Report of the Working Group

Governance

Working Group Members:

Colin Adams, Department of Mathematics and Statistics
Krista Birch, Oakley Center for the Humanities and Social Sciences
Ben Leary, Class of 2020
Maud S. Mandel, Office of the President

February 2020

Table of Contents

Vision and Goals

Williams College, like many small liberal arts colleges, has traditionally embedded decision-making in three key constituents. According to college by-laws, responsibilities are distributed among the Board of Trustees, the president, and the faculty. The trustees, together with the president, are responsible for governing and stewarding the college. While the Board of Trustees is the ultimate corporate authority responsible for the college's policies and programs, the president and faculty share the day to day governance of the college. The faculty holds primary responsibility over the curriculum, methods of instruction, requirements for degrees, aspects of student life that relate to the educational process, and matters relating to faculty status. In practice, the college operates through a sophisticated governance system made up of a senior leadership team headed by the president, standing faculty committees, and ad hoc committees that oversee many aspects of daily college life. The governance system as a whole seeks to draw from and involve all sectors of the college community and to elevate expertise and a wide range of voices.

This system has proven fairly effective at allowing the college to stay focused on its primary responsibility: providing the best possible educational experience for Williams students. The college has, as a result, been able to create new academic programs, revise and assess its educational requirements, and remain on strong economic footing over time.

If, however, Williams governance structures have historically proven robust enough to allow the school to fulfill its core mission, changes to the faculty, staff, and student bodies have in recent years put pressure on the model. These changes have led to questions concerning the governance structure's overall flexibility, efficiency, and nimbleness in terms of weighing trade- offs; its relative inclusiveness; its transparency; and its methods for ensuring accountability. In addition, some college constituents have raised concerns about the ways in which the governance system weighs unevenly across constituents, burdening some and marginalizing others.

The goal of this report is to evaluate our current system and provide a strategic direction for the future that addresses some of these emerging concerns. Ultimately, it is our hope that the college can strengthen its governance model by expanding outreach, inclusion, communication and transparency throughout the Williams community by making clear how decisions are made and who makes them and by providing pathways for all interested community members to weigh in on decisions that are under consideration or that affect them directly. By streamlining elements of the governance system while adding new components, it is our hope that Williams will be able to move new decisions forward efficiently and effectively, while still providing touchpoints at key decision-making junctures for those in the community who feel they have a stake in the work at hand.

Description and Appraisal

Overview of Williams current governance system

As stated above, Williams College has a long-standing system of shared governance. The college's by-laws charge the school's president and trustees with responsibility for governance and direction of the college. The president is a member of the Board of Trustees and the chief executive officer, with general oversight and direction of administration, instruction, and discipline, and is also the presiding officer of the faculty. The board approves the college's major initiatives, including any spending or fundraising commitments needed to achieve defined goals.

1. President and senior staff

The president is supported by a team of senior administrators, known collectively at Williams as the senior staff. All senior staff members are formally designated as officers of the institution. Three senior staff posts are reserved for Williams faculty members: the dean of the college, the provost, and the dean of the faculty (the college's chief academic officer). Williams chooses provosts and deans exclusively from within the ranks of current faculty, who serve for a period typically three to six years. Faculty bring to these positions an intimate understanding of the workings of the institution, and serving in these roles provides rising faculty leaders with valuable experience and professional development opportunities while also serving as a credible source of insight for other faculty into how the college runs. The non-faculty members of senior staff are: the vice president for college relations; the vice president for campus life (a position that will be sunsetted in June 2020); the chief investment officer; the vice president for institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion; the chief communications officer; the assistant to the president and secretary of the board; and the vice president for finance and administration and treasurer. Based on its consultations with other groups in the governance and organizational structure, senior staff, at their weekly meetings, make decisions about college operations and set matters of short- and long-term policy. For example, the dean of the college, vice president for campus life, and vice president for institutional diversity and equity routinely meet with student leaders; the dean of the faculty and the provost regularly engage with faculty regarding academic matters; and other senior staff connect with relevant staff on issues within their units.

2. Main faculty committees

Faculty standing committees are the central pillar of Williams faculty governance system. The main faculty committees are:

• The Faculty Steering Committee (FSC). Its six elected faculty are charged with facilitating the faculty's effective participation in the conduct of college business and directing to the relevant committees issues of particular concern to the faculty. The FSC consults annually with the president and the dean of faculty on appointments to the various standing committees.

• The Committee on Appointments and Promotions (CAP), made up of the president, dean of the faculty, provost, and three elected faculty, advises on appointment and advancement of faculty,

allocation of positions to departments and programs, granting of leaves, and new curricular initiatives that have staffing implications.

• The Committee on Educational Affairs (CEA), comprising the president, dean of the faculty, dean of the college, and provost (in ex officio positions), along with elected faculty and students, recommends educational policy to the faculty and maintains collegewide oversight of the curriculum.

• The Curricular Planning Committee (CPC), which includes the president, provost, dean of the faculty, and elected faculty, analyzes the college's curriculum, investigates changes over time, and explores questions about its future.

• The Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR), made up of faculty, various senior and administrative staff, and students, reviews allocation of the college's fiscal and tangible resources during the annual budget cycle and advises on long-range financial planning.

3. Other college-wide and administrative committees

There are dozens of other committees, several under faculty purview and many others organized by administrative offices, around specific institutional questions (see appendix). While there is no standard way for selecting membership for these committees, broadly speaking they typically include senior leadership, faculty, students and relevant staff (sometimes in ex officio roles depending on the committee).

4. Faculty meetings

Monthly faculty meetings provide another means to ensure the role of faculty in governance. At these meetings, motions that have been vetted by committees are presented for discussion and vote. No major changes to the curriculum or to academic regulations can be adopted without faculty approval. The meetings also serve as an opportunity to inform faculty about issues of concern and to engage in discussion about those issues. Feedback gathered from these discussions plays an important role in shaping decision-making at the institution.

5. Staff Committees

Williams staff are another key component of the campus community. Three formal committees facilitate staff input on college affairs:

• The President's Administrative Group (PAG), made up of the president, senior staff, and 62 director and mid-director level administrators, meets monthly to discuss issues affecting the campus; to review and provide feedback on presidential and/or senior staff initiatives; and to learn more detailed information about college operations.

• The Staff Advisory Council, which is managed by Human Resources and which includes both hourly and salaried staff nominated through a campus-wide process and appointed by the committee. The Staff Advisory Council meets with Human Resource leadership to discuss and provide feedback on policies and practices, and inform leadership's thinking about work-life topics.

