

# Hebrew University Governance

## Must be Reformed

To redeem excellence from mediocrity's clench  
control must be transferred  
from HU's workforce (faculty) to its Board of Governors

*Prepared for a meeting in NYC with  
Mr. Harvey Krueger  
Board of Governors  
Hebrew University*

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*by  
Yaacov Bergman  
School of Business  
and Center for Research in Rationality  
Hebrew University*

Based on a presentation that I was invited to make to the Knesset Education Committee.

The message herein is still essentially valid now (Dec 2006), as it was four and a half years ago.

-YB

# Executive Summary

## *The Problem*

- HU governance gives control to mediocre faculty majority.
- Administration—including president—being subordinated to mediocre faculty majority, protects the latter's interests.  
Instead of promoting HU excellence,
  - cooperates with trade-union to stifle competitiveness,
  - reluctant to monitor academic performance of faculty,
  - detaches reward from performance.
- HU governance denies president power to change things.

## ***The Solution***

- Learn from the Weizmann Institute and from top American universities.
- Take away control from academic employees (faculty).
- Return control to Board of Governors.
- Install a hierachial-authortative administration.
- Give the HU president real power to run the university.
- Demand of president true accountability for HU's academic standing.

## Important Message

- President Magidor feels insecure. Wary of faculty.
- Therefore, he cannot lead HU to excellence.
- Reason: HU's current impossible GOVERNANCE.

Unlike at the Weizmann and at top American universities –

- HU governance gives control to a TRADE-UNIONIZED Senate, that can easily unite against President.
- President needs to be re-elected too often.
- President Magidor covets 3rd term.
- HU Board of Governors should demand of President Magidor to protect excellent minority from the mediocre majority, and give him the fullest support in doing so.

## **Israeli Science is Mediocre on Average**

From reports commissioned by the Israeli Academy of Sciences.

“Too little energy is going into true scholarship  
in the best Jewish tradition.”

— The Arnon Report on the state of scientific research in Israel

This is just one of many similar comments in those reports.

## Israel lags in humanities too

I am following with great concern the decline of the humanities in Israel. This problem is peculiar to you; it occurs neither in England nor in the US. The Hebrew University may be better than the other Israeli universities, but it lags behind the rest of the world.

— *Sir Isaiah Berlin* (famous Oxford philosopher)

This is a quote from a 1995 newspaper interview with Sir Isaiah Berlin. He added: "I thought about the problem, and came to the conclusion that the [HU humanities] professors are not good enough." Then he goes on to advise that Israeli students should be sent to the world centers of learning, and then return to join the HU humanities division. In this he was referring to the "inbreeding" problem from which especially the HU humanities division suffers. -YB

# Scandalous Teaching

- “A scandalous study culture pervades Israeli law schools. Israeli law students neglect their studies, because their law schools neglect them.”

— Israel Law Review, 2002, 25, p.421

# **Foreign Experts' Recommendations to Israeli academic establishment**

## **Nurture excellence at mediocrity's expense!**

- Introduce competitiveness.
- Implement reliable research quality assurance systems, so that excellence can be distinguished from mediocrity.
- Reward excellence at the expense of mediocrity.

## **Foreign experts recommend external academic evaluations**

“We propose that each Israeli University should have outside scientific advisory committee (SAC) to evaluate faculty productivity and provide *recommendations* on a 3-5 year basis.”

## **Foreign experts identify main Israeli problem**

“The heads of the universities should have the power to implement our recommendations.”

# Best universities hold regular internal and external evaluations

The Trustees of *Princeton* University  
Final Report of the Wythes Committee, April 15, 2000

The Committee believes it is essential that the strengths and weaknesses of departments and programs continue to be evaluated on a continuing and regular basis.

The Committee recognizes the importance of yearly **internal** reviews by the President, Provost, and Dean of the Faculty.

*In addition*, it emphasizes the importance of independent evaluations and supports the practice of regular periodic formal reviews (every 6-7 years) of academic departments and programs by **external** visiting committees.

