.

On the secondary level of governance, the University Senate, which is of necessity the largest, representative governing body, subject to the authority of Council, has been given the upper guiding hand concerning the Institutional policy frameworks that govern all major academic and related capital developments undertaken by the University, as well as broad operational policy guidelines. The mechanism of all Senate decisions is that of thorough discussion, deliberation and final voting by the representative members of Senate, who are assumed to be very responsible individuals, the process underpinned by a tenet of the inherent freedom to determine one's own destiny, bounded, of course, by legality. Since every stakeholder is represented in the Senate, every

stakeholder has a small, direct or indirect, say in the final decision and direction of the University, to the extent so desired, and, as a result of the process, the collective wishes of the majority are ultimately carried. The stakeholders determine the extent of their second-level control, i.e., through a vote of the Senate they indirectly exercise discretion as to the depth and breadth of Senate’s involvement in University governance via policy formulation. The Senate wisely refrains from diurnal management, which is the domain of the Executive Administration. No decision of the Senate, as also for those of the remaining two second-level governing bodies, takes effect unless and until ratified or sanctioned by Council. The Council may, for purposes of urgency or expediency, temporarily grant specific blanket or categorical decision-making powers to the second-level governing bodies, or authorize specific decisions, which would take effect immediately or as prescribed, but which can still be revoked by Council at any time. All second-level governing-body decisions, previously validated by Council, may be rendered null and void by Council at any time.

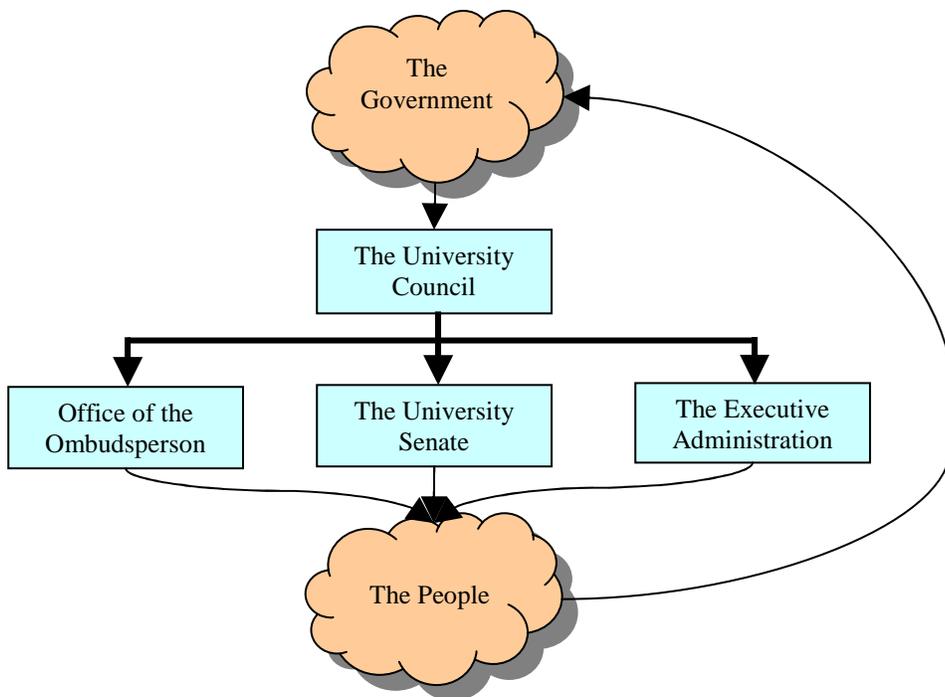


Figure 1: The Top Two Levels of University Governance and Management with Connections to the Government and the People

Council, at all times, remains sympathetic towards the decisions made by its second-level agencies, cognizant of and understanding well its overriding authority, responsibility and accountability to the Government, and by extension, to the people of the nation (i.e., all Bahamian taxpayers—see Figure 1), for all the successes as well as all the failures of its agents, in particular, and by extension, of the University, in general. Hence, Council conducts itself wisely in permitting or executing the election and appointments of members of the second-level governing bodies. All three second-level governing bodies report directly to Council.

Like the ombudspersons, who are term-elected University officials, and by reason of this time limitation and their administrative independence, would be more inclined towards impartiality in their judgments, University Senators are also term-elected, and for similar reasons are likely to be more faithful to the voices they represent. The Chief Executive Officer and her loyal executive administrators are also term-elected and/or appointed, as is current practice. The member positions of Council are also term-limited. Term limitations on all of the top administrative and top governing positions are more conducive to a culture of innovation, and dynamic improvement, growth and development. Technically, there need not be any restrictions on the number of times an individual can be reelected or reappointed, whether successively or not, as long as the election or appointment process is fair and

done according to established procedures. However, it may be good practice to limit the number of consecutive reelections/reappointments of executive administrators in order to minimize the development and impact of inefficient or unproductive autocracies or oligarchies.

