MEMORANDUM

To:  Dr. Joseph Newpol, Chair of the Bentley Faculty Senate
From:  President Gloria Larson
Date:  28 November 2012

Over the last four decades, Bentley made the challenging transition from a small commuter college with a regional outlook to an internationally recognized business university. Amid the strains that change of this sort usually brings, the ligaments of our shared governance system held up well, supporting a creative dynamic between Faculty, Board, and Administration that made regular institutional improvements possible. However, even good organizational structures require reevaluation and renewal when circumstances demand them. Given the legitimate concerns about shared governance that arose in mid-2011, we need to seize this opportunity to ensure that both cooperation and collaboration remain hallmarks of our university.

Our immediate goals in the report that follows are three-fold:

- Delineate the primary domains of authority and responsibility at Bentley.
- Chart a provisional path toward improved communication and greater trust across the university.
- Document the changes that have been made, or are in process, in response to the shared governance concerns expressed in Faculty Senate in fall 2011, and explain the reasoning behind them.

Our primary purpose is to help Bentley maintain its dedication to student education and intellectual innovation by strengthening time-tested and sustainable norms of shared governance. These are essential conditions for sustaining a collegial and stimulating work environment and an institution worthy of the time and energy dedicated to its improvement.

Since the task force convened, a number of measures have been implemented to begin restoring trust and a commitment to our common enterprise. Further measures are in process that, together with the broader recommendations that follow, will help us honor our primary responsibility as an educational community. These changes are intended to cultivate a free and constructive exchange of ideas between all Bentley stakeholders and maximum feasible transparency in institutional management, with the larger object of ensuring that Bentley remains an exciting and welcoming place to educate and innovate.

Bentley’s governance practices have been influenced by the challenges emerging across higher education where the forces of demographic change and competitive pressure have tempted some institutions to transform collegiate structures into top-down corporate structures. The task force recognizes the importance of conscientious adaption to a difficult higher education environment. Concerns about future revenue streams and existing financial liabilities are very real. Bentley needs to address these forces by appreciating the roles and leveraging the creative strengths of all in collaborative planning and strategy efforts. The following report is intended to help us achieve that end.
Shared Governance at Bentley University

**Members**:¹

Chris Beneke, Associate Professor, History Department  
Ann Dexter, Executive Director of Human Resources  
Beverley Earle, Adamian Professor of Law and Chair, Law, Tax and Financial Planning Department  
Gloria Larson, President  
Aaron Nurick, Professor, Management Department  
Michael J. Page, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Andrew Shepardson, Dean of Student Affairs  
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**Advisors**:  
Judith Malone, Bentley University General Counsel  
Judith Block McLaughlin, Director of the Higher Education Program, Harvard Graduate School of Education

**Governance at Bentley University and collegial relationships between the Faculty, Administration, and the Board of Trustees are crucial for the university to fulfill its purpose as a non-profit educational institution that is financially sound and able to further its mission**² “to educate creative, ethical, and socially responsible organizational leaders by creating and disseminating impactful knowledge within and across business and the arts & sciences”. Following a call from the Faculty Senate in the fall of 2011, President Gloria Larson established a Shared Governance Task Force to clarify Bentley’s approach to shared-governance and explore opportunities for improving relationships between Faculty, Administration, and Board. President Larson requested that the discussions and recommendations of the Task Force should be oriented to developing better communications and greater trust between groups on campus and, thereby, improving the university’s ability to work collaboratively to develop and implement its strategic plan.

