

Report to the Board of Trustees, Clemson University

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20. September 2017

Healthy ‘Shared Governance’ across and within University Units Engages Faculty (and Staff, Students) as Knowledge-workers Connecting Local and Global Perspectives

The July report summarized how the professional development of our students and the knowledge economy of South Carolina are impacted by the engagement of all members of the Clemson University Family in shared governance. In the July report, a few ways that Faculty Senate has been working towards improving engagement of senators across Colleges and units was described as the ‘Lead Senators’ project. In this report, we take a closer look at how we use the term ‘shared governance’ to describe internal communication and strengthened professional participation, how such participation is achieved through a more structured and accessible communication stream, and how including these communication streams and mechanisms of participation improves focus on teaching, research and service through trust that issues are being addressed (clearing the mind for professional focus, which is essential for knowledge-workers).

Summary of this report:

- 1) Clarify ‘shared governance’ as within-University conversation to include diverse, thoughtful input to facilitate best possible decision-making and cultivate excellence from local and global leaders
- 2) Communication issues Faculty Senate is addressing, for operations and infrastructure within and across Colleges, in our Lead Senators project
- 3) Internal methods to professionally and collaboratively share views: Free Speech, Resolutions, and Open Forum

‘Shared Governance’ = seats at tables to provide input and make best decisions possible

As a top 25 public university serving the state of South Carolina, the United States, and the world, Clemson University family is fortunate to include international leaders of many disciplines that are uniquely highly engaged and committed to research, scholarship AND teaching and service. One could easily argue that what makes Clemson “Clemson” is deep, sincere commitments to simultaneous excellence in our classrooms and our laboratories by the same faculty. This is an attribute that many Universities strive towards, and one we must constantly support and foster as it is the core of what makes our students, staff and faculty feel when they say that their ‘blood bleeds orange’... this connection and direct access to highly regarded international leaders in their fields on a one-to-one basis that sincerely enjoy mentoring students in their research programs (without expectations of research support), during classes, and after classes.

A term to describe people that are constantly thinking, 24-7, about their work and how it improves knowledge is ‘knowledge-workers’. Knowledge-workers thrive in environments where they can participate in decision-making processes that constantly adapt to improve their working environment and the environment of everyone around them in order to make space for the hard work of innovation and problem-solving in their disciplines. With so many disciplines at Clemson, we have an incredible spectrum of ideas and networks which has been barely tapped into yet serve as resources that, if cultivated, can enable waves of innovation in research, teaching and service. A major way to cultivate faculty as ‘knowledge-workers’ is to make it easier for them to engage with others across campus on shared issues that include our disciplines and our link to the community and global society. For some matters, the topic is obvious such as specific fields of research. For other matters, such as how we decide what we all need to do to recruit top-notch students or visiting scholars, identify interdisciplinary teams to build and attract resources for innovative research

groups, or address issues of well-being in campus climate, the topic is more nuanced and less straightforward regarding how to identify routes for addressing the cascade of related issues. To put simply: knowledge-workers need to know if and how more complex issues are being addressed and knowing this information is what makes or breaks engagement in larger scale, innovative projects and programs. It also substantially improves recruitment and retention. Faculty don't necessarily need to be at every table or even vote on final decisions... they want to know that both straightforward and more complex issues are being thoughtfully addressed so that they can think, concentrate, and build more broadly their longer term work in teaching, research, and service programs.

Not just ‘talk’, how Faculty Senate is setting seats at tables: shared governance website and the “Lead Senators Project”

At Clemson University, we are in the phase of ironing out details following our recent reorganization. Colleges are revising and updating bylaws. Departments are revising and updating their bylaws and TPR guideline documents. Graduate programs are revising and updating their program guidelines. This is a lot of ‘revising’ and ‘updating’ which means many decisions are being made and the longer term stakeholders, including faculty, are at the table. Some faculty are at the table directly while others focus on other matters and trust that their views and sometimes specific suggestions on these decisions are taken into account. One way that Faculty Senate has already worked hard to facilitate this trust and transparency is the ‘Shared Governance’ website (link at end of report).

Another Faculty Senate action initiated May 2017 is the Lead Senators Project. The Lead Senators are working within the Executive and Advisory Committees (EAC) to evaluate the structure and effectiveness of Advisory Committees within each unit (School and/or Department, see July report). These Committees, sometimes called ‘Executive Committees’ or ‘Faculty Advisory Committees’ in department bylaws, can include different faculty ranks and serve to help Department chairs deliberate and think through decisions and actions that impact each unit. This year, Lead Senators (one from each College) are working with senators in their College plus others in non-represented departments to determine if and how these committees operate. Additionally, with the full EAC group, we are reviewing all roles listed for Lead Senators (link below) with the goal of updating this list and opening communication across Colleges for how each item functions (or not) so that we can share resources and thoughtful approaches across colleges and units to streamline and be consistent across the University. Several Colleges and Units are already seeing the positive impact that this project can have on improving engagement and commitment.

Internal methods to professionally and collaboratively share views: Free Speech, Resolutions, Open Forum

Similar to all institutions of higher learning and research, the most transformative work occurs in collaborative efforts. Likewise, the most important work in Faculty Senate occurs through the constant focus and hard work within our committees (Scholastic Policies, Research, Finance & Infrastructure, Welfare, and Policy). Outside of committees and votes at Senate meetings, Faculty Senate also facilitates professional discourse within meetings through registered Free Speech presentations, discussion and voting on Resolutions brought to the table, and Open Forum letters. In Faculty Senate, we see these mechanisms as demonstrations of the firm commitment of Clemson University and our leadership to transparency, communication, and the ‘Higher Seminary of Learning’ spirit. We also know that providing these mechanisms affirms the principles of ‘dignity, honor, and respect’ and acknowledges that all of these principles must be in place for the hard work of knowledge-building, knowledge-sharing, and knowledge-leading that we all have committed our entire lives and careers to improve... together.

Resources:

Clemson University Shared Governance website (through Faculty Senate): this is the in-house access portal Faculty Senate built that includes committee information:

<https://www.clemson.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-senate/shared-governance/>

This website was devised and orchestrated by the most recent past Faculty Senate President and current Faculty Manual Consultant Mary Beth Kurz (Industrial Engineering).

Lead Senators responsibilities (listed below Senators list):

<http://www.clemson.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-senate/documents/responsibilities.pdf>

The ‘Lead Senators Project’ is reviewing this list, discussing how actions function, and exchanging ideas and resources across Colleges and units.