**There are no regular academic reviews  
at Hebrew University;  
neither internal nor external**

- President Magidor promised external reviews of all HU units. Did not fulfill.
- Contrary to the foreign expert recommendations, the Hebrew University administration has not appointed a Standing Scientific Advisory Committee.
- The reason for both: mediocre majority of the faculty successfully opposes being evaluated.

Postscript:  
Much due to my pressure, the Hebrew University administration is recently seen to move in the direction of reviewing. No review has been accomplished yet, but there are plans to do so.

# But when HU *does* review, see what happens:

## HU Business School is defunct

- In recent European business schools ranking:  
Tel Aviv University ranked 3rd; HU ranked 23rd(!) (equivalent to about 150th in the world).
- HU business school had 35 faculty members in 1983.  
Twenty years later, it is down to 28, while number of students increased by 70%.  
Towards the end of 2006, the HU business school has only 24 faculty teaching 1400 students.
- The accounting group had 8 faculty in 1983. Only two(!) of those remain. Both were hired a generation ago! One of the two was hired in the late 60's, the other – in 1978.  
Towards the end of 2006, the HU business school has only one(!) accounting faculty.
- Information Systems had 5 faculty in 1993. Now, ZERO!  
It is still zero at the end of 2006.
- Etc.

# Opacity at HU

## The Gould Committee visit in 1993

- The Gould Committee visited HU business school in 1993. The Committee was headed by then Dean Jack Gould of the Chicago University Business School. Economics Nobel Prize winner William Sharpe was a member.
- The Gould Committee recommended in 1993 to *close* the HU business school and restart it on new, robust foundations.
- Former President Gutfreund *concealed* Gould Report
  - from Board of Governors,
  - from Committee for Academic Policy,
  - from most of HU business school faculty.

Equivalent to CEO concealing true firm status from directors.

- Postscript: Gould Report is still effectively secret in 2004.

## ***Compare: Transparency at UC Berkeley!***

### **Closure of School of Library and Information Studies**

- The UC Berkeley Committee for Academic Policy voted on February 24, 1993, to advise the President of UC Berkeley to close the School of Library and Information Studies.
- **The school closed, reopening in 1997 as the School of Information Management and Systems.**
- Although a few faculty members have remained, the new school's curriculum bears little resemblance to the old.
- Compare how UC Berkeley and how the Hebrew University handled the same situation; cultures a gulf apart.

## **Why the difference?**

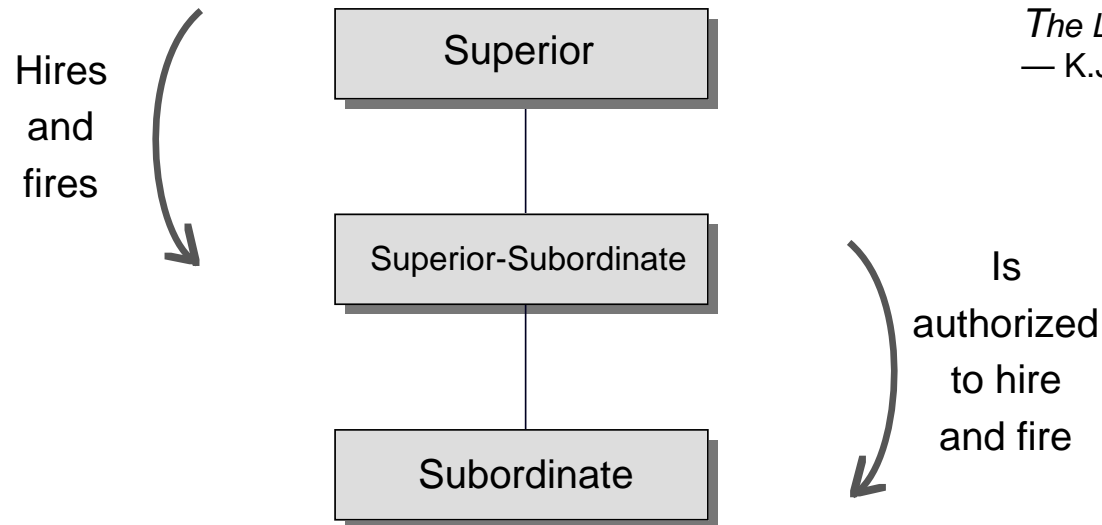
The big difference between how the Hebrew University handles its academic affairs and how the better universities handle theirs, stems from the big difference in how they are governed.

