

## APPENDIX TO BY-LAWS OF KEYSTONE COUNCIL

This Appendix to the By Laws of Keystone Council provides a rationale and explanation for some of the key provisions found in the document. The Appendix was written by members of the Keystone Governance Committee who examined various aspects of shared governance at University High School and then drafted recommended revisions for the faculty and staff to review and ratify in the fall of 2003.

### **Critical Assumptions About Keystone Council And Shared Governance**

The first assumption about shared governance at University High School is the complexity of decision-making and the exercise of authority. Authority is the accepted understanding among all stakeholders on who controls a particular set of decisions. There are many variations of authority that are held by various participants at University High School. On some issues, the Principal has unilateral control as the chief administrator of the school (e.g., budgets and scheduling). On other issues authority has been delegated to faculty members and various groups in the school (e.g., collegial decisions made by Departments and individualized decisions about instruction and assessment made by faculty). Finally, there are issues that require joint decision-making by faculty/staff and the administration. Sometimes these joint decisions are made with little formality as a common consensus prevails. At other times joint authority is formalized with official rules of deliberation and formal votes. Given the complexity and variation in the exercise of authority, it is important to understand that no single group (or individual) has exclusive control over the decision making process at University High School.

The complexity of governance at University High School also assumes that many decision making groups co-exist with no simple line of authority that rank orders their

importance. In actual practice four decision making groups are found at University High School: 1) Keystone Council, 2) Chairperson's Group, 3) Standing Committees, 4) Ad Hoc Committees. All four groups are essential in the collaborative work of maintaining operations, reviewing existing conditions, and planning for new developments that strengthen the school. It is assumed that the groups do not work independently of each other. The groups must be understood as key parts of a system of shared governance in which various relationships are defined and recognized. Some of the relationships are spelled out in the the Keystone Council By Laws (e.g., the formation of Ad Hoc Committees appointed by Keystone Council). But the By Laws do not provide comprehensive guidelines for relationships among different groups. This aspect of the governance system must be developed by school leaders in various positions of responsibility.

**Keystone Council: Purpose # 1: *to create, review, revise, recommend, and record internal policies.*** Keystone Council is the only group at University High School with the primary purpose of creating, reviewing, revising, recommending and recording internal policies. Keystone Council is a policymaking group in the broad sense of that term found in Webster's Dictionary, "A definite course or method of action selected to guide and determine present and future decisions." This responsibility does not mean that all policies at UHS are determined by Keystone Council. Clearly, this is not the case, because many policies are developed externally by other decision making bodies (e.g., College of Education, Illinois State University, Illinois State Board of Education, and the United States Department of Education) that have precedence over deliberations by Keystone Council.

It is also assumed that opportunities for policymaking by Keystone Council are always subject to the approval of the Principal. The administration always has the right to veto a policy made by Keystone Council. The Principal is expected to explain his or her position, in order to help members better understand opportunities to find common ground in future deliberations. Keystone Council offers a setting of mutual exchange of views by all parties, but the final authority of the Principal is assumed for all policy making deliberations. The Principal has final authority and serves on the Keystone Council and Keystone Executive Committee. This arrangement maximizes opportunities to review any matters that might be vetoed. Keystone is not a separate legislative body of the faculty/staff that is independent of the administration. It is a collaborative decision making body that shares authority with the administration.

**Keystone Council Purpose # 2: *to provide an open forum for communication***.... Many faculty who participated in the formation of Keystone Council envisioned it as the one group that would allow an open awareness of various problems, initiatives, and projects that are found in a complex high school such as UHS. The By Laws of Keystone Council provide specific responsibilities to assure an opportunity for an open forum for all faculty and staff at least once each year. To quote the By Laws, “The Executive Committee of Keystone Council shall be responsible for organizing the open forum.”

**Keystone Council Purpose # 3: *to assist in implementing current action plans and planning documents***. Keystone Council does not become directly involved in the enactment of policies or the ongoing management of operations that are related to various policies. The implementation of policies and procedures is the responsibility of

administrators, staff, and faculty members in their respective roles as professional educators. Policies are often developed with specific procedures, action plans, and planning documents that do require thoughtful review and reflection. It is highly appropriate for members of Keystone Council to examine these documents to assure a meaningful connection between a given policy and the written procedures essential for effective implementation.

**Areas of Responsibility: # 1 – *articulate and support mission of University***

**High School** The Keystone Council has a special responsibility to protect and promote the institutional values that sustain University High School. Keystone is the “keeper of the flame.” Members of Keystone Council assume the leadership role of articulating and defending the mission of the school.

**Areas of Responsibility: # 2 – *critical issues of school development*** This

responsibility is about leading a professional community of educators who address the core academic tasks of educational work in the school. Leaders of Keystone Council are expected to advance the learning agenda of UHS. They seek to better understand how learning opportunities can be further developed. Such reflection and planning require consideration of curriculum (what is taught), instruction (who it is taught), assessment (discerning what is learned), and professional development (acquiring new knowledge and skills to advance learning).