• The Williams Staff Committee, an elected committee of hourly and salaried staff members that works to advance staff roles in the life of the college. The committee does so by providing a

forum for staff discussion of College policies, procedures, and employment conditions; identifying and presenting staff concerns to College leadership and committees; and establishing effective mechanisms through which staff members may participate in decisions that affect them.

Although there are two groups to represent staff, there is no staff equivalent to the faculty steering committee or the student College Council, both of which are recognized as the locus for their constituent group and which appoint members to wider campus committees.

6. Student Governance

Students, too, have a significant voice in college affairs. As an undergraduate residential college, a Williams education is grounded in a holistic student experience that exists both within and outside of the classroom, which means that students play an active role in advising the deliberate process of building this experience. All relevant standing committees have positions for student representatives who have an equal vote in decisions on an array of matters affecting students, from the curriculum, to facilities, to health and wellness. At present, the College Council—the elected student representative body—discusses a variety of campus issues and allocates an annual budget of $484,000 in activities funds to support registered student organizations and other student initiatives. The Student Leadership Roundtable, comprising leaders of many major student organizations, meets regularly with the various deans and vice presidents to provide input on important campus issues.

Assessment of Williams governance system

In order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Williams governance model, the working group held numerous discussions with constituencies across campus, including during open forums at the Log with faculty, staff, and students; at the faculty retreat and at faculty meetings; and on strategic planning day. We also met with several committees and administrative offices in order to understand how they see their roles in governing the college. In addition, we looked closely at the governance models of several other liberal arts colleges and small universities and held a number of informal conversations with peers at these institutions in order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of alternative models. Beyond the campus outreach and peer institution review, the working group researched best practices in shared governance. This document review focused on recent task forces by higher education institutions, research centers and nation-wide surveys, and drew information from publications by core authors in higher education governance. Lastly, the group conducted an extensive mapping of Williams governance structure, gathering information on all faculty standing committees, college-wide committees, and administrative committees.

This outreach and assessment period helped clarify several positive features of the Williams College governance system. It should be noted that, in many ways, the Williams model is quite similar to that of other institutions of its size. Shared governance, as divided primarily among the Board of Trustees, the senior administration, and the faculty, is standard across the academy. Engaging staff and students in college decision-making via relevant committees and through

their own representative bodies is also common, as is incorporating all members of the community on search committees, advisory boards, and ad hoc committees.

However, while relatively conventional in its emphasis on shared governance, Williams has some distinctive features. Most notably, the College's incorporation of three faculty members onto senior staff for relatively contained three-year renewable tenures is atypical for a liberal arts college of Williams' size. This system allows for a relatively large number of faculty to play a role in governing the college over time and ensures a highly collaborative relationship between faculty and administration. Limiting the pool of faculty administrators to current Williams faculty rather than conducting national searches for such roles has necessarily narrowed the pool of candidates, which means commitments to diversify the leadership of the college can be hampered, a point about which some current faculty members have expressed concerns. On the other hand, others greatly value this system as a mechanism for ensuring accountability to the faculty as a whole and fostering a sense of shared responsibility.

A second feature of the Williams governance system that appears to be somewhat distinctive, if not unique, is the large number of faculty-established committees that seek to ensure broad faculty engagement with all areas of the college. This gives faculty both experience that may lead to leadership positions and an investment in the institution that does not exist at schools that minimize faculty involvement in governance. On the other hand, at schools that intentionally streamline governance for the sake of efficiency, faculty have more time to engage in teaching and research. This occurs more often at schools that have graduate programs in which the faculty must devote time to supporting the training of masters and doctoral students. There are also some schools that expect even more governance service than does Williams. For example, at least one peer institution *requires* all faculty members to attend monthly evening faculty meetings. Notably, despite the range of models across academia, concerns of inclusion, transparency, accountability and trust were articulated by faculty almost everywhere, suggesting there is no perfect model, although, as we will discuss below, some have instituted practices that the working group recommends considering at Williams.

As in other peer institutions, staff and students also play a role in many standing and administrative committees at Williams. While, this feature has not successfully ensured that all members of the college community feel heard or engaged in campus governance and while many members of the community suggest that despite the large number of committees, few have real power to affect change, it is worth noting that in comparison to peer institutions, the sizable committee infrastructure at Williams does provide more significant engagement with college administrative structures and distributes those roles to more people than at many other schools.

If there is much about Williams governance system that has served it well, several challenges have emerged in recent years that have placed stress on the system and that now require attention:

First, a growing cohort of staff on campus seek to have their perspectives included in decision-making processes. Throughout the outreach phase of the working group's efforts, we heard significant feedback from staff at different ranks and roles with questions about decision-making, representation and inclusion in governance processes. Indeed, while students and faculty also spoke to these concerns, staff representatives were the most vocal and numerous in articulating a sense that the shared governance model was not working to include them as members of the college community, especially in those areas that affect them directly.

Moreover, few felt that the current system of representation via the Staff Advisory Council and the Staff Committee adequately represented and served current staff needs, with the former viewed as directly affiliated with HR, and with the latter viewed as lacking a voice in high-level conversations of the issues it seeks to represent. Occasional overlap among programs run by each of these two groups adds to the confusion. In the past, both have offered 'morale raising' initiatives such as campus gatherings, acknowledgement/reward programs, and have acted as liaisons between staff and administration around questions regarding communication, leave policy, etc. Yet conversations around other matters of deep importance, including items such as advancement, professional development programs, conflict resolution, and the compensation system have proven challenging for either group to advance. The Staff Committee feels itself lacking a voice in higher-level discussions where forward-looking matters may be considered; the Staff Advisory Council primarily appraises an agenda that Human Resources collates from committee members and from issues that come to its attention from across campus. Admittedly, consideration of difficult matters makes for difficult conversations; yet we note a rise in recent years in the call from staff for fora in which these matters can be discussed and inclusion of staff representatives in those areas and groups where advice and/or decisions are shaped.

Of the peer institutions we reviewed, we saw few models that provided staff with widespread mechanisms to participate in campus governance structures. However, several schools have taken steps in this direction, and those staff seem more satisfied that their concerns could be addressed. Among those, there were several common characteristics of note: each has a representative staff group that was either relatively newly-formed (has existed for 15 years or fewer) or was well established but was in the process of revising its scope; all were solely comprised of elected members; all collaborated to various degrees with campus departments and committees but operated autonomously. For example, some staff committees appoint members to serve on key campus committees and groups that consider issues affecting staff; some staff committees participate in regularly scheduled high-level meetings with the president, senior staff, and, at a few schools, with the Board of Trustees; a few take up matters such as conflict resolution, pay transparency, and review of termination.

