



# REVITALIZING YOUR LIBRARY FACULTY GOVERNANCE

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Ashley T. Hoffman  
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# ABOUT ME

**Ashley T. Hoffman**

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- 11 years in academic libraries
- Served as chair of the Library Faculty Assembly from 2018–2019
- Academic background in political science and international studies



# WHO ARE YOU?

- Tenured or tenure-track faculty librarian
- Non-tenure track faculty librarian
- Librarian or library-worker without faculty status
- Curious interloper (please comment!)

POLL

# BACKGROUND

Ashley T. Hoffman

## Revitalizing your library faculty governance

Five tips to increase involvement

If you're an academic librarian with faculty status, you know that this status comes with an equal portion of benefit and burden. Some of the benefits are academic freedom, support for scholarship, and elevated status on campus (though not necessarily higher pay). Some library faculty are even eligible for tenure (though at my institution, Kennesaw State University, we are not). On the flipside of these benefits are a few things I would consider burdens, such as tedious annual reviews and extensive service requirements. Library faculty governance, I would argue, falls somewhere in between a benefit and a burden.

Library faculty governance is a form of shared governance allowing library faculty to assemble, discuss pertinent issues, and communicate recommendations or complaints to library and university administration. Shared faculty governance has several layers, starting at the university department level, such as our library faculty governance, then moving up to the university's Faculty Senate, where every department has a representative. Shared faculty governance extends even beyond the university level to organizations such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which has local chapters with representatives for each university. According to a 2009 column in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, shared governance is a "delicate balance between faculty and staff participation in planning and decision-making processes, on the one hand, and administrative

accountability on the other."<sup>1</sup> In my experience, library faculty governance is the perfect avenue to discuss significant topics affecting our work, such as the process of evaluating librarian scholarship, the implementation of new university policies, or a decision by library administration. While all actual authority comes from library and university administration, library faculty governance is our voice in the decision-making process.

### Background

While the aims of shared governance are commendable, anyone who has actually attended a meeting of library faculty governance may agree when I say that this benefit is equal parts burden. I vividly recall my first Library Faculty Assembly meeting as a new librarian at Kennesaw State University in 2016. I remember the meeting especially because once before, when I was still a paraprofessional at this same organization, I accidentally walked into a Library Faculty Assembly meeting. As I did, a hush came over the room, as if I had violated some sanctum reserved for those who had completed their MLIS and crossed into the realm of the professional librarian. No one kicked me out, but I was so overcome with the

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# OVERVIEW

- Defining shared governance
  - What is it and why doesn't it work sometimes?
- Revitalizing faculty governance
  - 5 tips to increase faculty involvement
  - Some of your advice, too!
- Let's discuss!



A person is paragliding over a vast mountain range. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, and the mountains are rugged and rocky, with some green grass on the lower slopes. The overall scene is serene and adventurous.

# DEFINING SHARED FACULTY GOVERNANCE

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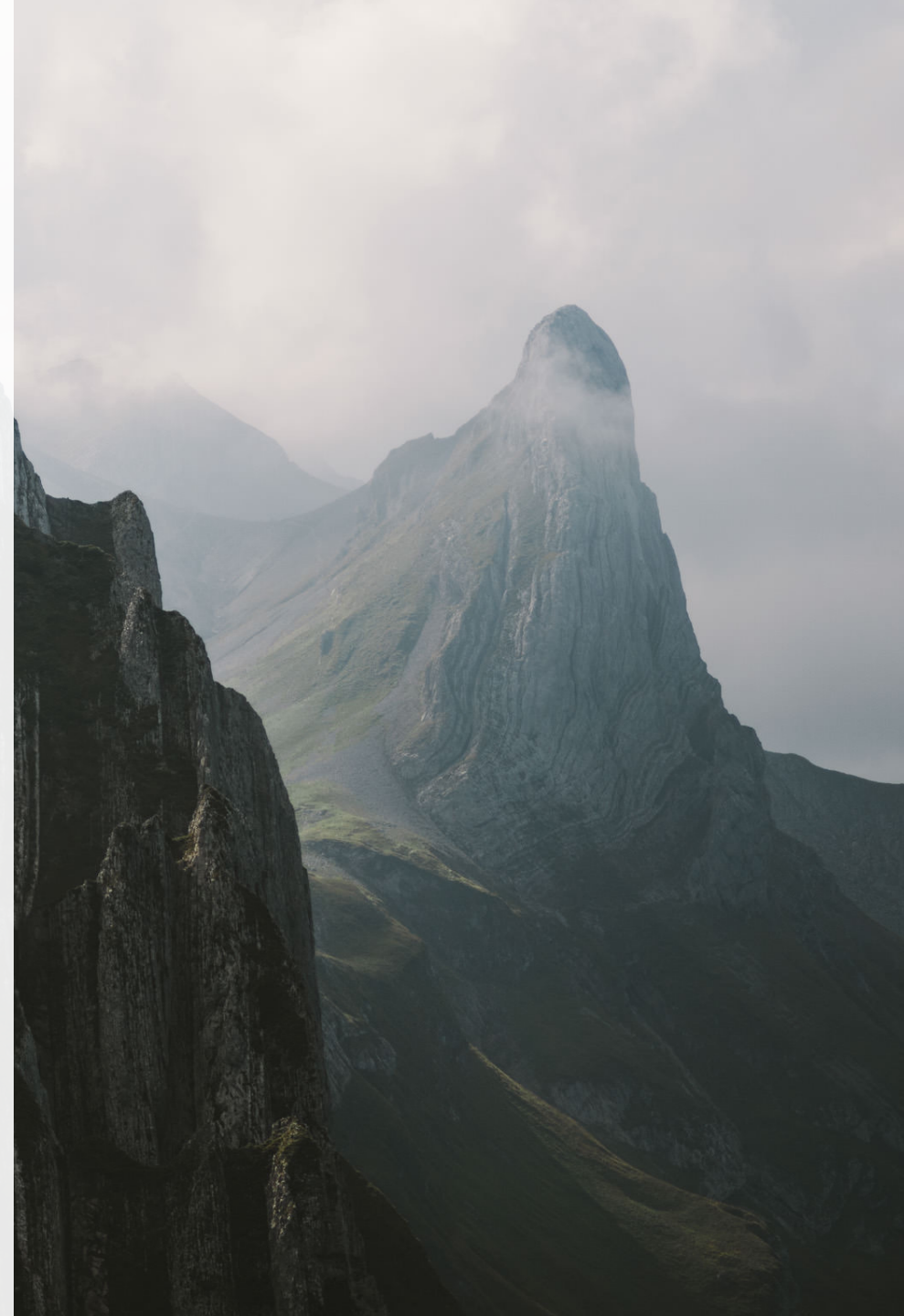
What is it and why doesn't it work sometimes?