The better universities are governed by hierarchical administration on behalf of the public and in its interests.

The Hebrew University is governed by the mediocre majority of its faculty, in that majority's interests, which are not aligned with those of the public.

# From elements of organization theory

## Organizational Chart



The giving and taking of orders, is an essential part of the mechanism by which organizations function.

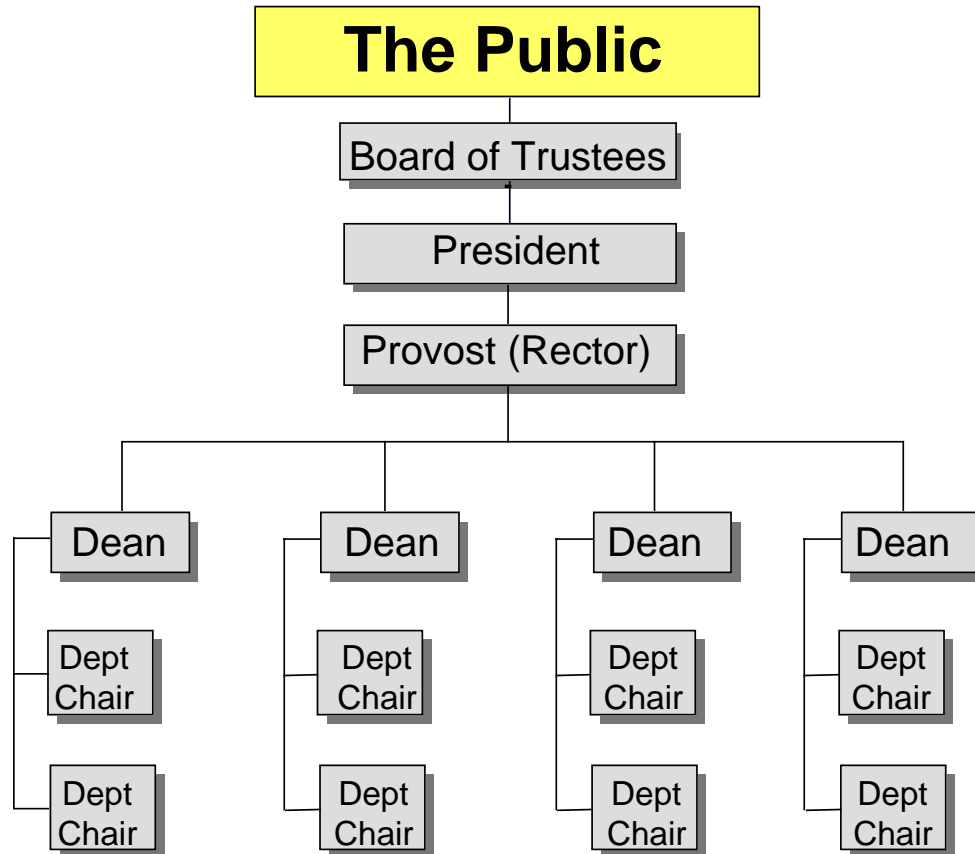
Within the firm, the sanctions which authority can use are basically those of hiring and firing.

*The Limits of Organization*  
— K.J. Arrow

A rector at an Israeli university is a faculty elected provost. In an American university, a provost is effectively a vice-president for academic affairs, and is subordinated to the president. In Israel, a rector is effectively subordinated to the faculty members who elect and can fire him.