Second, student governance structures have struggled in recent years to be fully operational and, more broadly, students have expressed concerns that they have little ability to promote change in a system that they feel lacks transparency and clear opportunities for student advocacy. In addition, the main organ of student governance has suffered recently from a lack of trust and

support from the wider student body and with lack of a diverse representation of council officers. Elections typically go uncontested, which means student incumbents rarely run on any sort of platform and turnout is low. Given some of these concerns, student governance is in a period of reorganization, following decisions among its leadership that the current structure suffers from significant gaps that have undermined its ability to build a strong and trusted representative body. In the absence of a strong student government, student advocates hoping to create change tend to reach out to administrators with whom they have personal relationships while others feel unrepresented or distant from governance structures at the college.

As should be clear from this overview of current staff and student governance structures, while many of those who spoke to the working group expressed frustration with or distrust of the highest decision-making bodies on campus, it was also clear that within each constituency there were internal critiques of their own standing governance structures that undermined trust and engagement. And while few faculty expressed a similar distrust of faculty governance bodies, irregular attendance at faculty meetings by some members of the community suggest that not all of those who make up that body are fully engaged or are willing to prioritize this aspect of faculty governance. Moreover, many who regularly serve on committees voiced concern over the large number of such committees and frustration that they seemed to hold little authority to promote effective change. The working group's collective sense from these conversations is that while some change needs to take place throughout college governance as a whole, each constituency must also seek to make change from within in order to be as strong a partner as possible in the broader collaborative system. Moreover, each separate part of the governance structure needs to be validated and included from the top down in order to help establish its legitimacy more fully.

Lastly, the distributive nature of the governing process has created some inefficiencies and coordination challenges. Some of these shortcomings of the governance structure were noted in the 2018 outside review team's accreditation report: "There are many aspects of distributed authority at Williams that are extremely positive, and it certainly contributes to the sense of faculty ownership. Nevertheless, […] there was a real question as to whether the balance was right in this distribution, and whether or not the extreme version of this practiced by Williams was actually serving the college well." The accreditation report suggested that the heavily encumbered faculty governance model at Williams makes it difficult for decisions to be made quickly and efficaciously in certain instances. Moreover, faculty regularly note that the overwhelming service obligations at the college interferes with their ability to devote sufficient time to their teaching and research.

The collective impact of these structural challenges is that despite some of the strengths of the Williams governance model, many constituents are dissatisfied with the college's current system. This dissatisfaction can be broken down into several broad categories: representation and inclusion; transparency and communication; decision-making and accountability; and efficiency.

1. Representation and inclusion

The growing diversity of the Williams campus and the college's stated commitments to ensuring full belonging for all its members has raised questions for many about how well the governance model is working to represent the breadth of the campus. As noted above, staff and students voiced particular concerns in this area, while many faculty respondents noted that faculty governance processes tend to ensure that the same individuals serve in important positions on committees while others are relegated to less essential roles. Others raised concerns about the over-burdening of certain faculty, particularly those from historically underrepresented groups, which while driven by positive motives (the efforts to include diverse voices in governance structures) often led to problematic outcomes (i.e. proportionately high labor falling on a few).

2. Decision-making, transparency and communication

The working group heard concerns expressed about how decision-making takes place on campus, where in that process voices are heard, and whether diverse perspectives are given balanced consideration. With respect to any particular issue that is up for discussion, there will be disagreement, of course. Such conflicts are not, in and of themselves, necessarily an indication that the system is ineffective; in fact, it might indicate the opposite—that the system allows for healthy debate. In contrast, closed door discussions, or the perception that doors are closed due to poorly functioning communication structures and methods for gathering input, suggest to those affected by campus policies that the college governance system lacks transparency and is not inclusive. As an example, some of those providing feedback suggested that important issues regarding finances and the built environment discussed by the Committee on Priorities and Resources are impenetrable to those outside the committee, as the mechanisms to make the community aware of those discussions are uneven. Moreover, as the group does not have representatives from all campus constituencies, many staff in particular feel marginal to its discussions and decision-making. While the committee holds open fora, certain campus constituents seem unaware of the opportunity to engage or opt not to attend.

The working group heard many calls for the importance of being clear about where a given decision will be made and how input can be provided before the process is complete. Once a decision is made, it is also important for the result and the reasons for the result to be made available.

In addition, members from all constituencies voiced concerns about how to best communicate with the Board of Trustees in a way that fosters communication among stakeholders. The college's recent decision to send out letters following every board meeting with an update of the topics covered and decisions made is widely appreciated. However, for many, the board remains a fairly abstract body whose role is understood to be powerful but is nevertheless poorly understood. Few seem aware of the website on the president's page that gives information on every board member and on the charge of each of the board's several committees, nor are many aware of the College Laws that dictate in great detail the college's governance structure and the role of the board within a system of shared governance, thereby clarifying its duties and

responsibilities. As a result, many articulated a desire for greater transparency around board activities and more clearly defined and regular mechanisms for interactions across all constituencies.

3. Efficiency

Given the complexity of Williams College shared governance model, decision-making can be slow. The relatively cumbersome system means that decisions that should be made in a timely manner in order to resolve a problem or to take advantage of an emergent opportunity can be hampered. As noted in the reaccreditation report, the college would likely be better served if it improved its ability to be nimble and to create structures that allow for more rapid turnaround. While the topic of efficient decision-making was not at the top of the priority list for many of those who interacted with the working group, the accreditation review team made it clear that the college was at risk of missing opportunities to launch new initiatives or take advantage of its many strengths by bogging down decision-making in heavily bureaucratic structures focused more on process than outcomes.

Strategies

The working group proposes that Williams pursue the following strategies as ways to build on the strengths of the shared governance model while further enhancing areas that have been under stress in recent years.

Participation and engagement
Strengthen the constituent bodies of campus governance and enhance partnerships among them to facilitate collaboration, communication, inclusion and increased engagement.

In order for Williams to function as efficiently, collaboratively, and inclusively as possible, the working group has concluded that each constituent element of the governance process needs to be strengthened so as to be fully legitimate partners in the collaborative governance model and to foster trust *within* its own constituency. As noted above, this is not to suggest that each constituent group plays the equivalent role in decision-making on campus. Nevertheless, improved or reimagined faculty, student and staff governance structures and better mechanisms for bringing each of them into conversation with each other and with the president, senior administrative leadership, and the Board will address a number of concerns that the working group heard around inclusion, engagement, and communication.