Nurturing healthy shared governance is crucial both to Bentley’s internal vitality and to its standing among its peers. The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) recently reaffirmed the belief that how boards, presidents, and faculty contribute to and engage one another in institutional governance speaks to the health of a particular college or university as well as to the principles of autonomy, self-regulation, and accountability of higher education (Schwartz, Skinner & Bowen, 2009: 3). Recognizing this, the mandate set for the President’s Shared Governance Task Force that was endorsed by the Senate Planning Committee states:

*The shared governance task force will explore the relationship of the faculty and the administration (President’s Cabinet as well as Board of Trustees) and look for ways to develop improved communication among those groups as well as develop avenues for faculty to provide input into the key issues facing the institution.*

¹ President Larson established the mandate and composition of the Shared Governance Task Force in consultation with Michael Page (Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs), Andrew Aylesworth (Faculty Senate Chair), and Joseph Newpol (Senate Vice-Chair). The mandate was also discussed among the members of the Senate Planning Committee.  
² Achieving the Business University: Bentley University 2013 – 2017
In order to deliver upon this mandate, the Task Force, articulated three objectives; namely to: (1) create a greater shared understanding of what is understood by governance and how the governance authority of the Faculty and the Administration should be broadly viewed; (2) address and reflect upon the delivery responsibilities that accompany these governance authority domains; and (3) explore avenues that will reestablish and reinvigorate communication flows and trust between the key stakeholder groups. We hope that the framework document will also be helpful for the Board of Trustees.

Early in its deliberations the Task Force developed a keen appreciation that explicit statements of authority, rules and procedure are considerably less critical to good governance than creating a culture that is summed up in the expression: Trust in People, Trust in Process. The Task Force adopted this phrase as a guiding principle when developing its recommendations and as a goal of the changes outlined in the following pages.

The report deliberately avoids going into excessive detail about duties, authorities, and responsibilities of the parties to shared-governance. Rather, it highlights several key principles that the Task Force believes are essential to reaffirm Bentley’s commitment to substantive shared governance and to ensure that this commitment is honored in the interests of the students that the university serves. Lengthy discussions were held concerning the issue of timely, honest, and open communication among key stakeholders of both a formal and informal nature. In particular, the Task Force reflected upon perceptions that the university had experienced a loss of academic community combined with a commensurate growth of corporate culture that had drawn Bentley away from its core educational commitments. As this report discusses below, the Task Force appreciates that current economic realities and changes in the higher education landscape mean that Bentley will have to manage itself in an increasingly agile and disciplined manner. However, it believes that successful adaption to new circumstances is best achieved through dialogue in a collegial environment, and that achieving Bentley’s educational mission depends on open communication and mutual cooperation between faculty and administration.

What shared governance entails

The explicit trust that is understood to exist between the mission of an organization and those whom the organization serves (BoardSource, 2010: 15) requires that we also address the authority and responsibilities of the officers and administrative officials of the university that are appointed by the Board, and the authority and responsibilities of the Faculty. The essence of the relationship between the three stakeholder groups is depicted in Exhibit 1.

- The Board of Trustees, as the primary fiduciary, is responsible for securing the long-term health of the university and for ensuring that it delivers on its core mission. To this end, it: (a) appoints the president, officers and administrative officials; (b) approves the strategy, budget and financial plan; (c) authorizes investment and divestment, raising capital, degrees that may be offered, tenure and executive compensation; and (d) seeks out and secures qualified candidates for appointment to the Board of Trustees.
- Officers of the university serve as agents of the Board of Trustees. They are responsible for: (a) ongoing administration and management of the university; (b) developing the strategy and ensuring its successful implementation; and (c) ensuring that operational decisions and choices made are fiscally sound, consistent with the mission of the university, and do not jeopardize its future.

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3 Administration refers to the cabinet or the officers of the university.
4 The Task Force would like to acknowledge and thank Judith Block McLaughlin for the expression “Trust in People, Trust in Process” that she proposed during our early discussion as potentially very relevant for Bentley and the reflections of the Task Force.
5 This includes authorizing tuition increases and fees charged to students.
6 Beyond this the Board also approves sabbatical leave, emeriti appointments, and honorary degrees.
7 The officers fulfill this role in tandem with the Board of Trustees and in dialogue with the Faculty.
• The Faculty is primarily responsible for educating the students of the university while expanding the boundaries of knowledge through scholarship and research. More specifically, the Faculty Senate and General Faculty, with the support of academic administrators, are charged with maintaining the quality and relevance of teaching and scholarship.