- If "superior" cannot sanction subordinate, then subordination relation does not exist!
- The Maltz Committee erred: It repeatedly declares that the Rector will be subordinated to the President, yet it gives the Senate exclusive rights to hire and fire the Rector.
- Despite its declarations, the Maltz Report leaves the Rector subordinated to the Senate.
- Imagine an organization where top management is subordinated to the workforce.

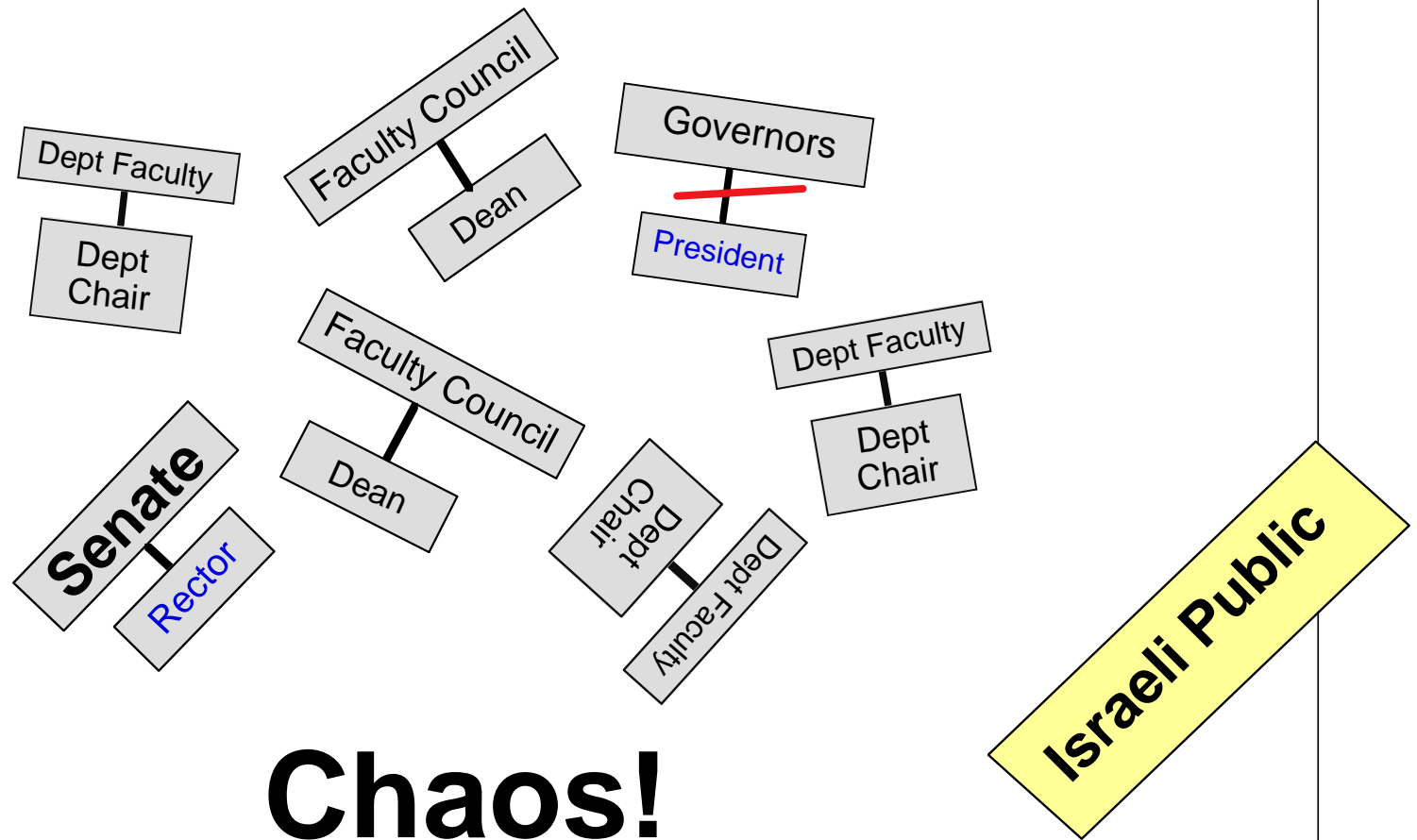
**Academic organizational chart at the Israeli Weizmann Institute  
and at every prestigious American research university; either private or public**