Having posited the importance of each element of campus governance (student, faculty, and staff) being strong in its own right so as to be a healthy partner in the collaborative endeavor, it is also important to note that needs differ among them. Therefore, the working group offers specific suggestions for each one based on feedback gathered from its conversations across campus and comparative examinations of models at other campuses.

1. Faculty

As noted above, there are many elements of the faculty governance system that are working well. Nevertheless, it seems widely agreed by many that the numerous committees overextends the faculty, particularly in consideration of the relatively large number of academic departments and programs, all of which also rely on faculty leadership and require numerous service obligations. The working group thus proposes that the Faculty Steering Committee conduct an overview of the entire faculty committee structure and consider adopting a tighter model focused closely on the key areas of faculty expertise, including the curriculum, hiring, research, teaching, pedagogy, and academic advising. In areas such as these where faculty leadership is essential, the working group has a broad sense that overall, the committee structure is working well.

The working group nevertheless heard concerns over the relative effectiveness of the Curricular Planning Committee (although not all shared these views). The concerns were focused on the CPC's inability to meet its charge given, on the one hand, its overlap with the CAP while on the other its relative lack of decision-making authority. There are several alternative models that could be considered. For instance, one possibility would be to enlarge the CAP and fold the work of the CPC into a strengthened committee. Another would be to focus the work of the CAP on tenure and promotion and move its work on hiring and the determination of tenure lines to the CPC.

Other areas where faculty have always exercised a crucial *advisory* role, such as budgeting and finance or residential life should remain central to faculty governance but might be reimagined as more collaborative endeavors with staff and student partners with the understanding that the goal of these committees is to partner with senior administrators in areas where the latter maintains ultimate responsibility. The advisory nature of such committees suggests that each one select a set of themes or topics each year to review rather than seeking to oversee every element of the area that falls under the committee's purview. By fully embracing the advisory nature of such work, it might be possible to consolidate certain committees (for example incorporating the work of the Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid into the Committee on Priorities and Resources or the Committee on Athletics into the Committee on Student Life). The working group offers these examples not as specific suggestions but rather to point to ways of helping to cut down the number of advisory committees and distinguish them from those in which faculty play a key *legislative* role. The use of subcommittees to address particular concerns could also help to eliminate the need for entire committees devoted to that concern.

Although all committees have played important roles at key moments and on key issues, there can be long periods of time between those moments. For the sake of efficiency and to minimize the amount of inessential time and work, it might be better to create ad hoc committees to address specific issues that are then disbanded upon the completion of their work. A good example is the recent Ad Hoc Working Group on Inquiry and Inclusion that carried out its work over one semester.

The Governance Working Group also suggests sunsetting committees that have completed their initial mandate and that the FSC do away with others altogether, thereby providing more faculty capacity for key ad hoc committees. This may make for a more satisfactory advisory governance experience than standing advisory committees that frustrate their membership by their seeming lack of impact.

In addition to possible changes to the list of committees, it is also important to reconsider the membership of the committees in terms of numbers of faculty, athletic faculty, administrators, students and staff. For instance, the Faculty Compensation Committee considers compensation and benefit issues related to faculty. It may make sense to think about ways to provide similar opportunities for input from staff.

Athletic faculty serve on relatively few committees, and often have trouble with the committee meeting times because of practices. Theirs is a unique perspective that can be particularly salient on certain issues. We therefore recommend that the FSC conduct a broad evaluation of the membership of its advisory committees and partner with other governance structures on campus to reconsider the make-up of those committees.

   2. Staff

On the staff side, the question raised most often during the strategic planning process was *who speaks for staff?* As noted earlier in this report and as exhibited in appendix #4, often staff on campus committees serve in ex officio roles; in other words, they hold their seats as a reflection of their position within the administration and are not charged with representing staff concerns or reporting back to the Staff Committee, the Staff Advisory Council, or the wider staff body. Hence, many who spoke with the working group expressed a sense of disconnection and questioned, beyond the formal channel of HR, where and by whom their wider concerns are voiced and heard.

Furthermore, gaps and duplication between the two groups, the Staff Advisory Council and the Staff Committee, has caused confusion and frustration, a problem clearly evident in the similarity of the names between them. For the sake of clarity, we suggest a name modification to the Staff Advisory Council that clearly captures its role as an appointed body that meets with HR leadership to provide feedback on policies and practices affecting staff and to organize staff appreciation events.

More fundamentally, the working group proposes a re-thinking of the Staff Committee at Williams that would transform it into something closer to the Faculty Steering Committee. Of the institutions we surveyed at those colleges where staff reported the highest rates of satisfaction and thriving, the elected staff group was considered the legitimate spokesgroup for staff by other campus groups. The feedback from those campuses suggests that the following are key attributes to the success of such a group: 1) a recognized staff group as the representative body for all staff

members; 2) the autonomy to set its own agenda; 3) the charge to appoint staff to serve on campus committees and advisory groups. As such, we recommend that this new Staff Steering Committee would be charged with gathering and responding to staff concerns, representing staff to other governance bodies, and serving as a clearinghouse for nominations and appointments to other committees, including the Staff Advisory Council. As well, the Staff Steering Committee should hold campus-wide staff meeting(s) to ensure healthy and transparent dialogue and information exchange.

Feedback from peer institutions where staff seemed to thrive most and had the strongest sense of belonging suggests that other changes to the way staff are selected and participate in staff governance might also be worth considering. Thus, at some places, the aggregate of staff were considered members of the staff association and voted members onto the representative board, while others divided the entire staff body into divisions, and elected representatives from each division. Sometimes these divisions followed department and reporting lines; for example dining services, academic departments, and facilities would all be distinct sectors. In other cases, groupings were based on related job components and/or training; for example, at Brandeis, the libraries and OIT are grouped together although each reports up differently. One seemingly successful model can be found at [Haverford College](). While the working group is not proposing a specific model for moving forward, we believe the new Staff Steering Committee should be charged with considering some possible changes to the way staff are organized and participate in the staff governance structure.