**Areas of Responsibility: # 3 – *field experiences of student teachers*** University

High School plays a significant role in the educational training of future high school teachers. Critical policies and procedures are essential to assure a strong working

relationship with members of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and other academic areas of Illinois State University.

**Areas of Responsibility: # 4 – *personnel matters*** Personnel matters include a wide range of topics: recruitment, screening, appointment, annual review prior to tenure, tenure decision, annual review after tenure, faculty responsibilities and duties (core expectations), professional ethics, evaluation of administrators, and professional development. These topics do not constitute a single comprehensive set of policies and procedures, but they indicate the need for open discussion and review of policies that are of vital importance to faculty and administrators at University High School.

**Areas of Responsibility: # 5 – *parent-school relations*** Effective schools have positive and strong relationships with the parents. Pertinent policies and procedures include parent-teacher conferences, communication between school and home, and shared expectations about school conduct, academic standards and performance.

**Areas of Responsibility: # 6 – *discipline, student conduct, and school climate*** All schools formalize expectations for student conduct and discipline in a student handbook. There are inevitable situations in the school environment that require thoughtful attention, but are not found in the handbook. These matters deserve continuous review and appropriate revisions.

**Areas of Responsibility: # 7 – *extracurricular activities*** University High School has an extensive program of extracurricular activities. Keystone Council is responsible to review appropriate policies and procedures in this program area.

**Areas of Responsibility: # 8 – *codification of policies that are updated each year*** Keystone Council is responsible to review and make internal policies. It is equally

important to take the next step and assume responsibility for recording these policies and making them available to all interested parties. This responsibility can be best met by publishing a policy manual that would be revised each year.

**Areas of Responsibility: # 9 –*provide opportunities for an open forum*** The leaders of Keystone Council have a special responsibility to provide opportunities for an open exchange of ideas and information about the matters of importance to the school community. The Executive Committee of Keystone is authorized to carry out this responsibility.

**Membership: *The principal and assistant principal will serve on the Council without election*** The principal and assistant principal can inform the Council of underlying issues regarding subjects on the agenda, as each will have access to information unavailable to other Council members. Given that the final authority for decisions rests with school administrators, it is essential that their participation on the Council encourage broad opportunity for faculty and staff to assume leadership roles with actual voice in examining and formulating policies that serve the best interests of the school community. This arrangement also adds greater efficiency to the deliberations of Keystone Council.

**Executive Committee of Keystone Council: *setting agendas for the Council*** The By Laws establish a special leadership group at University High School: the Executive Committee of Keystone Council. This group is responsible to set the monthly agenda for Keystone Council. The agenda can include ongoing topics that have been set in earlier planning sessions; but, the Executive Committee can also consider issues that arise from any member of the faculty or staff. University High School is a dynamic

institution and on occasion critical issues emerge in the school that deserve the attention of the Executive Committee. Members of the Executive Committee are in a position to offer leadership on how issues can be best addressed. There are many options open to the Executive Committee: open forum for entire school, quiet diplomacy, an ad hoc committee, assignment to a standing committee, discussion item for a Keystone Council meeting. The important matter is the awareness on the part of faculty and staff that their concerns can be given a hearing among leaders who will respond in a responsible fashion. The Executive Committee of Keystone Council is in a position to be open to all faculty and staff and set agenda that deserve deliberation and action.

**Duties of officers and appropriate training** The leadership roles for the members and officers of Keystone Council are substantial. They are expected to be both visionary in their perspective and highly efficient in managing the details of Council affairs. Effective leadership from the officers and members of the Council and subcommittees will require special training on the complex tasks of setting agendas, conducting meetings, and resolving conflicts. Resources will be needed for these training opportunities.

**The work of the Council and appropriate support** Essential resources are needed for the work of the Council. Teachers and staff must have time to work together on critical issues that require concentration and continuous commitment. Special support is appropriate to complete specific tasks in a timely manner. This support may come in many forms: for example, substitutes, expanded blocks of time, retreats, and clerical assistance.

**Keystone Council By Laws and shared governance** The Keystone Council By Laws affirm the basic principle of shared governance at University High School: Faculty, staff, and administrators are committed to work together in a common decision making group. As a decision making group with primary interest in internal policies, Keystone Council does not have responsibilities to implement policies or manage operations. Other groups (e.g., Chairperson Council) and individuals have responsibilities to carry out daily work that is consistent with the policies. Keystone Council offers an opportunity for shared leadership that articulate guidelines that shape the character of the school

Shared governance should never be considered an end in itself. The larger goal is always the cultivation of collegiality among faculty, staff, and administrators who are better able to serve the best interests of students and the broader educational community. By laws are essential to shared governance, because they offer everyone the needed tools for collaborative endeavors to build a better high school. They help to shape renewed opportunities to participate in the school community.

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