- None of the faculty bodies is on the chart; no Senate, no Faculty Council, no Department council.
- Unlike in an Israeli university, these faculty bodies cannot hire or fire the administration. They only advise.
- Consequently, and unlike at an Israeli university, the administration is *not* subordinated to the faculty.
- But academic freedom is exemplary.

# Israeli University Organizational Chart

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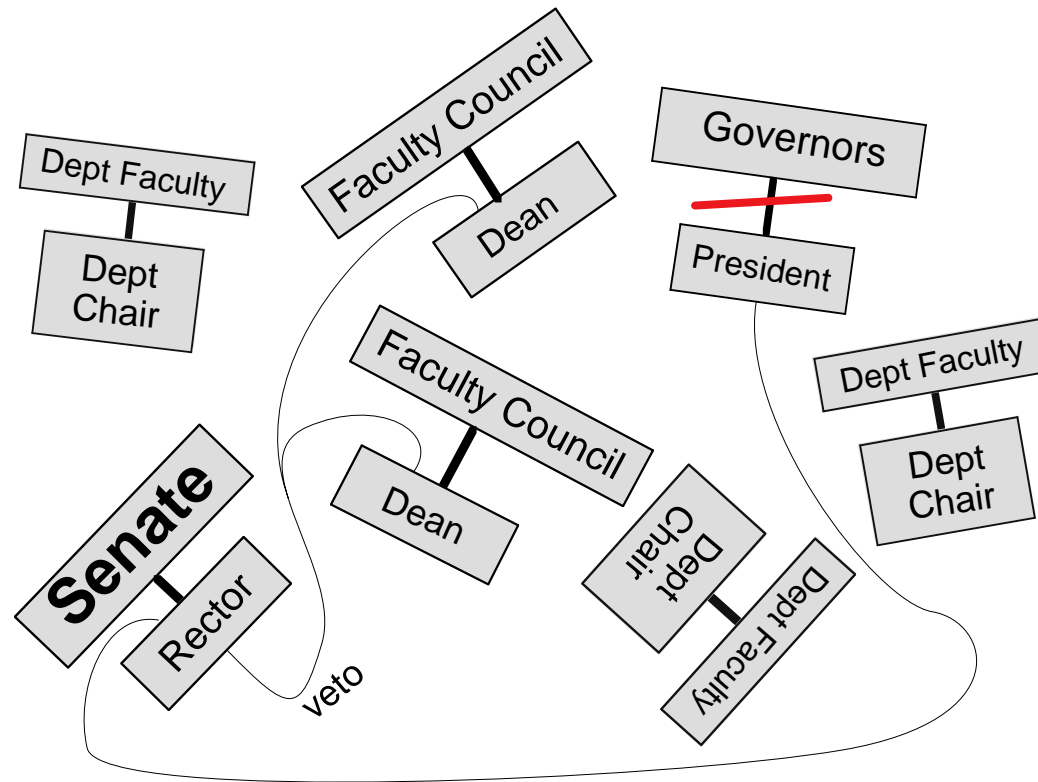
# Chaos!

Each administrator is subordinated  
to the mediocre majority in the faculty body that elects him.