3. Students

At the beginning of the 2019-2020 academic year, the Williams College Council launched a process of re-thinking the student governance system. This process began with a series of discussions within College Council and with senior administrators and a number of internal and campus-wide fora to discuss possible new directions. At the time of the drafting of this report, a group of elected student representatives have been engaged in an intensive winter study task force evaluating all aspects of the Williams student governance system, working closely with the Dean of the College and the Vice President for Campus Life as they put together a proposal for a full restructuring of the system. It is expected that in the months ahead, students will adopt some or all of this new system that broadens participation and elevates a wider array of voices. Our working group is fully supportive of the student effort to re-think their internal structures and recommends deepening partnerships across the wider college governance system, as outlined below, once the task force has completed its work and moved the discussions into the student body.

Collaborative Engagement

Increase collaboration and elevate a broader array of voices by establishing new governance structures that bridge faculty, student, staff, and senior administrative bodies

- Establish a President's Campus Advisory Council: In order to ensure that more members of the College community are represented in the governance structures, the working group recommends the establishment of a new advisory body to the president comprised of representatives from the Faculty Steering Committee, the newly imagined student governance structure, and the Staff Steering Committee (or whatever body comes to represent staff over the next year) to meet quarterly to address matters of concern and create communication among and across constituents. While this new committee would not be a decision-making body, its representatives would be charged with carrying forward items of concern to the president and other members of the committee as well as to serve as bridges back to their respective governing bodies.

- Nomination for committees and advisory bodies: Where opportunities exist for engagement in ad hoc campus governance bodies, administrative committees, or search committees, nominations for consideration should emerge from the relevant standing student, faculty, or staff governance bodies (as is currently the case, *final* decision for determining the make-up of administrative and search committees should remain with the person charged with constituting that group, who--among other things--must consider the balance of the committee, the diversity of its membership overall, etc.).   Appointees to such committees should be charged with reporting back to the constituent group regularly as well as to the broader community with information about the work of the committee in question.

Communication and Transparency
Enhance the information flow around process, decision-making, and accountability so as to ensure that members of the College community have a better understanding of why and how decisions are made. Promote awareness about the operation of Williams to foster productive understanding, conversation, and engagement.

- Create occasions for regularly scheduled, direct, high-level reporting and communicating among all constituencies and with the president, senior staff, and where appropriate, the Board of Trustees. Such occasions might include:
    - Holding bi-annual campus-wide open forums with the President's Campus Advisory Council for all interested campus constituencies.
    - Expanding current student drop-in open office hours with the president to include other campus constituents.
    - Hosting open discussions between individual senior staff and open audiences at regular intervals (modeled on the Log conversations organized throughout strategic planning).

○ Regularizing meetings among the leadership of each campus constituency and Board of Trustees (e.g., with College Council or its replacement; Staff Committee or its replacement, Faculty Steering Committee, etc.)

● Develop a Williams college governance webpage that clearly outlines all campus committees, delineates the differences among administrative committees, faculty committees, advisory bodies, and ad hoc committees and that makes clear who is charged with making particular decisions and how to provide feedback. Components for inclusion might include:

○ A college organizational chart
○ A one-page chart describing different decisions across the vertical axis and decision makers (e.g., FSC, the president, the board, key committees) across the horizontal axis and that clarifies within each of the boxes the role of the respective decision-makers (e.g., consultation, recommendation, making initial decisions, approving of decision, acting as appellate body).
○ Annual activity reports from all faculty and administrative committees explaining how and why decisions were made. Easily searchable and archivable roster of ongoing campus initiatives and the relevant responsible bodies carrying them forward.
○ A portal to allow all college constituents to offer thoughts and allow for anonymous feedback to the college leadership.

Appendix 1: Working Group charge and questions

The <u>Strategic Planning at Williams College</u> was a collaborative effort conducted by 8 Working Groups, 3 Academic Initiatives, and guided by a Coordinating Committee. In 2018, the charges of the working groups were gradually defined and revised, setting up the outreach phase of Fall 2019. The Governance Working Group conducted its research and outreach to answer the following charge:

Governance Working Group Charge

The group's scope includes:
- Faculty governance structures
- Decision-making dynamics among faculty, students and staff
- Participation and engagement across campus
- Coordination, communication, and transparency
- Collaboration with external partners to promote the mission of higher education

Group Members
Colin Adams, Department of Mathematics and Statistics
Krista Birch, Oakley Center for the Humanities and Social Sciences
Ben Leary '20, Student
Maud Mandel, Office of the President

Working Group charge
Williams College has a long tradition of shared governance and collaborative decision making. Essential work is conducted by numerous committees, and our most important decisions tend to reflect broad participation on the part of faculty, staff, students, and the Board of Trustees. While this approach has served us well in the past, the distributive nature of the process has the potential to create inefficiencies and coordination challenges.

Some of the shortcomings of our governance structure were noted in the 2018 accreditation report: "There are many aspects of distributed authority at Williams that are extremely positive, and it certainly contributes to the sense of faculty ownership. Nevertheless, […] there was a real question as to whether the balance was right in this distribution, and whether or not the extreme version of this practiced by Williams was actually serving the college well."

This working group is charged with examining Williams' current governance structures and recommending changes aimed at improving efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency, including:
- Reconsidering our committee structures;
- Improving coordination and communication of decision-making;
- Imagining ways to build appropriate broad participation;
- Developing protocols and norms for meaningful transparency;
- Enhancing trust in, and respect for, our governance structures.

This working group should consider the following questions:
- How well is our current committee structure serving the college? Could we imagine an alternative structure that would be more efficient and more effective? How often should our committee structure as a whole be reviewed for redundancy and accretion? Who should be responsible for this review?

- What principles should govern the balance of faculty, staff, and students on our various committees? How can we ensure that all members have a voice in committee work and deliberations?
- What might transparency look like at various levels? What is the most effective way to communicate key decisions and analyses? Who determines when it's necessary and important to share?
- How can we increase transparency and communication between the board and other governance structures on campus?

Each working group will collaborate with the Office of the President on a list of resources needed for its work, including internal data sets and models from peer institutions. In addition, each working group is charged with:

- Developing an open and inclusive process for gathering input from all sectors of the campus;
- Developing a communications strategy throughout the fall and early spring of 2019-20;
- Coordinating with other relevant working groups and the Coordinating Committee as necessary;
- Recognizing that resources are limited and thinking carefully about ways to achieve programmatic change without necessarily increasing total spending;
- Operating with the understanding that new initiatives may replace existing ones and thus an inventory of possible reductions/eliminations should be developed.

Appendix 2: Methods and outreach

Over the course of the Fall 2019, the Governance Working Group conducted outreach and research to respond to its charge. This work consisted of four bodies of work.

