

**MOUNT SAINT MARY COLLEGE**  
**Newburgh, New York 12550**

From 1963 to 1968, **Dr. Roland Whittaker** served as professor of chemistry and chairman of the chemistry department at Mount Saint Mary College. From 1964 to 1968, he filled the position of assistant to the president, and was selected as academic dean in 1966. Upon his retirement in May of 1968, he was awarded the first Faculty Award and received the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. After serving on the Board of Trustees for several years, he returned to the college as its provost to assist in the transition between presidents when Sister Mary Francis McDonald, second college president, was elected as superior general of the Dominican Sisters of Newburgh in 1971. As provost, he met with some faculty members in the summer of 1971 to answer their questions on governance and procedures at the college. His address follows.

**Governance and Procedures**

**Dr. Roland Whittaker**

The whole complex machine functions by authority of and in accordance with sections of the education law of the state of New York. This is important to remember because many things done at the college are required by law or State regulations that are set up as a consequence of the law. The only way we here at the college can change that situation is via the legislature, the Regents, etc. Our chances of ever doing that are slight because any change at the state level influences every college and university in the state. In simplest terms, the state law allows a Board of Trustees to establish and operate the college within the law and regulations of the state.

In effect, the Board of Trustees is the Board of Directors of a non-profit corporation known as Mount Saint Mary College. This Board is responsible to and chartered by the state to carry out certain educational operations. As long as it operates according to state regulations, the Board has complete responsibility and authority for all college activities. I repeat, all activities and functions of the college: its buildings, its grounds, its curriculum, its administration, its students,

everything. The members of the Board are busy people who donate much valuable time to the college, but they cannot actually be on hand to operate the college from day to day. They must appoint someone to be their executive officer. That executive officer is the president of the college.

The bylaws of the college are the written rules and regulations set up by the board for the operation of the college. Listen carefully as I read from the bylaws of the college concerning the president. This is article X: “The president of the college shall be the chief executive officer of the college, shall be the advisor and executive agent of the Board of Trustees and have immediate supervision with full discretionary power in carrying into effect the bylaws, resolutions, and policies of the board. Shall have the affirmative responsibility of conserving and enhancing the educational standards of the college, and shall exercise general superintendence over the concerns of the college, its officers, its employees, and students to appropriate delegation of duties and responsibilities to subordinate administrative officers and faculty.”

The bylaws also refer again to the delegation of duties and responsibilities in another bylaw. This is section XIV: “The president of the college shall establish an administrative code for the college to indicate in some details the manner in which the president is delegating responsibility and authority to the various administrative officers and faculty of the college, and to indicate the channels of procedures, regulations, and conduct of ordinary business of the college. The administrative code shall be established and modified solely on the authority of the president.

Before going on, please note that the entire conduct of the college rests in the president’s hands, subject only to the delegation of such responsibilities as seen desirable. Of course, a great deal is delegated via the administrative code to various administrators and to the faculty. One other point should be noted. Since the president determines the channels, procedures and regulations for the conduct of business, perhaps the president is the best person to consult when you want to find out how to get something done.

Now note what the bylaws say about the faculty and the Faculty Senate. I quote, “the faculty shall have the responsibility for considering and recommending to the president of the college all educational policies of the college including the subject matter of courses, general methods of instruction, the library, standards for admission of students, academic standards, and performance of students’ extra-curricular activities, working conditions, and welfare of the faculty, the academic calendar, general academic development of the college, and public relations.”

The term extra-curricular activities covers everything outside the curriculum: the courses in the classrooms and credit earning aspects of the curriculum. As the faculty grew, it became difficult to find a time when all were free to meet. A smaller group, the Faculty Senate, is an elected representative group that has all the functions of the faculty and can be over-ruled only by a majority of the entire faculty. In this talk we can use the term faculty and Faculty Senate interchangeably.

There are two important points to note. First, the faculty and Faculty Senate consider and recommend to the president concerning a variety of items. The responsibility and authority for decision rests with the president. In the history of the college, this college particularly, there has been very few situations in which the president did not carry out faculty recommendations. Usually any failure to follow faculty recommendations has been due to a lack of funds for some specific purpose. Because this is true we sometimes forget that a recommendation of the faculty is a recommendation and not a legislative edict to be carried out.

The second point about the faculty or Faculty Senate is that there is almost no phase of college life with which they are not concerned and should not make recommendations. From the students’ viewpoint, the faculty is concerned with everything within and without the classroom. This covers the entire student existence. Over the years many items have been considered by the faculty and decisions made by the president. These have been passed on or delegated to various groups, councils, committees, administrators or departments to carry out. So that now, only when changes are made or old procedures discontinued, is it

necessary to have faculty and presidential action. Not everyone can be an expert in all things. Much of the work of the faculty is done through committees which report to the faculty. Presumably persons serving on a committee have a chance to become more familiar with specific areas of action.