# Hebrew University Organizational Chart

Ben-Porath's minor correction

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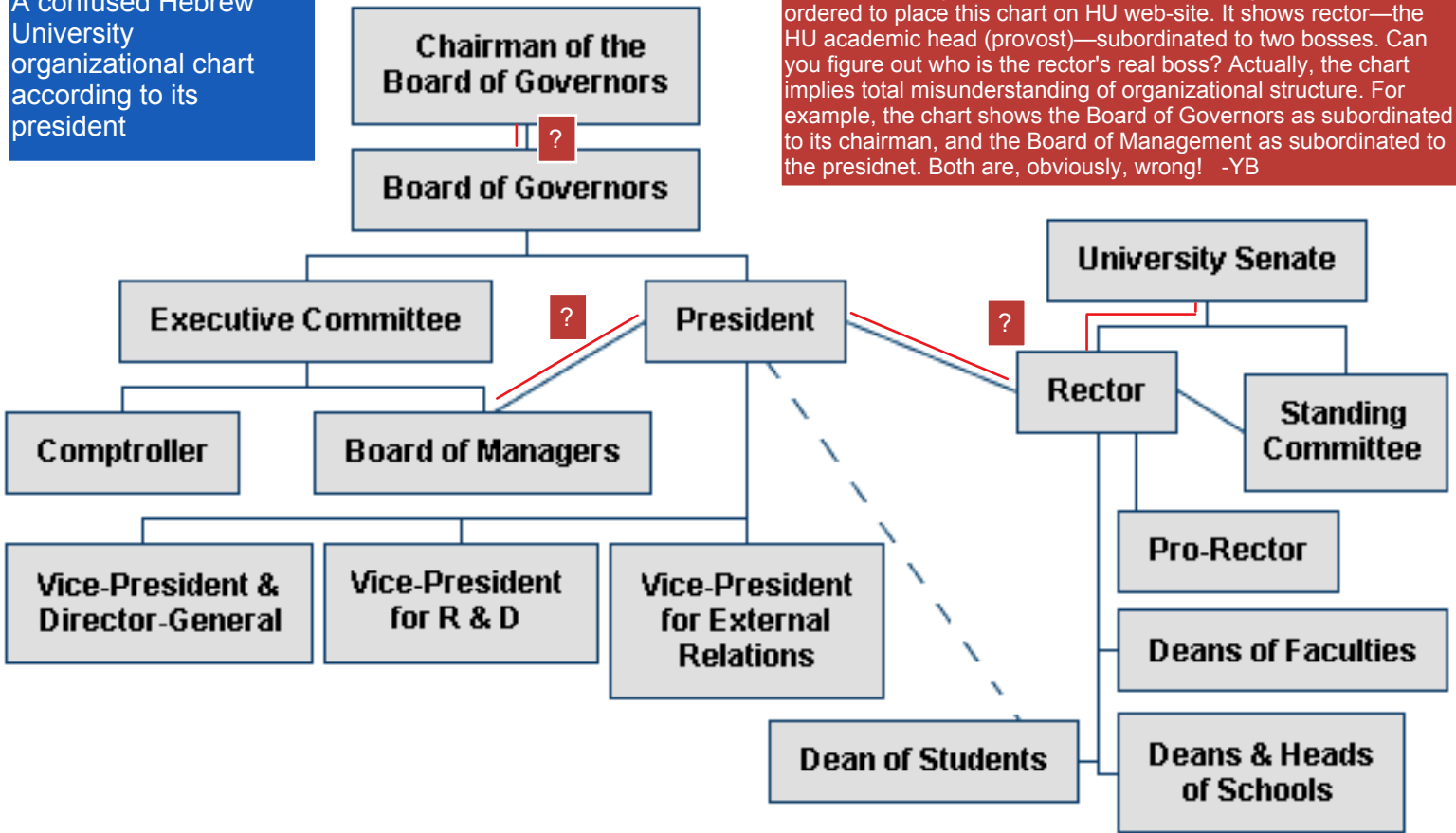
President can veto rector. But once rector is hired, president cannot fire him.  
Therefore, Rector is still not subordinated to President.