1. First, outreach to constituents of the College. This was done by holding open public engagements (Log Series, Strategic Planning Day), strategic planning meetings with targeted Williams College offices and committees, and through responses to a governance questionnaire, and an online feedback form.
2. Second, the working group conducted a review of peer colleges through direct conversations with their faculty, staff, and student leadership.
3. Third, the working group conducted a documentary review to outline shared governance best practices. This documentary review focused on recent task forces by HEI, research centers and surveys with nation-wide scope, and on the works by core authors in HEI governance research.
4. Fourth, the working group conducted an extensive mapping of Williams governance structure, gathering information on all faculty standing committees, college-wide committees, and administrative committees.

   1. Outreach
       A. Strategic Planning meetings

		GOVERNANCE			
Year	Month	Public Forums and Open Sessions	Meetings with College Offices, Departments, Faculty, Staff and Students	Strategic Planning Organizational Meetings	Working Group Meetings
2018	September				
	October			*Coordinating Committee*	
	November			*Coordinating Committee* *Coordinating Committee*	
	December			*Coordinating Committee*	
2019	January			*Coordinating Committee*	
	February			*Coordinating Committee* *Coordinating Committee*	
	March			*Coordinating Committee*	
	April			*Coordinating Committee*	
	May			*Coordinating Committee* All Faculty Retreat with working groups	Working Group Meeting
	June			*Organizational Performance Group Consulting -Coordinating Committee meeting*	
	July				
	August			Organizational Performance Group Consulting -Working Groups meeting	
	September	Tuesday at the Log	Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity Committee on Appointments and Promotions Curricular Planning Committee Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity	*Coordinating Committee*	Working Group Meeting Working Group Meeting Working Group Meeting Working Group Meeting
	October	Tuesday at the Log Strategic Planning Day	President's Administrative Group Committee on Priorities and Resources Faculty Steering Committee Student Leadership Roundtable Faculty Department / Program Chairs Staff Council / Staff Committee Faculty Department / Program Chairs Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity	*Coordinating Committee*	Working Group Meeting Working Group Meeting Working Group Meeting Working Group Meeting Working Group Meeting
	November	Tuesday at the Log		Strategic Planning Retreat *Coordinating Committee*	Working Group Meeting Working Group Meeting Working Group Meeting Working Group Meeting
	December				Working Group Meeting
2020	January				Working Group Meeting Working Group Meeting Working Group Meeting
	February				
	March				
	April				
	May				
	June				

in grey, the Coordinating Committee meetings, in which the heads of the working groups participate

B. Questionnaires and written feedback

a. Our questionnaire:

During the open public outreach events (Tuesday at the Log, Strategic Planning Day) and some targeted sessions with College groups, participants were encouraged to respond to the following questionnaire. Information gathered was kept confidential, and intermediary results were summarized during the Strategic Planning Day.

Williams

STRATEGIC PLANNING OUTREACH
https://bit.ly/2IywOo3

A) How would you define good governance at the college?

B) What features in a governance structure best builds trust (in a context in which, by definition, there are sometimes decisions with which you disagree)?

C) What elements do you think are most important to prioritize? Please rank the following and add your own:

____efficiency

____broad participation/including everyone's voice equally

____fostering investment/building community

____moving big ideas forward

____establishing and implementing the vision/mission

____transparency

____add your own:

____

____

____

b. Online feedback:

Over the Spring 2018, Summer and Fall 2019, an online feedback page was open to the Williams community, Williams Alumni, families of Williams students, and the Williamstown / Berkshire public. Comments were then directed to the relevant Strategic Planning working group. The Governance working group also gathered information from written communication sent directly to the group's members.

2. **List of Institutions reviewed**

Group	Institution	Scope
NESCAC	Amherst College; Middlebury College; Wesleyan University	Contacted members of Faculty, Staff, Students
Other Colleges and Universities	Pomona College; Oberlin College; Brown University	Contacted members of Faculty, Staff, Students
Other Colleges and Universities	Macalester; Bryn Mawr; Colby College; Haverford	Contacted members of Faculty, Staff

3. **Reports and documents reviewed by the Governance Working Group**

The working group reviewed four categories of documents. First, documents on Williams College governance produced by Williams members and by the 2017-18 accreditation team. Second, a review of recent colleges and university-based task forces, mandated to investigate shared governance. In parallel to this, a third set of documents was sought: national surveys on governance or research centers that develop nation-wide research on Higher Education shared governance practices. Lastly, the Governance Working Group reviewed core writings on university governance -assembled here as bibliography.

A. **Governance Documents from Williams College**
   ○ Accreditation documents
Williams self-study for accreditation, September 2017
Williams College evaluation team report, January 2018
Williams College institutional response, February 2018

   ○ "How the College Works" workshop and documents
This workshop series and documents was created by the Williams College Office of the Dean of the Faculty in conjunction with the Provost and Faculty Steering Committee, to give faculty an in-depth opportunity to learn about and discuss aspects of the college that affect faculty, that are linked to committees on which faculty serve, and that bear on big decisions made at the college.

B. **Review of recent task forces on Governance by Colleges and Universities**

Host Institution	Project Name / Description	Date	Link

Vanderbilt	Shared Governance Committee report. Comparative models of governance for Princeton University; Harvard University; University of Chicago; Yale University; Columbia University; Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Stanford University; University of Pennsylvania; Duke University; Dartmouth University; Johns Hopkins University; Northwestern University; Brown University; Cornell University; Rice University; Vanderbilt University	2018	https://cdn.vanderbilt.edu/vu-wp0/wp-content/uploads/sites/305/2019/08/06202610/Shared-Governance-Final-Report.pdf
Brandeis University	Faculty Governance Retreat Documents for faculty retreat: summary of key points from the literature on governance; key literature.	2017	https://www.brandeis.edu/faculty-senate/pdfs/FacultyGovernanceRetreatPacketRev.pdf
Ramapo College	Task force on shared governance	2017	https://www.ramapo.edu/president/files/2018/04/Task-Force-on-Shared-Governance-Report-Final.pdf
Stockton University	Task force on shared governance	2016	https://stockton.edu/academic-affairs/task-force/shared-governance.html
Colby College	Task force on shared governance	2015	http://www.colby.edu/provost/wp-content/uploads/sites/121/2015/02/REPORT-OF-THE-TASK-FORCE-ON-SHARED-GOVERNANCE-FINAL-for-submission-to-faculty.pdf