# SHARED FACULTY GOVERNANCE

Shared governance is *“a term so devoid of determinate meaning that it takes on whatever significance a particular speaker gives it at the time.”*

(Olsen, 2009, para. 5)

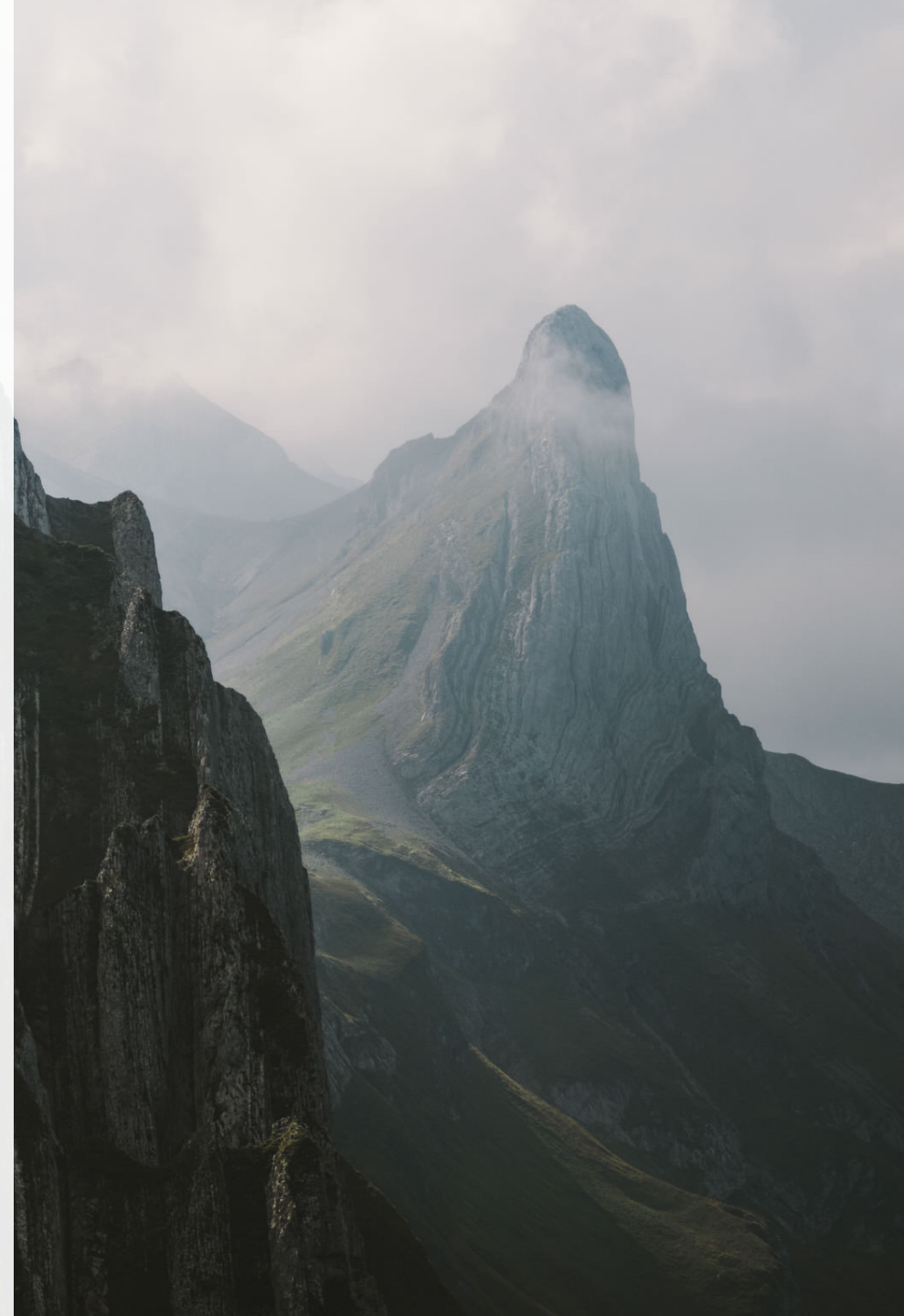
- Bicameral division between:
  - Management → Administration
  - Academic function → Faculty (Ribaric, 2023)



# SHARED FACULTY GOVERNANCE

*“With respect to library governance, it is to be presumed that the governing board, the administrative officers, the library faculty, and representatives of the general faculty will share in the determination of library policies that affect the general interests of the institution and its educational program. In matters of internal governance, the library will operate like other academic units with respect to decisions relating to appointments, promotions, tenure, and conditions of service.”*

AAUP & ACRL Joint Statement on Faculty Status of  
College and University Librarians (2006)





# SHARED FACULTY GOVERNANCE

- Library faculty governance usually covers:
  - Promotion and tenure guidelines
  - Workload guidelines
  - Offers input on issues affecting the library
- Could take the form of:
  - Library Council
  - Library Committee
  - Library Faculty Assembly
  - Representative on University-wide Faculty Senate



# WHAT DOES YOUR SHARED GOVERNANCE LOOK LIKE?

(Select all that apply)

- The library has its own shared governance body
- The library has a representative in the institution's faculty senate
- Library faculty are part of a union

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# WHAT CAN YOUR SHARED GOVERNANCE DO?