Exhibit 1 highlights the bilateral relationships between the three stakeholder groups that are essential to good governance. It is intended to convey that:

• Trustees and executive officers need to engage in open dialogue for the development and implementation of a sustainable strategy, as well to ensure that the needed financial, human, technological, and physical infrastructure is in place to deliver on the mission.
• Trustees, principally through the board committee system, and executive officers need to confer regularly with Faculty leadership to develop a shared understanding of the resources needed to both deliver a first-rate university education, support the personal and professional growth of students, and conduct internationally recognized research.
• That the Faculty leadership will be able to make better decisions by having a better understanding of the constraints within which the university has to operate, and by appreciating that trustees have the best interests of the university in mind even when their perspectives, concern for resources and market dynamics, and timeline appear to differ from what faculty might deem appropriate.
• Finally, that the Board of Trustees, executive officers, and Faculty leadership are aligned in their desire to achieve the education mission of the university. And that it is only through continual dialogue (bilateral and multilateral) that stakeholders can join around a shared vision for the university.

Exhibit 1: Relationships across three primary stakeholders
Authorities and responsibilities: An overview

Across the nation and the globe, university governance has changed substantially over the last few decades for multiple internal and external reasons. The authorities and responsibilities presented below are those most often at the source of contention among stakeholders. Clarifying these is essential as Bentley strives to increase trust and collective engagement in the pursuit of the university’s core purpose and mission.

Board of Trustees: Trustees are the primary fiduciaries of the university. The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges describes their duties in a way that emphasizes their legal and ethical responsibilities. Trustees govern within a long-standing tradition, with responsibility for the public trust, for the future of the institution, and for the benefit of current and future students.

Beyond appointing the president and executive officers, and conferring tenure, trustees typically exercise their ongoing authorities over strategy, budgeting and capital expenditure through the executive officers. The president and executive officers are expected to develop the strategy and financial plan following appropriate internal dialogue, and present them to the trustees for their consideration, input, and approval as appropriate. Trustees generally do not propose but rather react to proposals when exercising their authority. They carry out their responsibilities by fully informing themselves prior to making critical decisions. As part of the process, the board ensures that the opinions of stakeholder groups have been honestly solicited and fairly considered.

To enhance the board’s capacity to make decisions based on what is happening in classrooms, on campus, and across the scholarly world, the task force recommends the following:

- **Fuller faculty representative engagement in appropriate committee deliberations:** Exhibit 2 presents specific initiatives that have begun or are suggested as worthy of implementation. In addition, active inclusion of Faculty representatives leading up to and during the trustee committees on which they serve needs to be further advanced. Faculty leadership may be invited to attend the non-executive sessions of Board of Trustees committees meetings as appropriate. Informal discussion might be enhanced by increasing the number and range of academics that are invited to social events that surround formal trustee meetings and other university occasions that trustees attend.

- **Inclusion of several qualified academics as full members of the Board:** The Task Force feels that increasing the number of qualified academic trustees would improve the capacity of the Board to assess the academic challenges facing the university, helping to ensure that decisions made by the Board relating to curricula and program development, tenure, and sabbaticals, are consistent with best practice and the longer-term interests of the university. Consistent with the views of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (Schwartz, Skinner & Bowen, 2009) the university should expedite the appointment of another external academic trustee. We recommend that the Board explore whether the bylaws should reflect a desired number of academic trustees. Though internal academics do have a limited presence in some university

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8 Research by Marginson and Considine (2000) into changes in university governance within the Australian tertiary education sector reflects contemporary concerns for United States tertiary education institutions. As such, they provide an excellent context within which the relationship and communication challenges facing Bentley University might be interpreted. Four points raised by the authors that have been highlighted subsequently include: (1) universities are now defined by strong forms of executive control; (2) traditional forms of academic governance have lost a good deal of authority, particularly at faculty, school and departmental level and the lack of resource control by the academic authority has increasingly marginalized it; (3) non-academic divisions are increasingly run in a business-like fashion with governing boards making decisions that are increasingly determined by business and consumption models; and (4) teaching, learning and research are subject to a ‘dual structure’ of corporate and academic practices with the former playing an increasingly influential role in the culture of the university (Marginson, 2001).


