

Shared Governance Focus Groups Report

June 6, 2012

Discussion Facilitator: Mr. Rod Smolla

Focus Group #1 10-11am (Russell 117)

All focus groups were informal in nature. Mr. Smolla opened the floor for dialogue after brief introductions of himself and participants. There were no prearranged questions guiding discussions, only follow up questions to points of shared interest among participants. Discussions were meaningful and informative. All participants were given equal opportunity to speak.

- No clear sense of Internal Governance structure, how it works, and the delegation of tasks and responsibilities
- Specific areas of governance: administrative and professional, and staff, should be more informed about Internal Governance structures as well as have a voice in decision making.
- Internal Governance is too cumbersome and needs to be refined. There needs to be a campus-wide commitment to Internal Governance's overall refinement as well its practices. Documents are not well kept, and although the President's cabinet has voting power, the channels through which issues reach the cabinet and its members remain ambiguous.
- Faculty needs more of a voice in respect to reforms being made to departments, curriculum, and faculty. Channels through which these decisions are being made need to be clearly defined.
- Radford University's governance structure is top-down rather than bottom-up.
- Ongoing perception throughout the campus community is "chairs for life." There is no input into the continuance of Deans, and many believe the performance reviews somehow "disappear."
- When a chair position opens, there should be more internal hiring and faculty members should have a strong voice in the hiring process.
- More transparency with school budget. Link to school budget is exactly one page and provides very little detail.
- Although the new CFO has done a remarkable job, budget details remain confusing. For example new programs (Freshman Seminar, New Student Programs) budgets to seem to always fall short and there is never a clear answer as to why.
- Administrative and Professional committees would much rather listen to faculty as opposed to other governance structures because faculty puts everything into perspective. Faculty provides better information regarding students, withdrawals, retention, incoming students, and core curriculum.

- Governance leadership does not value the work of faculty and the tremendous amount of work they put in.
- Internal Governance should focus more on what faculty has to offer.

Focus Group #2 11-12pm (Russell 117)

- The missions and goals of Internal Governance need to be restructured, it is too complex.
- Too much inconsistency. While some committees meet weekly, some do not meet at all.
- Faculty members are appointed to committees too late. Only after processes have been designed are faculty members appointed.
- Current IG structure was formed through a sense of distrust and incomplete bridges; thus there is an unhealthy mix of ideas and perspectives which burdens its overall effectiveness.
- Committees seemingly overlap one another which in turn produce much confusion and distrust. There is a dichotomy between those who have a “voice” and those that do not.
- Everyone should be properly educated on IG, but due to poor communication this seems impossible. Staff senate wants to feel more included in governance processes.
- Staff and AP have continuously expressed concerns about their lack of involvement in IG practices, but they continue to remain ignored.
- Attending staff senate meetings is a great tool for staff to stay informed about the inner workings on campus. More staff should be required to attend meetings.
- School budget remains a big issue and questions about it remain unanswered.
- Despite positions held on campus, employees should be able to join a committee they have a vested interest in. Members with a vested interest are more willing to communicate and help the respective committee become more efficient, thus bringing value to the overall IG process.
- The President’s cabinet remains ambiguous. There should be more faculty representation on cabinet, more transparency, and open meetings; therefore everyone has a real sense of how decisions are being made.
- Those at the bottom have no clear sense of what is going on and remain uninformed. Everything is top-down. For example, merit pay was enacted without reasons as to why some were being paid more than others despite outperformance and years of service. Department chairs were kept out of the loop, which caused a ton of confusion.
- Other things faculty and staff were not informed about include the Dedmon Center being off limits to students and faculty and staff. Also the reduction from a 15 week semester to a 14 week semester.

- The top does not value the work of those at the bottom. Without a strong support group at the bottom, the top will remain insufficient.
- No clear and simplistic written form of tasks and responsibilities for those in decision making positions. Everything is so disorganized, many remain confused.

Focus Group #3 1-2pm (Russell 117)

- Clarify the role of IG in respect to curriculum. New programs were started without faculty input, so were the reorganizations of colleges and departments. Only until decisions were reached was faculty input sought.
- Perception that there is a lack of safety of AP employees' jobs. Inconsistent evaluations (not done on a yearly basis). Inequities such as salaries and policies are not adhered to.
- Only safety AP employees have is 6-12 month severance.
- Although more attention has been paid to entities that at one point had no "voice," tension and confusion is still rampant throughout campus community.
- "The Great Revolt" caused much hate and discontent.
- There is no gatekeeper of all documentation. Many believe it is HR, but remain confused as to who keeps the information.
- Diversity on campus has been an ongoing challenge. Members of diverse committees on campus are muted.
- Resources related to research are limited. This has led to much distrust, contempt, and frustration.
- Compliance issues seem to overlap and many remain confused as to how IG works.
- Budget is unclear and revenue sharing no longer exists.
- Radford is in direct violation with OSHA but no one seems to care. As a result, this could give the university a bad name.

Focus Group #4 2-3pm (Russell 117)

- Staff senate should have more of a presence on committees
- Everyone benefits from staff's work, yet they have no voice and everyone has a lack of faith in their output.
- It is as though staff members work under a constant state of probation therefore they are afraid to express their opinions.
- Staff just doesn't know how they fit in to the overall scheme of things.
- There is no encouragement to participate in staff meetings. Some are actually discouraged to participate because it takes away from their tasks and responsibilities. Administration needs to be more proactive in encouraging all classified employees to attend meetings.
- Members have low morale due to their lack of power. If staff had more support from their supervisors things would operate more smoothly.
- Little recognition for staff's hard work (their work providing for needy families in our campus community).
- Staff feels devalued and as though faculty is more important.
- If organizational structure is synergized there would be more cross communication among the different committees on campus.
- Feels like the campus is being governed on principles that may have worked in the 1950's. As the university has grown, the governance principles have not.
- Too much turnover and no real set of leadership.
- Throw everything out and start over. IG is so cumbersome that it needs to be redone. A culture change.
- As long as clear answers are provided, things can flow more smoothly.
- Involve people in the setting up of processes, rather than coming up with a process and then including people.