**Still Chaos!**  
**Mediocre majority still controls HU.**



A confused Hebrew University organizational chart according to its president

In reaction to my HU chaos chart (previous page), HU president ordered to place this chart on HU web-site. It shows rector—the HU academic head (provost)—subordinated to two bosses. Can you figure out who is the rector's real boss? Actually, the chart implies total misunderstanding of organizational structure. For example, the chart shows the Board of Governors as subordinated to its chairman, and the Board of Management as subordinated to the presidnet. Both are, obviously, wrong! -YB



## **Current governance renders HU administration powerless**

- Former Rector Ben-Sasson tried (1997) to implement a *Research Quality Assurance System*.
- Department chairs refused to cooperate.
- Initiative faltered.
- Mediocre majority organized the Senate to deny former Rector Ben-Sasson second term for trying to bring some order to the chaotic HU organization.
- Rector Ben-Sasson acted on presumption that he is protected by president's veto power. President did not save Rector's neck.
- Future rectors shall learn the lesson. They will represent interests of mediocre majority, as they have always done.

**Mediocre majority will never relinquish control**

**Control transfer to Board of Governors must be imposed**

European **Governments** have reformed  
their university governance structure |

## **New rules of university governance in Denmark**

- “Such demands have in Denmark, as in many countries, resulted in new laws on university governance.”
- “Compared to the former law, the 1993 Act places more weight on university autonomy, on **executive authority**, and on **hierarchical chains of command**. The old law was more collegial in orientation.”

— J. G. Rasmussen, 1998, *New rules of university governance in Denmark*,  
*Higher Education Policy*, 183-199.

The university governors must understand that their responsibility of determining the institution's mission requires not only monitoring the fiscal and physical assets of the institution, but also having sufficient knowledge of the academic programs to ask hard questions concerning program quality, coherence, relevance, attractiveness, and appropriateness.

— *Statement on Institutional Governance (1998)*  
by *The Association of Governing Boards of Universities*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.agb.org/>

## **Mediocre majority will never relinquish control**

### **Control transfer to Board of Governors must be imposed**

- Responsibility for the Hebrew University lies with its Board of Governors.
- HU Board of Governors cannot shy away from actively and publicly participating in reforming HU impossible governance to one that promotes excellence at the expense of mediocrity.
- Board of Governors should communicate its dissatisfaction with current governance of Hebrew University and its bad effects; to the HU faculty, to the Israeli public, and to the Israeli government.
- HU Board of Governors should cooperate with Boards of other Israeli universities to encourage Israeli government to follow the example set by advanced European countries and reform the governance at all Israeli universities.

## **For immediate action**

**The HU Board of Governors should relay a strong message to *President Magidor*:**

- **You have our full support. Take control!**
- Execute your plan to academically audit all HU faculties by outside committees.
- Disclose their reports to the Board of Governors.
- Implement their recommendations.
- Implement an effective research quality assurance system.
- Use it to correct incentive structure. Reward performers.
- Do not give in to trade union: make compensation scheme sensitive to HU needs. Like at the best universities world wide, introduce differential pay.
- In particular, use a competitive compensation scheme to save the Hebrew University defunct business school.

# Summary

- Current governance gives control over HU and its resources to the mediocre majority of the faculty.
- It promotes mediocrity at expense of excellence.
- To reverse that, control should be transferred back to a Board of Governors that is truly willing to govern.
- Hebrew University governance should be that of Weizmann and the top American research universities, which has proven most effective in promoting excellence at the expense of mediocrity.
- The Hebrew University Board of Governors should be the driving force behind the absolutely necessary reform in the Hebrew University governance system.

## **Postscript (June 7, 2004)**

The recent Hebrew University governance changes are just apparent. They leave the situation at HU basically unchanged. For more detail, see my second open letter to HU Chairman of the Board, Yigal Arnon. Click on the following web address,

[http://pluto.mscc.huji.ac.il/~msyberg/Higher\\_Education/TAU\\_vs\\_HU\\_.pdf](http://pluto.mscc.huji.ac.il/~msyberg/Higher_Education/TAU_vs_HU_.pdf)