10 In this context, the term “external academics” includes retired Bentley faculty such as emeriti professors. The Association of Governing Boards does not recommend internal faculty members serve on boards and states: “Faculty service on boards is relatively rare and is not recommended by AGB ... However, including higher education expertise on the board is highly desirable” (Schwartz, Skinner & Bowen, 2009: 13).
boards, the task force’s consensus is that internal Faculty endorsed appointees will be less effective than their external counterparts.\textsuperscript{11}

Further recommendations from the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges that have a bearing on the role of the Board of Trustees include articulating that board leadership and senior administrators (the executive) should engage in ongoing discussions concerning education quality and Faculty responsibility for shaping the education agenda.\textsuperscript{12}

**Executive** Guided by the president, Bentley’s divisional officers work together, and with personnel within their respective divisions, to develop and periodically update the strategic plan of the university. Once approved, they are then responsible for ensuring its successful implementation and for making fiscally sound operational decisions that further the achievement of the strategic intent of the institution. They are authorized to do this within the context of the university’s mission, and in a manner that manages its risk exposure and does not jeopardize its longer-term viability and competitive positioning.

The president is the chief executive officer of the university with overall authority and responsibility for the operations and management of the institution. These authorities and responsibilities are fulfilled through the academic and other administrative officials of the university. Consistent with the collegial character of the university, the president’s vision for the university is established following consultation with internal stakeholder groups, especially Faculty Senate and department chairs. Annual budgets and longer-term financial plans are developed for each of the operating divisions in a similarly engaged process both within and across the divisions. Once the strategic direction and budgets have been established and approved, Bentley’s executive team\textsuperscript{13} is tasked with overseeing that the resources of the university are directed towards achieving established goals. Fiduciary responsibilities imposed on the executive team means that all officers of the university have shared responsibility for the performance of the university and that they cannot restrict their oversight role exclusively to their own divisions.

Academic administration\textsuperscript{14} occupies something of a dual role within the framework of governance. On the one hand, the provost and deans are an integral part of the overall administration with all the authority and responsibilities that come with being part of the extended leadership team of the university. On the other hand, academic administration has the responsibility of representing the Faculty’s perspective on issues of strategic and organizational importance.

Executive effectiveness in the sustained collegial environment aspired to for Bentley can be enhanced by:

- **More advanced consultation, and better follow-on communication, of administrative decisions:** Sustaining a collegial university climate requires a high degree of early consultation among stakeholder groups broadly, and the Faculty in particular. This does not suggest that the authority of the president and the officers is diminished in any way. Rather, the duty of the executive is to openly solicit opinion and dialogue in a manner

\textsuperscript{11} The task force is less concerned about potential conflicts of interest that faculty endorsed internal academics may experience when exercising their fiduciary duty to support the longer-term interests of the institution than it is about the effectiveness of such appointees.

\textsuperscript{12} Specifically, the AGB recommends that board leadership and senior administrators: should: (1) intentionally incorporate discussions of educational quality in new-trustee orientation programs, education programs, and the annual agendas of the board and its various committees; (2) hold structured discussions with faculty members, key administrators, and outside experts to help develop the board’s understanding of these issues (Association of Governing Boards, 2011: 3); and (3) recognize that faculty members and academic administrators shape the approaches to assess the outcomes of student learning, and that boards should not micromanage this work, but that the board is ultimately responsible for ensuring that assessment takes place and that results lead to action for improvement (Association of Governing Boards, 2011: 6).

\textsuperscript{13} From a legal standpoint, the executive team is composed of those members of the President’s Cabinet that have been appointed as officers of the university in terms of its bylaws.

\textsuperscript{14} Academic Administration refers to the Office of the Provost and the Deans’ Council.
that allows for the incorporation of substantive community input before making key resource decisions and communicate back to the community what decisions have been made, why they have been made, and how the university will execute them.