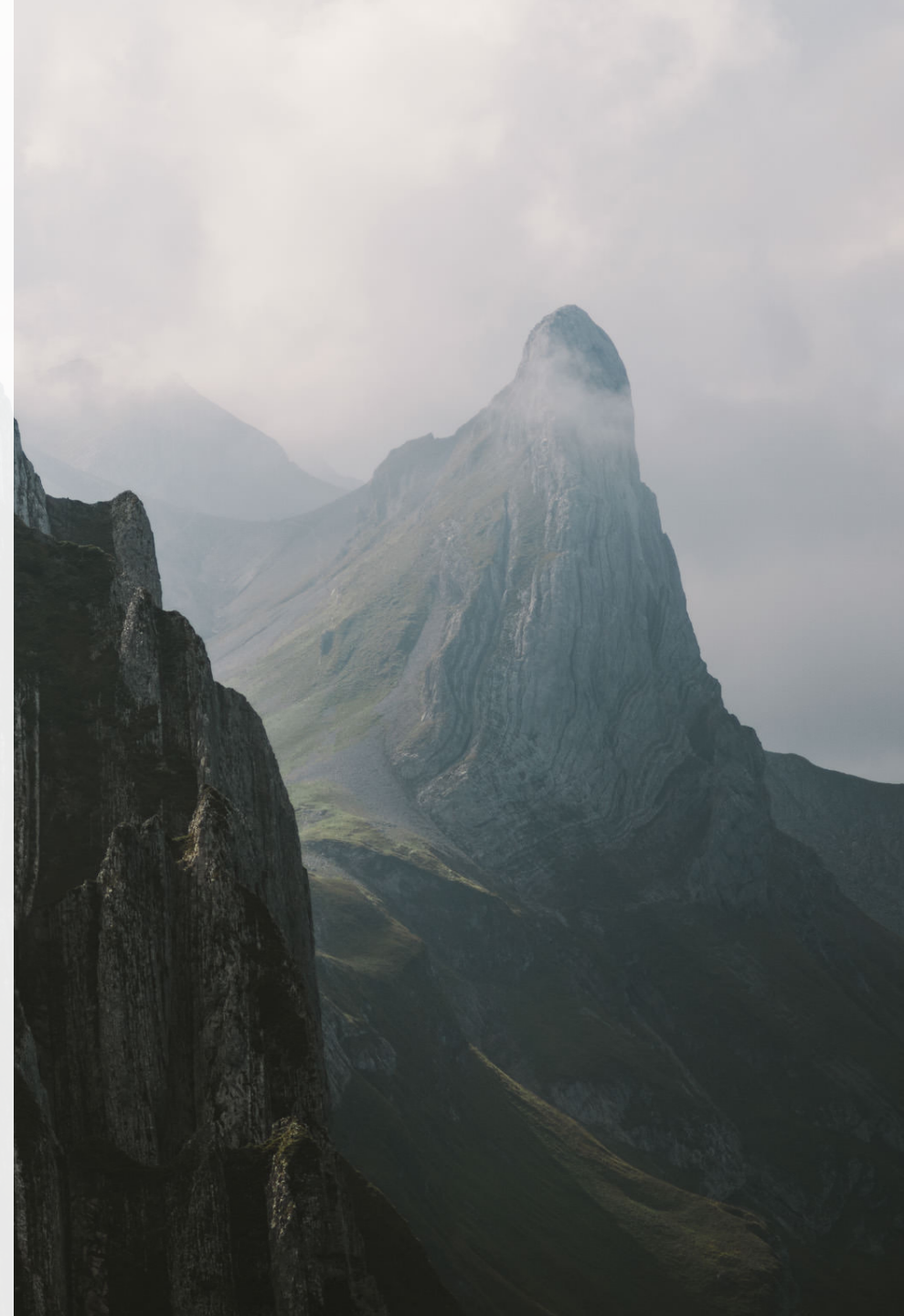
(Select all that apply)

- Pay and raises
- Promotion and tenure
- Workload
- Position descriptions
- Library initiatives and services

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# BARRIERS TO SHARED GOVERNANCE

- Challenged or incomplete faculty status
- Lack of awareness
- Current body is ineffective
  - Poor communication and collaboration
  - Way too many committees (Mower, 2015)
- Distrust of process
- It's really boring (Ribaric, 2023)