5. THE AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COUNCIL

The University Council represents the State, which orders the ownership of the Institution on behalf of the taxpaying public. Council has sole and complete charge of the University under the watchful eye of the State. The Council, therefore, reports to the Government, and as The Bahamas is a democratic state, the Government is accountable to the people (Figure 1). As the Government has already granted COB virtually full autonomy (The Bahamas Government, 1995), and presumably this arrangement will continue into university status, the Council is free in most instances to enforce the majority of its decisions, on behalf of the Government. The second-level governing bodies are mere agents of the University Council; they assist it with its mandate of leadership, and exercise that same level of autonomy under the Council, wherever delegated or prescribed in the governing statutes. In other words, they act insofar as Council, or the statutes, has delegated some or all of its power and authority to them. Their second-level decisions are, therefore, not necessarily final; they inform the first-level decisions of Council. It follows therefore, that the productivity and effectiveness of the University in carrying out its mission can be no better and no worse than the effectiveness of the leadership and direction exhibited by the University Council.

It is not sufficient to say then that the University is constrained by its second-level policies and directives, because these are under the direct control of the Council. Rather, in the long run, the University is constrained by the Council, and in turn by the Government which appoints or causes the election of the Council, and ultimately by the taxpaying electorate, who elect the Government and are the ultimate and collective owners of the Institution. So, in the end, the long-term state of the Institution microcosmically reflects the mindset, wishes and tolerance levels of the people (Figure 1), and the Council, from a particular hands-off perspective, serves as the ultimate check and balance for the managerial and other periodical decisions of the more hands-on second-level governing bodies.

6. THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES OF THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON AND THE EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATION

The decision-making processes of the Executive Administration and the Office of the Ombudsman are freely patterned after the leadership styles of the individuals and leaders holding these high offices. Due to the broad purview and constraints laid down by the Senate, slight variations in these styles are not paramourly critical to the smooth operation of the University, although there can be differing effects on the levels of performance and productivity, etc., achieved; the actions and decisions of second-level governors and administrators may not venture beyond the pale as collectively and parametrically set by the entire stakeholder body through decisions of the Senate, ratified by Council.

7. THE PURVIEW, DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND RULES OF THE SENATE

“Through its Terms of Reference, the [University Transition Secretariat] will assure that the voices of administrators, faculty, staff, students, alumni and external stakeholders of The College receive full consideration in the conceptualization of the character of the University of The Bahamas and in the identification of steps to be taken towards its realization.”

The College of The Bahamas (2012c)

The function of the Senate is paramount, and critical to the success of the governance system. While many operational details and Senate house rules can or will be determined and refined only after much discussion and collected experience, the following logical ideas may be helpful to begin this process.

Let us say, in keeping with the foundational philosophy already described, that the Senate will establish its own policy boundaries, as permitted by Council.

Let us also state that all decisions of the Senate will be democratic and taken by a defined majority vote (see later). No valid or enforceable decision can be taken otherwise. The specific majorities are defined based on the categories, importance and significance (or severity) of the decisions (e.g., simple majority [1/2 + 1], 2/3 majority, 4/5 majority, and unanimous). Voting is based on the principle of *one man, one vote*, except for the Chairperson of the Senate, whose vote is worth double. There can be no unresolved deadlocks on any issue that is voted on. In every situation a decision must be reached, even if it is the *do-nothing* decision. In the case of a tie, even after the Chairperson has registered her double vote, the deadlock must be broken by the Chairperson or her designate who casts an additional final deciding vote. No tally of votes that aberrantly omits the legitimately cast vote, or involves the prevention of a legitimate vote, of any member of the Senate can constitute a valid or enforceable decision of Senate.

Continuing, voting in the Senate takes place only after there has been sufficient discussion and debate. The Senate determines for itself, by a separate vote or established policy if necessary, the sufficiency or permitted duration of any discussion and debate. In general, Senate house rules uphold the dictum that *no Senator may be aberrantly denied his/her say* on any matter that is up for discussion and debate.

Assume that bullying in the Senate or the bullying of Senators outside the walls of the Senate, regarding decisions to be taken by the body of the Senate, is prohibited, and carries with it the appropriate penalties. The independence and integrity of the vote of every man and woman in the Senate must be resolutely protected. Senators may not be arm wrestled, bribed or cajoled to one side or the other, against their better judgment. By these rules, Senators will be guaranteed the freedom to combat group think, and objectively challenge the partial opinions, propaganda and dogma of others, particularly the partial opinions, etc., of the influential informal leadership structures that will develop from time to time both within and without the Senate.

