

RU Engaged Notes – October 20, 2008, 6:00 pm, Eynon Ballroom
Shared Governance: The Role of Students

Facilitators:

Dr. Carol Gruber, Assoc. VP for Student Engagement

Mr. Richard Jones, Interim Assoc. VP for Residential Learning / Dean of Students

Overview of RU Engaged Series:

Spring 2007: Crafting Our Future: Visions 2017

2008-09: Impacting Decision-Making: Your Role in Shared Governance

Next year: Broadening Our Horizons: Diversity

Students were asked to participate in an iClicker survey. The responses are as follows:

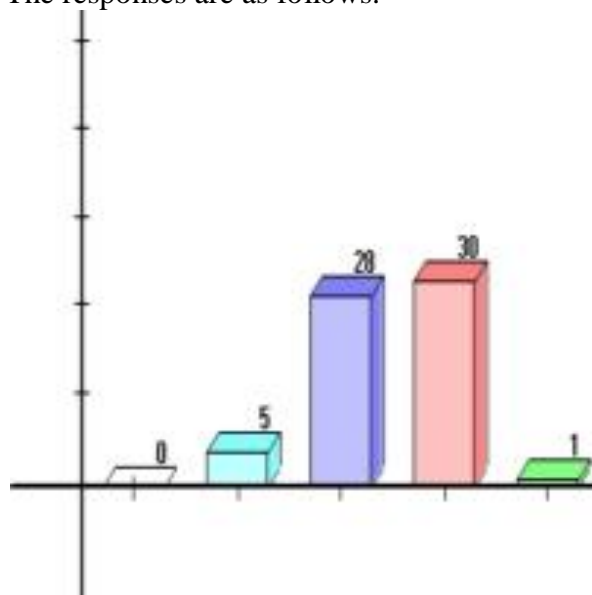
Question #1

To what degree do you feel students are involved in shared governance at Rowan University?

- A. Extremely involved
- B. Very involved
- C. Involved
- D. Barely involved
- E. Not at all

Rowan University STOP DISPLAY LOAN/REGISTER

Wait 0



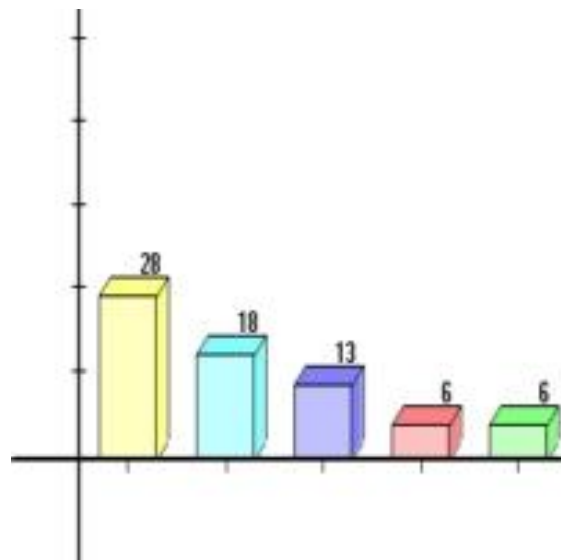
Question #2

At what level would you rate your own participation in shared governance on campus, with 1 being the lowest level and 5 the highest?

- A. 1 (lowest level)
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5 (highest level)

Rowan University STOP DISPLAY LOAN/REGISTER

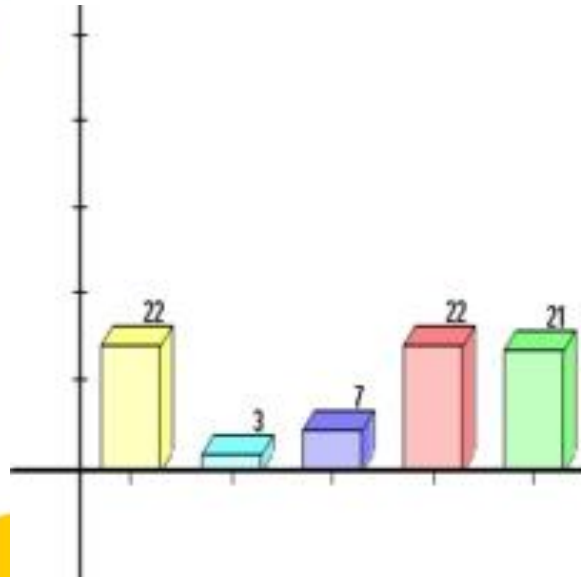
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Question #3

As a student, what is the best way to let student opinions be known?