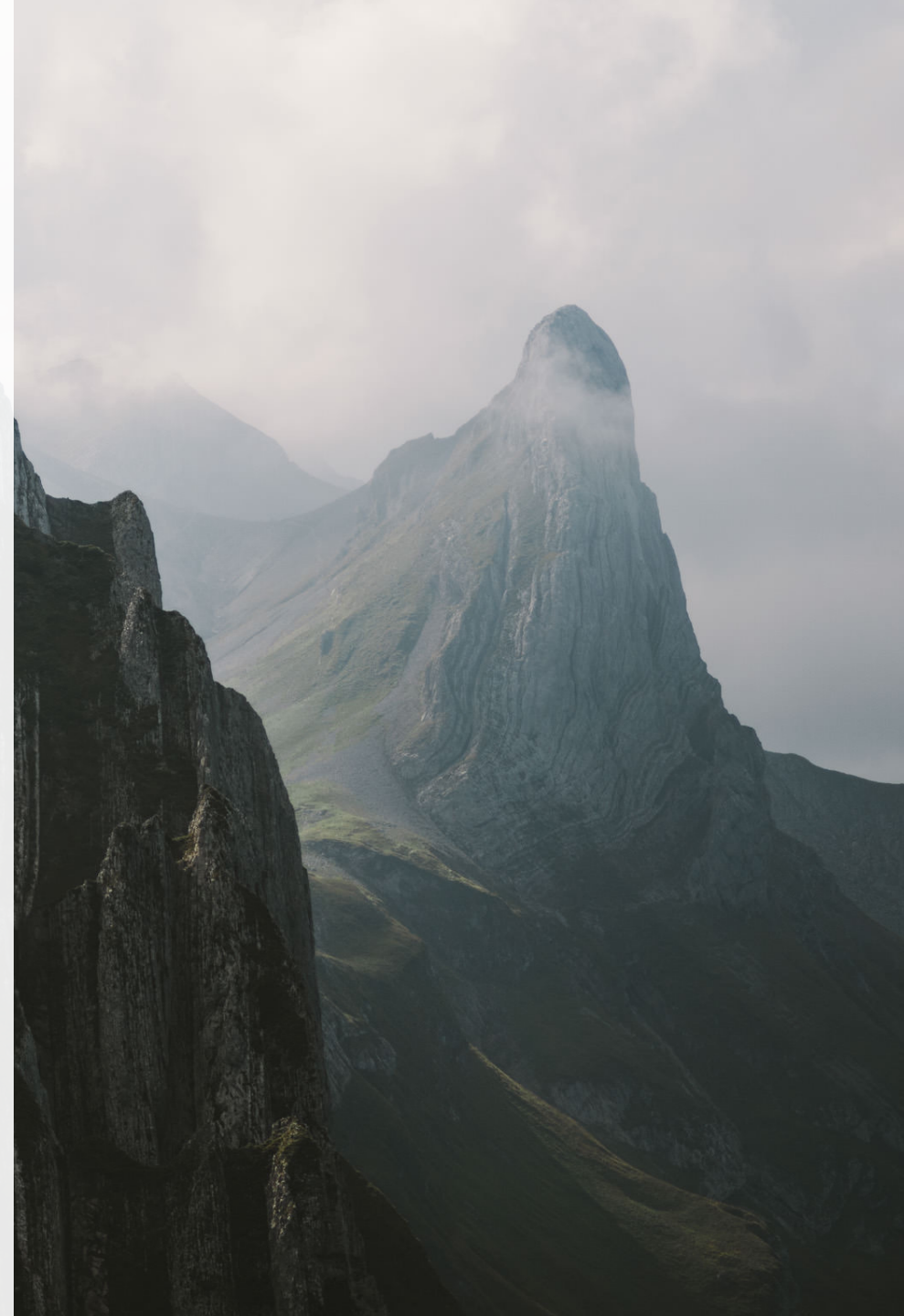


# BARRIERS TO SHARED GOVERNANCE

## Imposter syndrome...

*“If librarians are reluctant to participate ( imposter syndrome) remind them that they have their terminal degree and they are information experts, and their input is just as important as any other faculty department's input on campus.”*

Amy Parsons  
**Columbus State University**

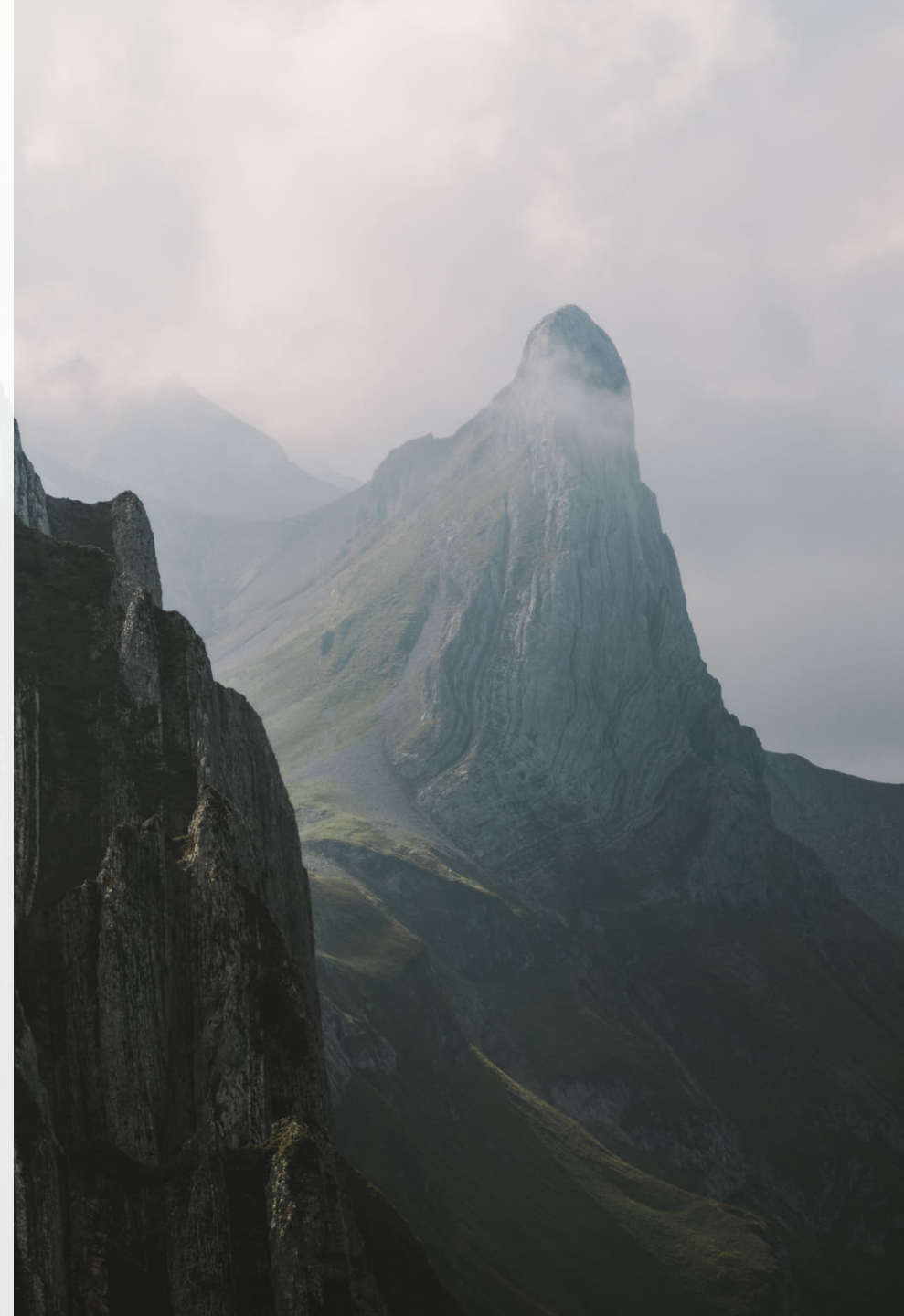


# BARRIERS TO SHARED GOVERNANCE

## Loss of faculty status...

*“When we lost our faculty status, other faculty objected to administration. Not only had we been their librarians, but we had served alongside them in the House of Delegates, sometimes in leadership roles. I would encourage academic librarians who are still faculty to participate in faculty governance. It’s work, but the connections you build over time are rewarding.”*

Anonymous



# WHAT'S THE BIGGEST BARRIER AT YOUR INSTITUTION?

- Ignorance
- Ineffectiveness
- Distrust
- Disinterest
- Other (please comment!)