- **Academic administration engagement with Faculty**: Given the dual role of academic administration, it has a greater duty to engage and communicate with the various bodies through which the Faculty exercises its governance responsibilities. Academic administration must contribute to bringing the perspectives of the Board and executive to the attention of the Faculty as well as assist Faculty\textsuperscript{15} in bringing its concerns and perspectives to the attention of the Board and executive officers. Academic administration is responsible for seeking meaningful and timely input from Faculty leadership, and for advocating on behalf of joint and Faculty recommendations\textsuperscript{16} concerning appointments, sabbaticals, grievances and academic standards.

Initiatives that have been implemented or are in process since last fall are further outlined in Exhibit 2.

**Faculty**: The Faculty has primary authority over the academic offerings of the university and shared responsibility with the administration in development of the mission and strategy, as well as in the subsequent successful implementation of the approved strategic agenda.

In exercising its authority to author, approve, and evaluate courses and degrees, the Faculty’s primary decision criteria are the quality, standards, and relevance of student learning and scholarship. Current and future resource limitations are understood and reflected upon as constraints that influence the decisions made. The Faculty delivers on its governance mandate through the academic departments, through Senate, and through General Faculty. It does this with the support of academic administration, and according to policies and procedures prescribed in the Faculty Manual.

Beyond its primary authority and responsibility, the Faculty has further shared responsibility. Working in concert with academic administration, the Faculty contributes to broad university imperatives and to the development of the Faculty itself by: (1) reflecting on the mission and budget of the university; (2) contributing to developing and subsequently adjusting the strategic plan; (3) making recommendations about resource priorities; (4) making recommendations concerning the appointment of senior administrators; (5) establishing policies for faculty appointments, retention, development and promotion; (6) implementing in terms of established policies; and, (7) developing the university calendar.

Finally, given the centrality of academics to the mission of the university, Faculty leadership is invited to give advice and contribute across a broad range of university matters that are formally outside of the domain of academic affairs.

In performing its primary, shared and advisory responsibilities, Faculty is expected to achieve:

- **Active participation in faculty governance and active communication by faculty representatives**: Faculty members deliver on their individual responsibility over academic process by serving on Faculty and other university-wide committees. This means that transparent and frequent communication and high levels of engagement are essential for Faculty participation in shared governance. Successful execution of Faculty’s primary, joint, and advisory responsibilities can only be achieved if faculty members are fully informed and if mechanisms exist to encourage them to play an active role. This obligates elected and appointed faculty and academic administrators to communicate regularly, to provide necessary information for informed participation by Bentley’s academics, and to appropriately and widely solicit their opinions when making decisions.

\textsuperscript{15} The Provost and deans meet this responsibility by ensuring that the perspectives and concerns they articulate represent the broad views of the Faculty as a body rather than opinions of a vocal minority within the academic community.

\textsuperscript{16} Academic Administration sometimes advocates for joint Faculty/Academic Administration recommendations or directly on behalf of Faculty.
decisions. Equally, it requires that faculty members ensure they keep themselves informed through appropriate proactive engagement. Proposals to encourage greater and more effective participation of the academic community are presented in Exhibit 2.

- **Timely evaluation and decision-making**: The Faculty must make timely decisions that enable the entire university community to appropriately pursue Bentley’s vision, mission and strategy. Consequently, the Faculty needs to continually reflect upon whether existing practices remain appropriate for delivering on the imperatives of quality education and scholarship. Such reflections should include whether existing committees have the necessary authority and capacity to deliver on their mandates, and whether the allocation of decision authority across departments, Senate, and General Faculty is appropriate.