Host Institution	Project Name	Sub-Project	Link
SUNY Fredonia	Review of shared governance Review of shared governance that led to the first SUNY Shared Governance Award; the review of Fredonia's Faculty Senate bylaws; and 3 book chapters in *Shared Governance in Higher Education, Volume 1*	2013-14	Cramer, S.F. 2017. Shared Governance in Higher Education, Volume 1: Demands, Transitions, Transformations. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
Skidmore College	Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) review of shared governance Review of governance at Amherst College; Carlton College; Mount Holyoke College; Swarthmore College; Williams College	2013	https://www.skidmore.edu/dof-vpaa/meetings/faculty/2012-2013/documents/GovernanceAddendum.pdf
Oregon State University	Joint task force on shared governance Full website of task force, with minutes, resource page, final report...	2010	https://senate.oregonstate.edu/sites/senate.oregonstate.edu/files/joint_task_force_on_shared_governance_faculty_senate_oregon_state_university.pdf

C. National Survey / Research Centers

Host Institution	Project Name	Sub-Project	Link

University of Pennsylvania GSE	Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy (Penn AHEAD)	Penn Project on University Governance	https://www.ahead-penn.org/improving-practice/university-governance
Harvard GSE	Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACH)	National dataset section on faculty experience of shared governance	https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/e/2PACX-1vTWdPvjkGdVVc7hMZJ6M1D7B8xgw4GU2IiF4TTcUSs5GnaIP_MM5btoDz9ux5k65qyYsTYJEyuJpLHo/pubhtml#
American Association of University Professors (AAUP)	Evaluation of Shared Governance	Survey tool	https://www.aaup.org/issues/governance-colleges-universities/evaluation
	Shared Governance Program	Resources on Governance	https://www.aaup.org/our-programs/shared-governance/resources-governance
	Survey on Higher Education Governance	2001 Survey	https://www.aaup.org/NR/rdonlyres/449D4003-EB51-4B8D-9829-0427751FEFE4/0/01Results.pdf
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB)	AGB Knowledge Center	Board Fundamentals Shared Governance	https://agb.org/knowledge-center/board-fundamentals/shared-governance/

D. Literature on Governance

- ○ AAUP

AAUP Committee on College and University Governance. (2014). *Faculty Communication with Governing Boards: Best Practices*. Retrieved from AAUP Policies & Reports: https://www.aaup.org/file/FacultyCommunicationWithGoverningBoards.pdf

- ○ Association of Governing Boards

Lounder, A., Cowdery, K., & AGB. (2016). *Shared Governance: Is OK Good Enough?* Retrieved from Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges: https://agb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/survey_2016_shared_governance.pdf

Maxwell, D., The Teagle Foundation, & ABG. (2017).*Shared Governance: Changing with the Times*. Retrieved from Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges: https://agb.org/sites/default/files/report_2017_shared_governance.pdf

- ○ UPenn Research Center on Governance

Eckel, P. D. (2016). Institutional governance for a shared global engagement mission. *Higher education in the world 6: Towards a socially responsible university: Balancing the global with the local*. Barcelona, Spain: Global University Network for Innovation.

Eckel, P. D., & Trower, C. A. (2016) Boards and institutional diversity: Missed opportunities, points of leverage. New York, NY: TIAA Institute.

- ○ Other

Bulette, E. (2015). *Improving Shared Governance's Effectiveness. A Shared Governance Whitepaper for Trustees, Presidents, Administrators and Faculty*. Retrieved from Bulette Consulting: http://www.buletteconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2015-09-21-WHITEPAPER-on-Shared-Governance.pdf

Chaudhry, S. A. (2015). *Leaders, Faculty, and Administrative Staff Perceptions of the Role of Shared Governance at Public Sector Universities in the USA.*(Ed.D.), Dowling College, Oakdale, New York.

Cramer, S. F. (2017). *Shared Governance in Higher Education, Volume 1: Demands, Transitions, Transformations*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Cramer, S. F. (2020). *Shared Governance in Higher Education, Volume 3 Vitality and Continuity in Times of Change*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Cramer, S. F., & Tamrowski, N. (2018). *Shared Governance in Higher Education: New Paradigms, Evolving Perspectives*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Kezar, A. J., & Holcombe, E. M. (2017) Shared Leadership in Higher Education: Important Lessons from Research and Practice. In A. C. o. Education (Series Ed.). *Viewpoints -voices from the field*. Washington DC: American Council on Education.

Rowlands, J. (2015). *Navigating the 'in between' spaces- beyond the academic-managerialism divide in university governance*. Paper presented at the Universities in the Knowledge Economy, Auckland, NZ.

Simon, B. (2017). Improving shared governance through Bylaws review, revision, and ratification. In S. F. Cramer (Ed.), *Shared Governance in Higher Education, Volume 1: Demands, Transitions, Transformations*.

Williams, M. C. (2015). *The relationship between organizational governance and faculty governance in higher education: A national study of shared governance* (Ed.D.), Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi, Corpus Christi, Texas.