- A. SGA
- B. Committee/ Association Meetings
- C. Student Representatives to the Board of Trustees (2 positions)
- D. Interaction and conversation with administration, faculty, and staff
- E. Surveys and focus groups

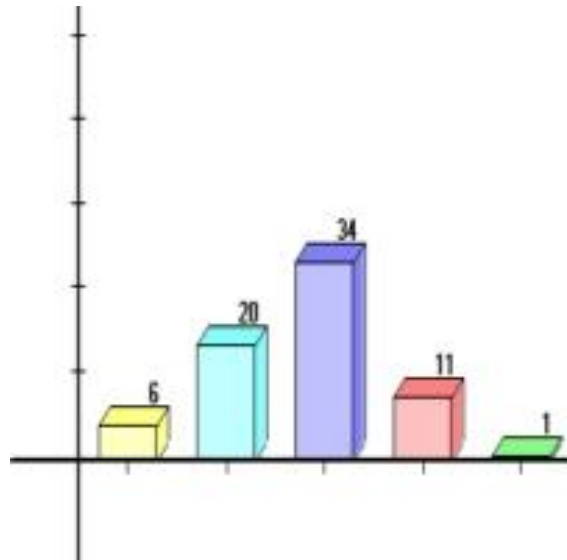


Rowan University logo on the left. A control bar contains three buttons: STOP, DISPLAY, and LOAN/REGISTER. Below the buttons, the text "Wait 0" is displayed.

Question #4

To what level do you think faculty and administration consider the opinions of students in shared governance, with 1 being the lowest level and 5 the highest?

- A. 1 (lowest level)
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5 (highest level)

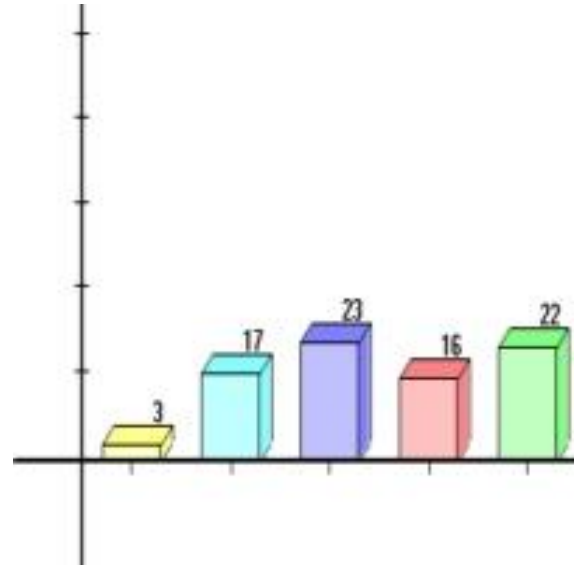


Rowan University logo on the left. A control bar contains three buttons: STOP, DISPLAY, and LOAN/REGISTER. Below the buttons, the text "Wait 0" is displayed.

Question #5

Based on observations that many students choose not to participate in shared governance, which of the following do you think is the primary contributing factor?

- A. Students are content with the way things are
- B. Students lack time
- C. Students lack information in how to participate
- D. Students do not care
- E. Students believe that no one listens anyway



Attendees were grouped at color-coded tables with an assigned question from above (omitting #2, a question designed for individual rather than small-group response). Each table chose a spokesperson to report to the group as a whole.

Reports from small groups:

Question #1 (To what degree do you feel students are involved in shared governance at Rowan University?)

Table 1 –

Our table believed that students are barely involved in shared governance. There are a lot of committees, but students often come for classes only and don't have time. Also, there is not a lot of information posted about meetings, so students are unaware of when they are. Meetings are not scheduled conveniently sometimes—it's difficult for everyone to get together. Transfer students had no information when they arrived about how to get involved. Tell freshmen and transfer students how to get involved and what the avenues of being involved are.

Table 2-

We believe that the answer is somewhere between “involved” and “barely involved.” Either students don't care to do anything or they have no idea what's going on. They don't know how to get involved.

Question #3 (As a student, what is the best way to let student opinions be known?)

Table 3-

We chose D as the best answer – the best way to get our values or opinions across to the campus is to try to talk to administrators, faculty, and staff because they are a part of every program on campus. No matter what the organization, a faculty, staff, or administrative member heads it, so you can talk to that person. They want to know exactly what it is we want. If we let them know how we're feeling, they can make sure our needs and wants are met.

Table 4-

Our table was divided between choosing SGA (A) and interaction and conversation with administration, faculty, and staff (D). We chose SGA because they are our representatives; as peers it might be easier to go to them for

advice. They know best how to interact with people higher up in the administration. We also liked D, though. It's good to go to faculty, administrators, and staff because they are knowledgeable. If you go to a peer, they might not have the best answer. There is now an academic senator for each of the Colleges who can talk to the Dean of the College and to SGA.