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# REVITALIZING YOUR LIBRARY FACULTY GOVERNANCE

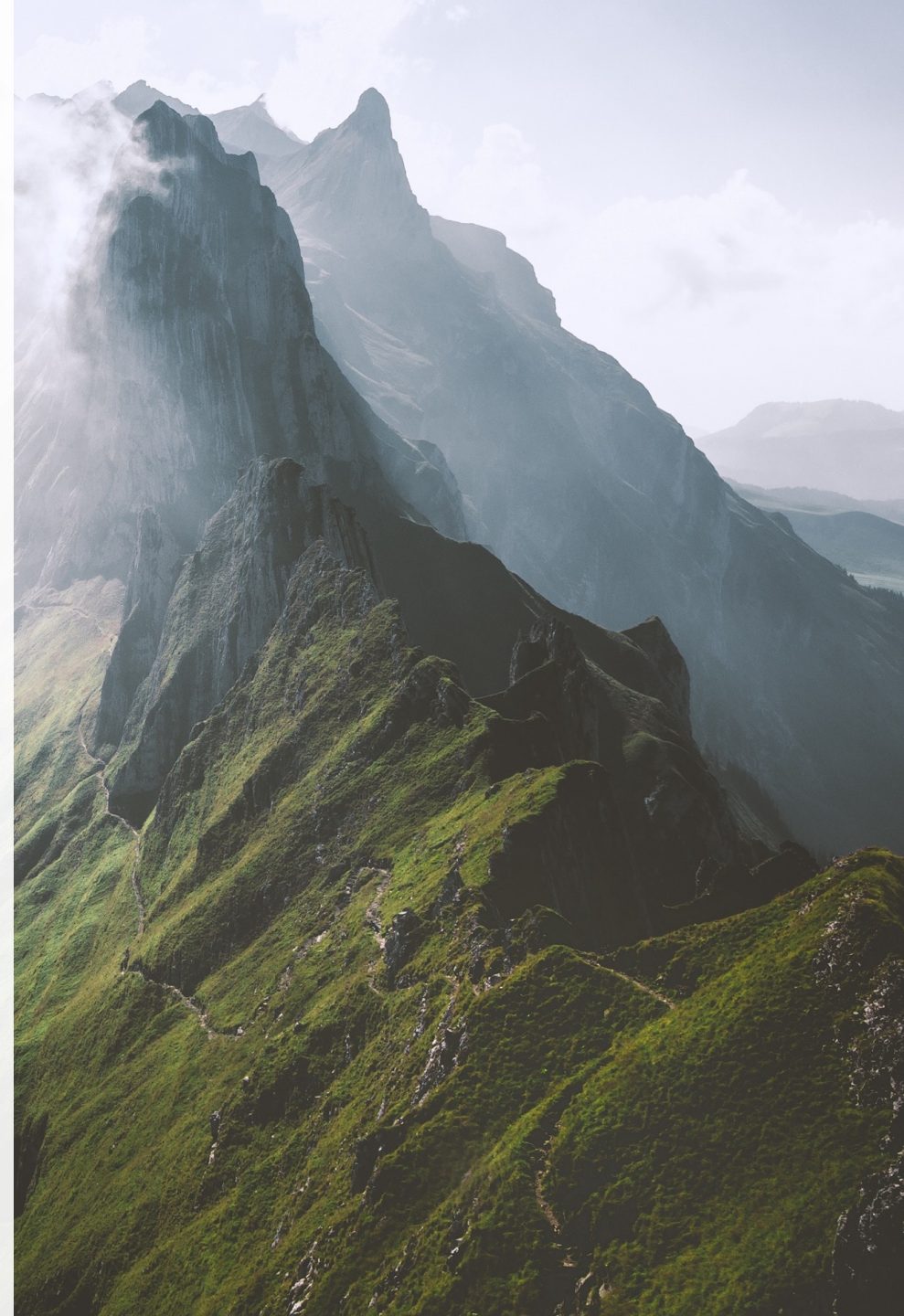
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5 Tips to Increase Involvement (and some of your tips, too!)



# REVITALIZING YOUR LIBRARY FACULTY GOVERNANCE

1. Get Them in the Door
2. Tell Them What It Is
3. Give Them a Voice
4. Give Them Something to Do
5. Tell Them What's Going On



# 1. GET THEM IN THE DOOR

- Limit service desks during this meeting
- Convert to a virtual meeting
  - Multi-campus friendly
  - Allows for recording
  - Microphone forces thoughtful conversation
- Consider a hybrid meeting
  - More challenging, but more effective
  - Assign someone as microphone-passer
  - Assign someone as computer controller
- Make sure electronic voting is allowed by bylaws