Woodward, W. (2018). Success through Collaboration: Establishing a Stakeholder-Driven Governance Process. *Educause Review*. Retrieved from https://er.educause.edu/articles/2018/9/success-through-collaboration-establishing-a-stakeholder-driven-governance-process
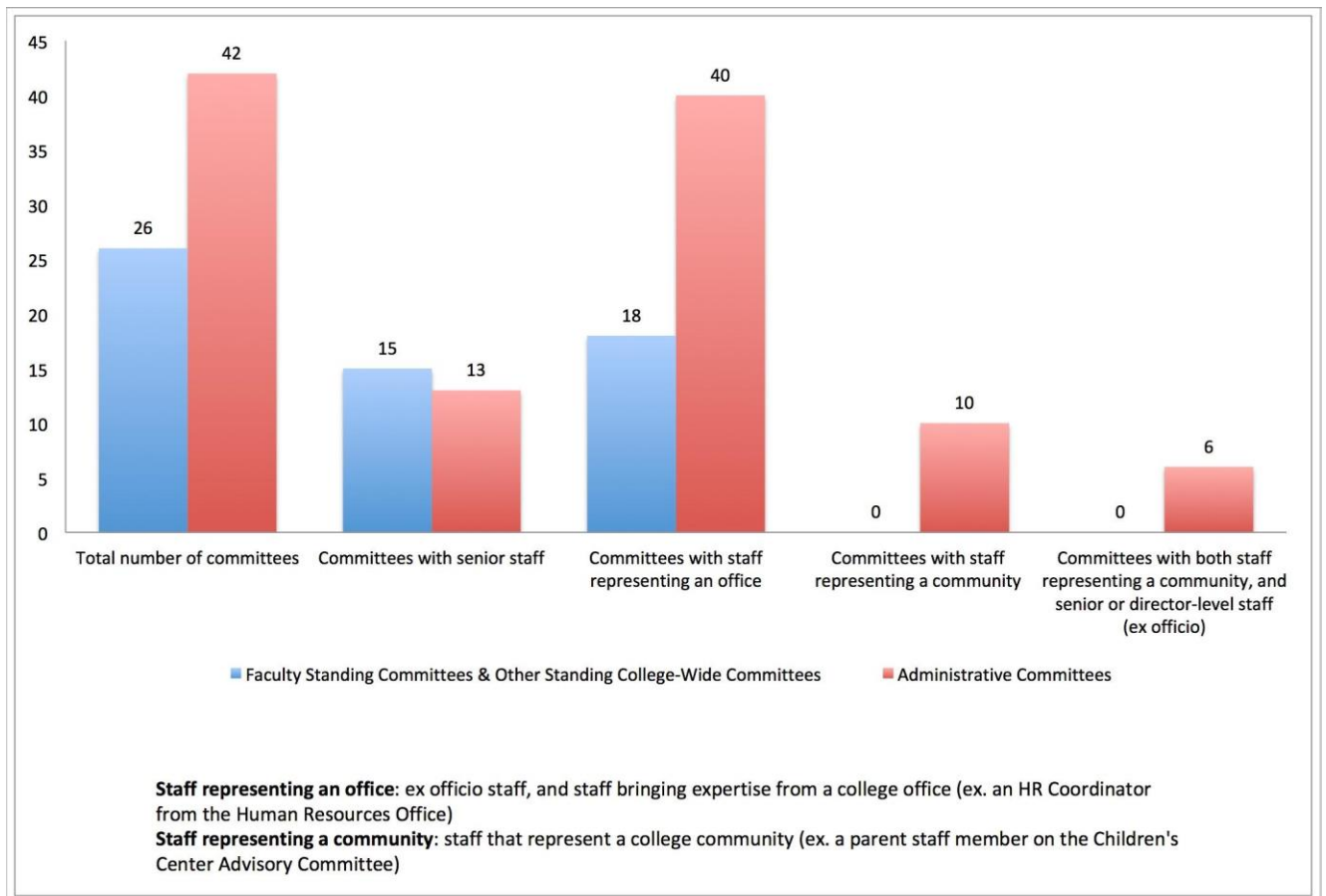
E. Mapping of Williams governance

Over the course of the Fall and Winter 2019, the working group mapped all faculty standing, college-wide, and administrative committees presently working at Williams College. Among elements mapped were (if known): the composition of the committees, how members are elected or selected, lines of reporting, and the advisory or decisional roles of the committee. This information informed the understanding of the working group on who makes decisions, who advises, and who provides expertise in decision-making processes at Williams College. The information also provided a stronger base of comparison when the working group reviewed peer colleges' governance models.

Appendix 3: Review of Williams Committees

    A. Distribution of staff in Williams committees

There are 82 committees at Williams, including 10 Board of Trustees committees, and 4 Investment Office committees whose members are alumni. The chart below represents the distribution of senior staff, ex officio staff and non-ex officio staff, within the remaining 68 on-campus committees (excluding Board of Trustees committees and the 4 Investment Office committees).

The chart below shows where senior staff serve, where staff serve as experts in their field/office, where staff serve as voices for a larger community, and where representatives of a college community serve on committees with senior staff.

B. List of Williams Committees

Williams College governance works through the efforts of 82 committees. 26 of those are faculty standing committees and college-wide, 10 are Board of Trustees committees, and 46 are administrative committees, that fall under the responsibility of 10 senior staff.

Location of Committee	Committee
Faculty Standing Committees	*Elected* ● Committee on Appointments & Promotions ● Committee on Educational Affairs ● Curricular Planning Committee ● Faculty Compensation Committee ● Faculty Steering Committee ● Standing Grievance Panel *Appointed* ● Athletics Committee ● Calendar & Schedule Committee ● Campus Environmental Advisory Committee ● Committee on Academic Standing ● Committee on Admission & Financial Aid ● Committee on Priorities & Resources ● Committee on Student Life ● Faculty Interview Panel ● Honor & Discipline Committee ● Information Technology Committee ● Lecture Committee ● Library Committee ● Special Collections Committee ● Winter Study Program Committee
Other College-wide Standing Committees	● Advisory Committee on Shareholder Responsibility ● Bookstore Committee ● College & Community Advisory Committee

	- Honorary Degrees Advisory Committee - Honor System Committee - Science Executive Committee
Board of Trustees Committees	- Audit Committee - Budget and Finance Committee - Campus Planning and Construction Committee - Committee on College Relations and Public Affairs - Committee on Faculty and Instruction - Committee on Student Experience - Committee on Trustees and Degrees - Evaluation and Compensation Committee - Executive Committee - Investment Committee
Administrative Committees - Dean of Faculty	Bolin Selection Committee
Administrative Committees - Dean of College	- Williams Reads Committee - Fellowship Selection Committees
Administrative Committees - VP of Campus Life	- Upperclass Residential Life Advisory Committee - Conference Advisory Group - Senior Class Events/Senior Week - Student Food Committee
Administrative Committees - VP of Finance and Administration	- Ad Hoc Real Estate Advisory Committee - Risk Management & Compliance Committee - Unique Assets Committee - Trust and Estates Committee - Children's Center Advisory Committee - Staff Advisory Council - Benefits Committee - Retirement Governance - Wellness Committee - Williams Staff Committee - Design Review Committee - Building Committees - Campus Safety Committee - Employee Safety Committee - Safety Advisory Committee
Administrative Committees - Provost	- Data Governance Group - ASTEER - Digital Records Management Committee - Public Art Advisory Committee - Chemical & Biological Safety

	- Human Subjects Review Committee -IRB - Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee - Biosafety Committee - Laser Safety Committee - Radiation Safety Committee
Administrative Committees - VP of Institutional Diversity and Equity	- Diversity Action Research Team - Affirmative Action Advisory Committee - Committee on Diversity and Community - Trans* Inclusion Working Group - Claiming Williams Committee - Dively Committee
Administrative Committees - Chief Communications Officer	Communications Advisory Group
Administrative Committees - Chief Investment Officer	- Trust Administration Committee - Other Assets / Unique Assets - Retirement Plan Governance Committee - Investment Committee - Marketable Assets Committee - Non-Marketable Assets Committee - Real Assets Committee