**Exhibit 2: Initiatives already undertaken and in process or proposed**

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<tr>
<th>Trustee level initiatives</th>
<th>Chair, President, Trustee Affairs Committee</th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Add a further academic appointment to the Board of Trustees (already appointed are two academic trustees plus a third academic as Trustee of Counsel)</td>
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<td>2 Encourage a greater atmosphere of transparency by reinvigorating the role of Faculty representatives during committee preparation and the meetings themselves</td>
<td>Trustee committee chairs</td>
<td>10/2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Seek informal and formal opportunities to engage a broader cross-section of the Faculty and staff members</td>
<td>Trustees, divisional officers, and Faculty leadership</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<th>Executive and officer level initiatives</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Include the Senate chair at the president’s leadership team meetings</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>10/2011</td>
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<td>2 Expand community Town Hall meetings and more fully engage senior administrators to increase the breadth of information disclosure and opportunity for dialogue</td>
<td>Cabinet with the support of Faculty leadership to increase attendance</td>
<td>12/2011</td>
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<td>3 Ensure more forums and strategic reflections include faculty representation such as those related to recent brand strategy development</td>
<td>Cabinet and Faculty leadership</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td>4 Shift in reporting structures with the Executive Director of Human Resources reporting directly to the President and becoming a member of the President’s Cabinet</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>09/2011</td>
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<td>5 Engage Faculty leadership during policy discussions related to broader human resources issues</td>
<td>Executive Director of Human Resources</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td>6 Increase information flows to Faculty concerning academic administration deliberations</td>
<td>Academic administration and Faculty leadership</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<th>Faculty leadership initiatives</th>
<th>Faculty leadership and academic administration</th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Encourage greater engagement in broad affairs of the University as part of (senior) Faculty members service loads</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Improve communication flows to and from individuals about, and to support, Faculty engagement</td>
<td>Faculty leadership</td>
<td>Proposed</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Look for approaches to expedite decision making while respecting transparent engagement and developing and demonstrating trust (among various Faculty bodies)</td>
<td>Faculty leadership with the support of academic administration</td>
<td>Proposed</td>
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17 Jeroen van den Hoven (10/10), Delft University of Technology, W. Carl Kester (10/12) and Rosabeth Moss Kanter (7/10), Harvard University

18 These committees include: (1) Academic Affairs; (2) Student Affairs; and (3) Facilities
Communication and Trust

The manner in which communication and trust reinforce one another in organizations is recognized in both the academic and professional literature (Lyman, 2003; Hurley, 2006; Thomas, Zolin & Hartman, 2009).

In recommending formal and informal measures to improve communication and enhance trust within our community and reaffirm Bentley’s commitment to the principle of shared governance, the Task Force endorses the view expressed by the president of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges in response to recent events at the University of Virginia. We believe that his views resonate well with those held by Bentley’s board, administration, and faculty, namely:

\textit{While the times have established new and expanded obligations for governing boards, an appropriate governance process coupled with respect for a shared-governance process should remain a fundamental tenet on any campus} (Legon, 2012: 8).

Conclusion

Only through a renewed commitment to open communication can we strengthen the trust and institutional loyalty that are essential to Bentley’s future success. A healthy relationship between faculty and administration is critical to sustaining a community in which honest and responsible dialogue takes place. This entails that faculty can and do provide regular input concerning the central issues facing the university – a community where process is trusted because people are trusted.

Bentley’s faculty and staff are the primary assets that make it possible for us to adapt and prosper as an institution. Few, if any, of our ambitious strategic priorities will be achievable without the fresh infusion of new ideas and regular feedback that comes from a culture of mutual trust – a culture where communication is open and honest consultation is regular. The Task Force considers the initiatives described herein as important steps toward achieving this goal. Responsible \textit{shared governance} is essential for an institution to thrive in today’s challenging higher education environment.

References


\footnote{Improved communication among the various internal stakeholder groups undoubtedly improves trust. Equally, as trust improves, the tenor and perceived value of formal and informal communication elevates. Hurley’s (2006: 4) ten-factor model for determining the extent that someone is trusted includes seven situational factors that critically include the quality of communication between the parties. He suggests that those seeking to build trust need to increase the frequency and candor of their communications and build relationships beyond the constraints of their respective roles (2006: 7). In addition, and certainly in a perception sense, five others may be considered to be influenced by communication, namely: security; interest alignment; benevolent concern; capability; and predictability and integrity. Beyond looking for avenues to increase direct communication as a means of building trust and engagement, the initiatives described in Exhibit 2 should also impact upon these over time and support an improved culture at Bentley.}