# 1. GET THEM IN THE DOOR

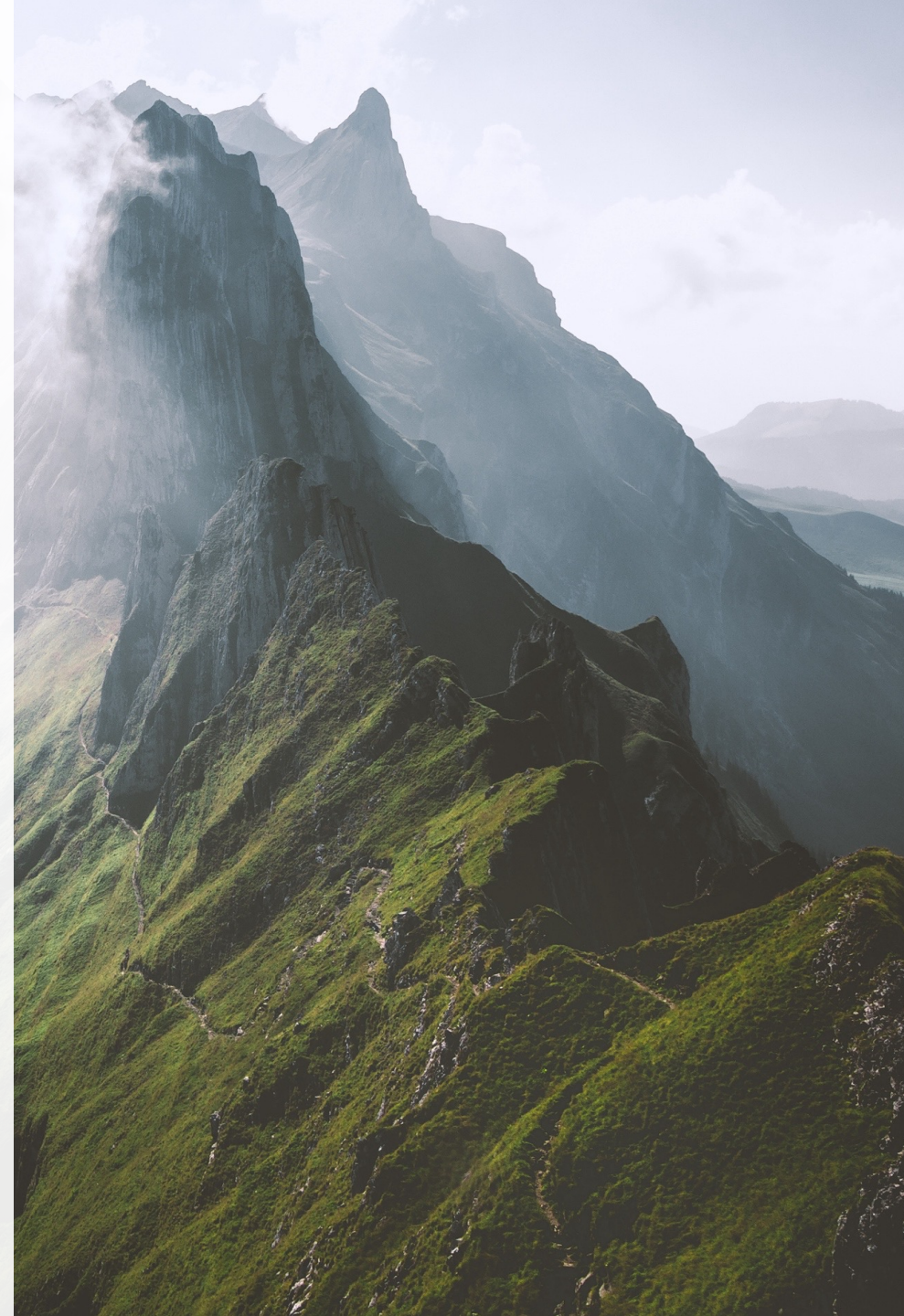
*“Use Zoom for your faculty org meetings. It was essential for us as a multi-campus institution, but we believe going completely virtual for faculty meetings would work for any type of institution. It really broadened participation by lowering the barrier to entry.”*

Russ Hall, Matt Wayman,  
Andrew Marshall, and Emily Rimland  
**Penn State University**



## 2. TELL THEM WHAT IT IS

- Shared governance is probably foreign to many librarian faculty members
  - Shared governance is not taught in library school!
  - Many librarians are first-generation academics
  - Shared governance is highly localized to an institution's unique culture (Kater & Burke, 2022)
- Offer a primer on shared governance
  - Consider inviting AAUP representative or faculty from another department
  - Break down all acronyms and define terms



## 2. TELL THEM WHAT IT IS

*“We had break-out sessions after our department meeting last year that covered various topics, general governance, promotion, etc. It was well received since so many people didn't really understand why and what governance is and why they should care.”*

