Effective communication is one of the biggest challenges of shared governance. When I hear "I didn't know about that or "I was not consulted," I start wondering where the mechanisms of shared governance need to be lubricated. As I think about all the emails, telephone calls, committee meetings, forums, senate meetings, memos, electronic publications...all the time and expense of trying to communicate across campus...I wonder how on earth these gaps could occur. Yet, I know that they happen because we all are inadequate at times in the reciprocal phenomenon we call "communication."

Some questions to ask when these feelings of exclusion happen:

1. What was my role in this decision? Was it determinative, consultative or informational? (As suggested by the Association of American Governing Boards in "Board Responsibility for Institutional Governance," January 22, 2010).
2. Is this one of those decisions that, within a shared governance system, was someone else's purview?
3. Was I paying attention to developments regarding this issue? E.g., attending meetings, reading memos, asking pertinent questions?
4. If I was not in the loop at the appropriate stage of decision-making, where did the communication break down? If my shared governance representative(s) didn't include me in a timely fashion, what can I do to help them do a better job in the future?
5. Am I feeling this way because I didn't know what was happening, wasn't given a chance for input, or because I don't concur with the decision? "Communication" and "consensus" are different, sometimes dramatically so.

Shared governance at MOSO is fledgling. Even as it matures, it will never be perfect because our communication will never be perfect. All we can do is be proud of the progress that has been made, commit to continual improvement, expect accountability, yet refrain from blaming when things don't go smoothly.