CLAS Faculty Council
Shared Governance Report to College Assembly

Presented Jan 22, 2010 by J. Larson, Chair of the Faculty Council

Rationale: The College Faculty Council is charged by the Constitution with annually reviewing the state of shared governance in the College. This year we have chosen to focus on shared governance in the departments of the college and distributed a questionnaire to the chairs of departments (and the director of the Program in Linguistics) on five principles of shared governance: collegiality, transparency, representative participation, accountability and clarity of roles.

Successes: All 20 units responded. Bylaws were cited repeatedly in most of the responses and several units have recently developed or revised bylaws, or are in the process of doing so: Astronomy; Languages, Literatures and Cultures; Mathematics; Philosophy; Physics; Psychology; Spanish and Portuguese Studies. A number of the larger departments have an elected representative body and/or an elected body for merit pay decisions: Anthropology, Biology, Chemistry, English, Mathematics, Physics, Political Science, and Statistics. Shared decision making is largely through the work of committees.

Examples of Best Practices: Biology has a robust mechanism for handling complaints. Multiple departments have a formal mechanism for calling a faculty meeting or a requirement of a faculty meeting which must cover key topics. Results of votes are reported in Sociology and Criminology & Law. Committees are asked to explain their recommendations and decisions to the whole in Religion.

Concerns: Little is available to reward those heavily involved in service, especially graduate and undergraduate coordinators. Discussing issues in a collegial manner and building consensus takes considerable time; it can be difficult to motivate faculty to put in the time needed. Concern was expressed that there is little transparency and insufficient consultation of faculty at the University level, and that this absence of transparency makes transparency in the departments more difficult.

Caveats: We all recognize that a structure allowing for shared governance does not guarantee participation, nor does its absence preclude collaborative decision-making. In this survey, we polled a single individual from each department, the chair, and would expect a range of responses with a wider sample from each.

Quote from Alice Harmon: The amount of time each faculty member needs to invest in shared governance is very high, and they complain about the number and length of meetings. However, the level of satisfaction with departmental policies and functions is very high. Getting all issues on the table and discussing them in a collegial manner takes considerable time, but this makes it much easier to build consensus.

Appendix: Memo sent to chairs on shared governance

The CLAS Faculty Council is charged by the CLAS Constitution with annually reviewing the state of shared governance in the College. To help us with this review, please write brief responses to the questions below and send them by email to jal@ufl.edu by December 21, 2009. The results will be reported to the CLAS Assembly. If you would like background information on shared governance at the University of Florida, you may visit the web site listed below:

<http://www.math.ufl.edu/~jal/comm/facultycouncil/shareGovbackground.htm>

Regards,

Jean Larson, chair, CLAS Faculty Council

QUESTIONNAIRE

1.   Person responding:

2.   Department/unit name:

3.   Through what mechanisms/procedures does your unit promote collegiality and collaboration in decision/policy making? Are these mechanisms/procedures institutionalized, do they rely primarily for implementation on unit culture, both? Something else?

4.   How does your unit promote transparency in policy/decision making? What complaints, if any, have arisen in your unit? Is it your sense that faculty are satisfied with the level of transparency in your unit?

3.   How does your unit promote representative participation? What incentives/inducements/encouragements are offered to enhance participation? Do you take affirmative steps to enhance diversity of representation by rank, gender, field, something else? Are these criteria of representative participation used for both appointments and elections to unit offices and committees?

4.   What mechanisms are in place to enhance accountability? Do these measures apply to both committees and unit officers? What complaints, if any, have arisen about the level of accountability practiced?

5.   How are roles within the unit expressed and clarified? Through bylaws? Unit culture? How often are they examined and, if necessary, changed?

6.   What other comments on shared governance in your unit would you like to share?