Rosemary Humphrey  
**Kennesaw State University**



# 3. GIVE THEM A VOICE

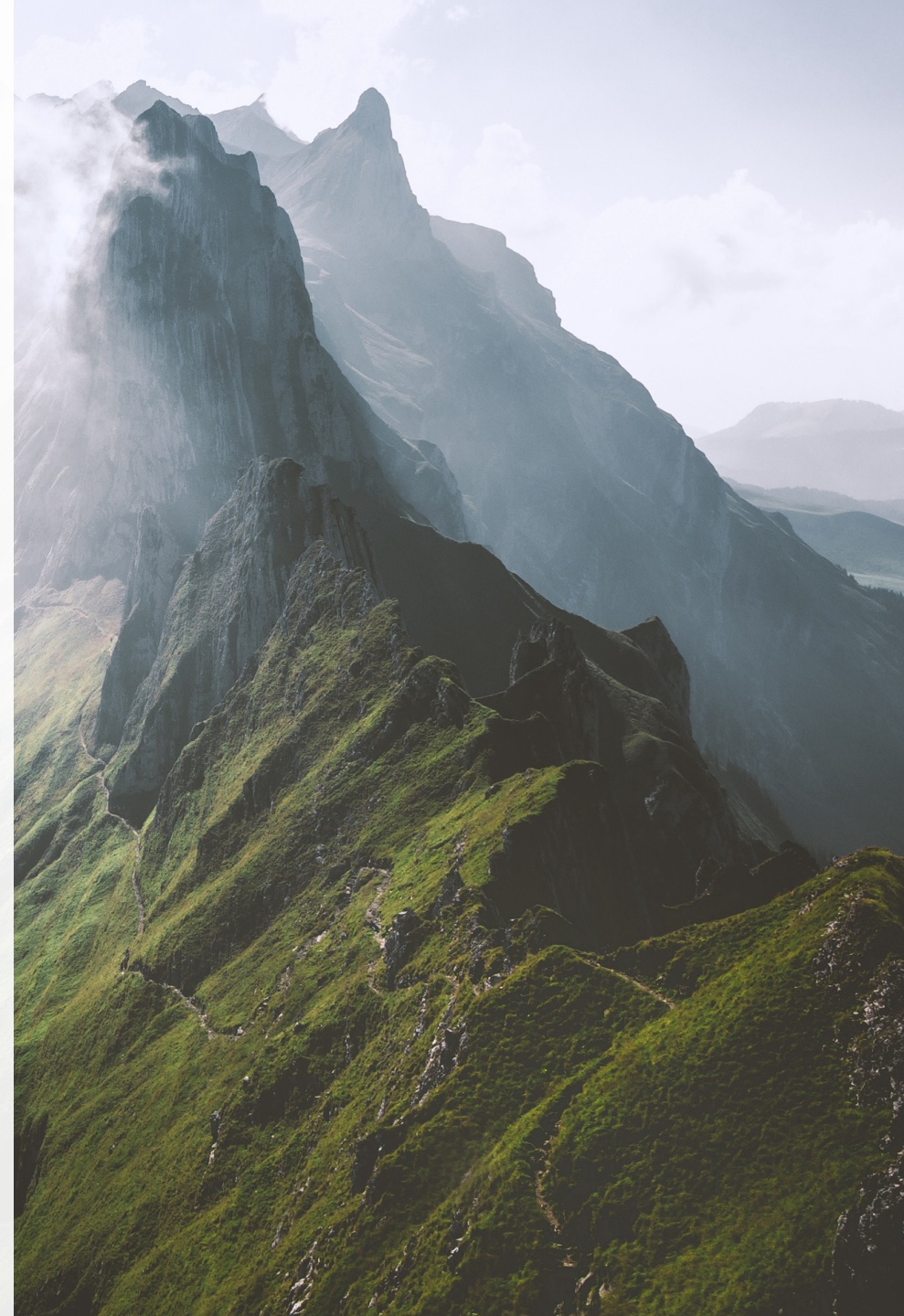
- Introduce discussion to the format
- Make space for faculty-only discussion
  - “Executive sessions” may be allowed by your bylaws
- Keep it civil and productive
  - Focus on actionable topics and issues
  - Avoid just complaining
  - Never use this space to bash individuals
- Give a venue for confidential concerns



### 3. GIVE THEM A VOICE

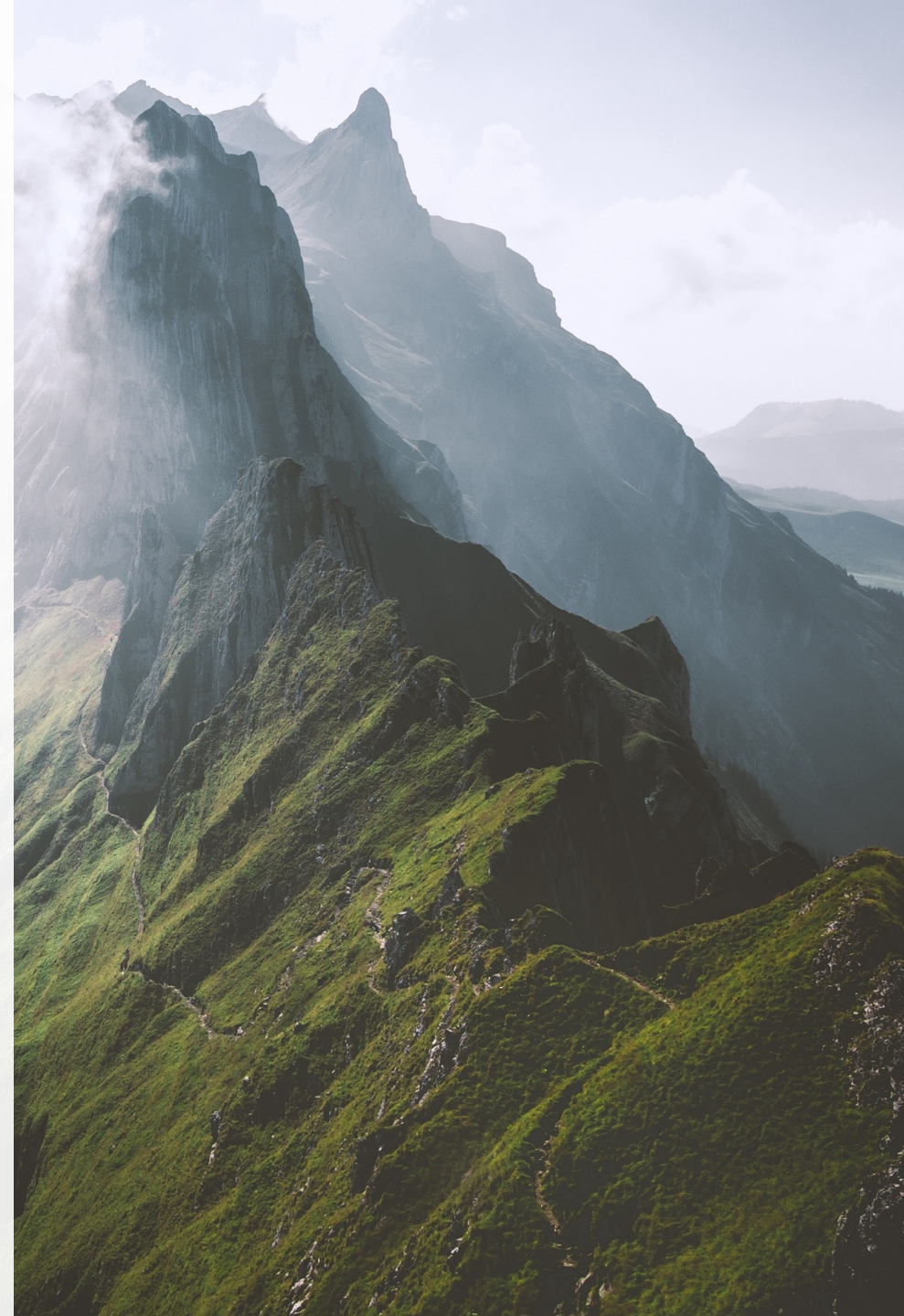
*“People need some sense of whom to take ideas to, and at each point in the process they should have some confidence that there will be a logical next step.”*