Consider that there will be no secret ballots. All votes by all members of the Senate on every issue, great or small, will be open to public scrutiny, and kept on record in the University Library. The Senate cannot be held hostage by the actions of some or all of its members, therefore the quorum in a duly convened meeting shall be all members present (see also *Decision Majorities Defined* below). All members present shall be eligible to vote. Absent members may vote by proxy. The decision is carried by the vote upon completion of the vote. The decision may not be altered, except by a separate new vote. No issue duly raised by any member of the Senate may be rejected from the discussion, debate and decision process, except by a separate decision (taken by vote) to do so. All duly raised and “unrejected” issues must be considered and brought finally to appropriate votes.

8. DISMISSAL OF A MEMBER OF SENATE

Let us say that procedures will be put in place to permit the constituents of any Senator, excluding none, or any other members of Senate, to cause to be introduced in the Senate, at any time before the end of the Senator’s term in office, a motion for the swift removal and replacement of that Senator on the proven grounds of non-performance, gross misrepresentation, or extreme disloyalty towards his/her constituency. There are no other means by which a Senator may be dismissed from the Senate except by an order from higher up, i.e., by order of the Council, or of the Government through the Council. However, this power should be exercised within reason and with great caution, noting that, at the “end” of the circle, the Government is still subject to the people.²

9. MEETINGS OF SENATE

Let us stipulate that, except for the possibility of individual authorized meetings or conferences such as sub-committee meetings/conferences, which may or may not be closed, no meeting or conference of the General Assembly of the Senate may be held in secret or exclude the presence of any sitting member of Senate. All members of the Senate must be duly informed of normal, as well as extraordinary, meetings/conferences of the General Assembly, and invited to attend (see below); their participation in the meeting/conference, including the

right to vote, may not be prevented in any way. No tally of votes that aberrantly omits the legitimately cast vote, or involves the prevention of a legitimate vote, of any member of the Senate can constitute a valid or enforceable decision of Senate (repeated from above).

In addition to the above, no extraordinary or regular meeting or conference of the Senate may be called or scheduled in a manner or at a time or place that intentionally disadvantages any member or impedes their ability to attend and participate. The member so affected may lodge a complaint to the grievance committee of the Senate concerning the improper vote; the matter or matters and decision or decisions taken in the member's absence will be null and void, and if it is still desired, the matter(s) may be properly reconsidered by the house, and any consequential action(s) to be taken, decided by a proper vote.

10. DECISION MAJORITIES DEFINED

Defined decision majorities are percentages or fractions of the tally of votes of the members voting, not of members present or of sitting members of the house. The decision majorities by category or type of decision, of the nature of those given in Table 1, can be envisioned.

Table 1: Defined Decision Majorities

| Category or Type of Decision | Majority vote | |
|---|----------------------|-------|
| Establishment of a University policy; or a decision to take action other than defined below | Simple | > 50% |
| Amendment of an established policy | 3/5 | 60% |
| Dismissal of a member of the Senate | 3/4 | 75% |
| Impeachment; Amendment of a house rule | 4/5 | 80% |
| Amendment of a defined majority; Restructuring of the Senate (Composition) | 9/10 | 90% |
| Dissolution of Senate | Unanimous | 100% |

11. CONCLUSION

For too long, the progress of public education in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas has been slowed by doubt and uncertainty. At the apex of this public educational system, the framers of the new University of The Bahamas, including the members, benefactors and friends of the College of The Bahamas, undaunted and unafraid to break away from the unfavorable and distrustful parts and autocracies of the past as they intrepidly plough into the uncharted future, have taken up the awesome challenge of creating new higher educational opportunities for students in The Bahamas at the new University of The Bahamas. The path and decisions, taken now, will continue to affect this Institution's purpose and performance for years to come, unless they are redacted before then. So, allowing for human fallibility, these daring choices need not be *written in stone*, and in view of the importance and significance of the possible consequences of those choices, whether fruitful and best or unfruitful or middle-of-the-road, the newly appointed University Transition Secretariat certainly has its work cut out for it!

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Notes

¹ The University Council is also representative of all stakeholders and thereby also inclined, like the Senate, to produce only impartial decisions.

² This modus operandi is discernibly only one example of good conduct and resolve at the top level, since it would most likely be the general intent of the University Council and the Government to always exercise reason and caution at the pinnacle of control, considering that many of their decisions at this level, vis-à-vis *the premier tertiary educational institution in the country*, could have also significantly broader national, social, economic and political impacts, whether those decisions are targeted or general, and have been explicitly or implicitly sanctioned by the Government or temporarily undisclosed outside the halls of Council.