Table 5 –

The first four are good responses. SGA is a big student body—no one really knows what they do, where they are, how to go to them. I personally feel student representatives are the way to go—they vote on everything that is here. But we also said D (interaction with faculty, staff, administrators) because one good way to get word out to students is to have faculty mention activities and meetings. E (surveys and focus groups), though, is something people are “too run down on” sometimes; there can be too many surveys or focus groups.

Question #4 (To what level do you think faculty and administration consider the opinions of students in shared governance?)

Table 6 -

We pretty much agree about C, which we thought was mid-level involvement. The administrator at our table said that faculty and administration do care, but students often have no interaction with administrators and faculty on campus except their own professors.

Students don't know what faculty and administrators think. For example, many people here probably don't know about the open period being moved from Monday to Friday. Many people in SGA said that would kill many clubs. The problem is there is not enough communication with students—administration needs to get student opinion, try to figure out what students think. Also, we need to remember that as members of the University, we need to participate in the affairs of the University. As part of the Rowan family, we need to participate.

Table 7 –

We basically agree; we chose C. What it often comes down to is miscommunication. Students want to be heard; faculty want to help us—both sides need to be responsible for utilizing forums such as this or the SGA to bridge the gap. We have the responsibility to stand up and voice our opinions.

Question #5 (Based on observations that many students choose not to participate in shared governance, which of the following do you think is the primary contributing factor?)

Table 8 –

We agreed with C (students lack information) and E (students believe no one listens anyway). Sometimes it seems that no one listens—for example, the free period—the student body said no, we don't want it, but a couple days later we received an e-mail saying it had been changed. If there is no explanation, students wonder why they get involved.

Also, flyers and e-mails are not enough for communication purposes. When transfer students arrive, they should be given a calendar of events and a list of clubs. However, a personal invitation is better than an e-mail. The SGA just did a freshman “dorm storm”—we made an effort to go to the freshmen—students need to see our faces and know who we are.

Table 9 -

All the factors are valid points. It depends on the issue. With the open period, for example, it raises a lot of eyebrows—students want to get involved. But what about windows on the Education Building getting dirty? Students think, “It’s not my problem.”

Table 10 -

We chose C (students lack information) and D (students do not care) as the main reasons, but it’s not that students don’t care; they don’t believe they can make a difference, so they don’t care as a result of that. To get more information, have RA’s put up posters inside the dorm. Have a board where students who can’t make the meetings can post their responses. Professors should get more involved in mentioning something like this RU Engaged session; for example, a couple of people at our table were given extra credit for being here tonight.

Additional conversation:

Question from Richard Jones: What about e-mails as effective communication?

Responses:

I think they’re effective if you choose to use them. So I don’t think that’s a good excuse, that you’re not involved.

Too much of a good thing – if you get ten e-mails a day about meetings and events, it’s too much. I don’t know how to go about fixing that. I think it’s about the bulk—it looks like spam—you just don’t want to read ten e-mails a day.

I do better by hearing, not by e-mail. I don’t check my messages every day, and sometimes when I do check it, the event has already happened. Tonight’s event I heard about by word of mouth.

Comment from Dr. Gruber: Could it be that many of our students are used to hearing P.A. announcements in high school, and they’re not getting that now?

Additional Remarks from Phil Castro (SGA President) and Liz Palmer (student trustee on the Board of Trustees):

Phil Castro -

I feel this is a good step—your being here. We’re here to be the voice of the students. The more we hear from the students, the more we can help you. Under the SGA constitution, my role is to be the voice of the student body. I would like to encourage you to use SGA as a voice as much as possible so that you can see the changes you’d like. If there is anything you’d like to talk about, please e-mail me at castro62@students.rowan.edu.

Liz Palmer -

The student trustee plays a unique role here. The Board of Trustees is the highest governing body at any public institution in New Jersey. Trustees have a vote on construction, tuition, and many other things. I work with administration, faculty, and staff to make this campus better for you. I can’t tell you how much these people care about you and how much they really do regard what student trustees have to say. While I represent the taxpayers of the state, I come from a student perspective. I cannot reiterate this enough: Please contact me if you have any concerns or questions about what goes on here at the University.

Closing Remarks from Richard Jones:

If you don't know where to go to get something answered, there are three people to start with: Carmen Jordan-Cox (Vice President of Student Affairs), Carol Gruber, and myself. If you have concerns, please come to us. Our door is always open. We want you to use us as a resource.

At our next meeting, on November 24, we will focus on the role of faculty in shared governance. In the spring, we will have sessions devoted to the role of administration, professional staff, and support staff in shared governance.