(Mower, 2015)



## 4. GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO DO

- Standing committees are limited in terms of participation and powers
- Ad hoc task forces allow more agility and participation
- Involved faculty are more invested





## 4. GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO DO

*"Ad hoc committees are much more effective, as you have people who bring up an issue and are motivated to work out a solution."*

Laurel Littrell  
**Kansas State University**



## 5. TELL THEM WHAT'S GOING ON

- Keep regular meetings, even if nothing “new” has happened
- Begin meetings with summaries of last meeting
- Consider a regular email update
- “No news” is still news!
- **Bonus Tip:** Developing a rapport with your fellow faculty makes involvement and communication that much easier

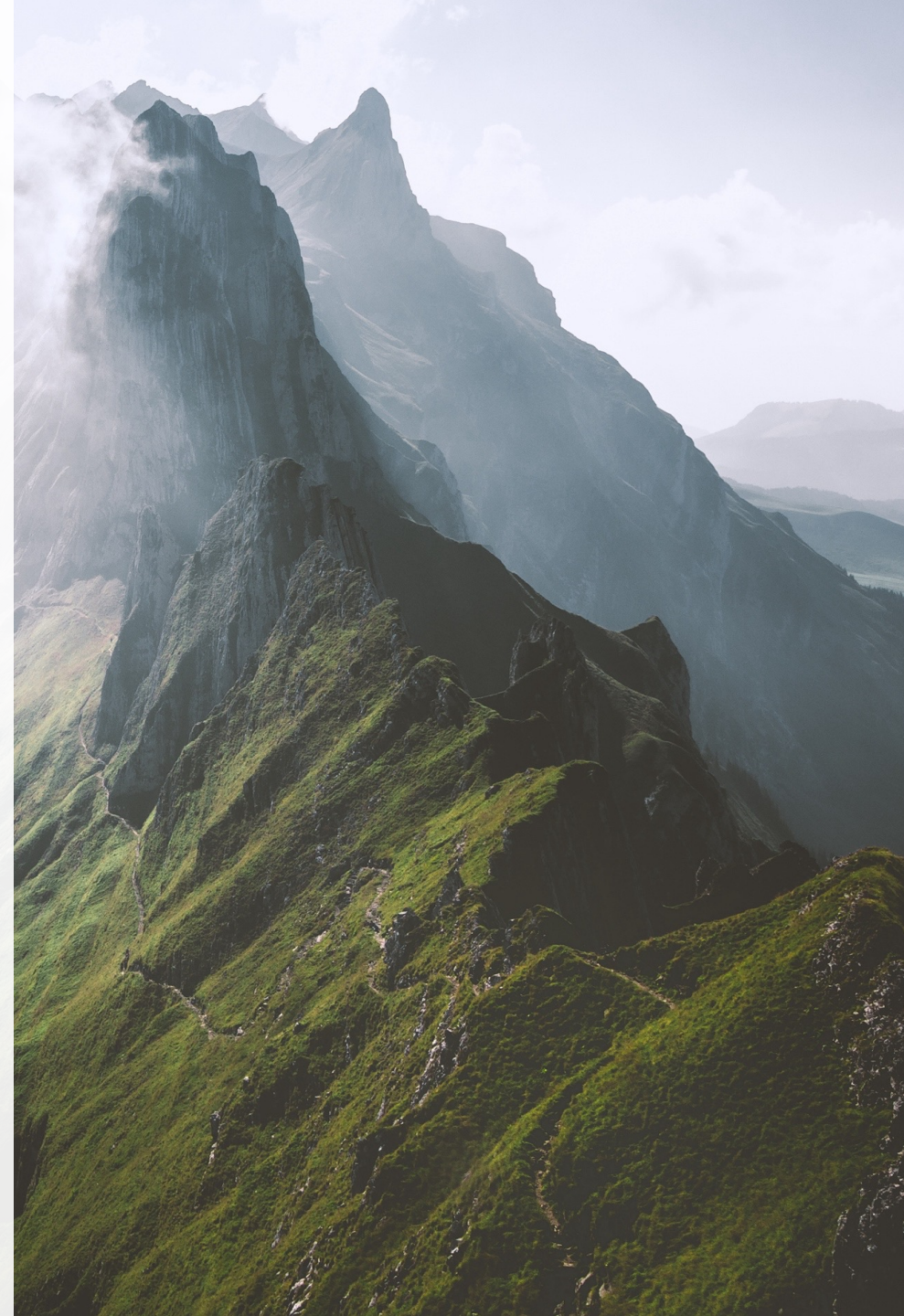


## 5. TELL THEM WHAT'S GOING ON

*“Organization leaders should reach out individually to other faculty members. Whether this means for consideration for a committee or running for an office or a reminder that a vote is coming up, people really respond to this. I don't know if it's flattery or social pressure or something else entirely, but it seems to work. (One of our group refers to this as arm-twisting, but the rest of us have the more positive take 😊 )”*

Russ Hall, Matt Wayman, Andrew Marshall, and  
Emily Rimland

**Penn State University**



# CONCLUSION

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# CONCLUSION

- Faculty power shared faculty governance
- Faculty need to be informed, aware, and able to participate in order to make governance succeed
- Your job as a faculty leader is to help lower those barriers and engage faculty to participate



A person wearing a bright yellow jacket and a dark hat stands on a rocky, elevated position, looking out over a vast, rugged mountain range. The scene is captured in a cool, blue-toned color palette, giving it a serene and majestic feel. The person is positioned in the lower center of the frame, providing a sense of scale to the massive landscape.

**WHAT HAS WORKED FOR YOU?**

(answer in the comments)

**QUESTION**

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