Your Student Affairs Council is in reality a special type of committee. I can tell you a little bit of why the name council is used rather than committee. At the time we were organizing and delegating certain functions to what is now your group, there were some faculty members objecting to students serving on faculty committees as equals of faculty members. By calling it a council we avoided the objection that students serve as full-fledged members of a faculty committee. Does all this sound complicated? It does and it is. After about four-five years of this business, I sometimes wonder if I can find my way through the maze. However, the situation is much the same in any college or university.

We, here at Mount Saint Mary College, have bylaws, administrative code, faculty handbooks, student handbooks, and a directory of committees, all of which are more or less explicit in their instructions as to how to find your way through administrative conglomeration. In fact, we have been highly complemented on our procedures and our set-up. In the light of this complex structure, I will now try to answer the questions present in the report of your meeting of June 2, 1971, but not necessarily in the order given.

First, what is the role of the president? Excepting only the Board of Trustees, the president is the top-level decision maker, policy maker and procedure determiner of the college. However, experience has taught me that this top level, last decision type of role is only a part of what the president can do. Since the president must be the final decision-maker, it is often best to talk over a proposal with the president before any serious steps are taken. I refer, of course, to business that seems to be quite new or different.

Some proposal that seems unique to us here at the college can be investigated by a preliminary approach, through which you may learn several things. You may find out that if you go through the proper channels, the president would go along with your proposal when it eventually reaches that office. You might be told why

your proposal could not and would not be approved. The reason might be some state regulation, a board regulation, or just lack of money or space. Perhaps more important, and since the president has made the administrative code and is presumably familiar with the channels for doing business, you may be told to whom and how to present your proposal. These preliminary discussions let the president know what is in the works and serve as a good contact between whoever it is and the president. That is real communication.

Another question, type problem should come to the Faculty Senate and what can be handled by the Student Affairs Council? I cannot be specific here, because many files of years ago, dating back to when the Faculty Senate first set up the Student Affairs Council, were left behind when I retired in 1968. However, the Dean of Students would have the original statement as well as any changes since. The bylaws of the Student Affairs Council simply say that the council is to evaluate all aspects of student life under its jurisdiction. Note that it does not spell out what is under its jurisdiction. Probably the best advice I can give you is this: when considering anything for which there appears to be no precedent, something new, something different, something unique, go get advice as to your jurisdiction and best procedure. The stranger and the more unique the proposal is, the higher you should go for your advice.

Remember, the president must evaluate and decide, and the more unique or different a proposal is, the more that official should know about it well in advance. It's always embarrassing and a cause for friction when some item goes through proper channels but must be turned down or modified by the President. Confrontation should be avoided out of consideration and respect for all concerned. Strictly speaking, all matters of student life are the concern of the Faculty Senate. But unless it is without precedent, or represents a real change, the chances are that at some time in the past, your proposal was passed on to the Student Affairs Council by the Faculty Senate. The key to all of this is to remember that the role of the faculty and the Faculty Senate is to consider and recommend matters in just about all areas, including all that involves students in or out of curricular works. This implies that the various actions and areas of activity and authority delegated to students exist because some recommendation

has been put into force by the president or board sometime in the past. If you want to change the nature of these actions, or extend the areas of activity or authority, you must consider and recommend to the faculty, which in turn will consider and recommend to the president. It is the heavy responsibility of the president as agent of the board to make the final decision or, if necessary, pass the proposal on to the Board of Trustees for action if a change in bylaw or board policy is required. Sometimes much friction is generated because we forget that actions at certain levels may be recommendations and not regulations or edict.

Another question: how can the channels of communication between Student Affairs Council and the senate be improved? Well, think back to my remarks about council versus committee, and regardless of names, you function pretty much as a committee. Now, some members of the senate are members of the Student Affairs Council. They should make frequent brief reports of what is going on in the Council, and in the reverse direction, they should pass out information concerning what business of the Senate is related to the Council.

When the issue indicates the need of Faculty Senate consideration, there is no reason why we should not invite a student or student representative of the council to attend the meetings of the senate at which that item of business is to be considered. This question of communication relates to all portions of our college life, not just the senate and the council. The solution is for people to knock on doors, sit down and talk.

Finally, a personal word from me: for the most part, the title president, in all I have said, now applies to me. As provost, for a temporary period, I will be carrying out the duties of the president. The fact that I have found time to tape this should indicate my willingness to work with the entire college family, especially if students or members of the council as individuals are invited to arrange to talk with me. We may have to select some odd hours to do it, but communication requires effort in both directions. I hope this lengthy talk will point the way to find some answers. Thank you.