

RU Engaged Notes  
Shared Governance: The Role of Administration  
3/25/09

Facilitators Joy Solomen, Director of Inter-Collegiate Athletics, and Bruce Klein, Director of Network and System Services, welcomed the audience and gave an overview of the RU Engaged series.

The session began with the following definition of shared governance:  
At Rowan, shared governance is defined as “a set of practices under which faculty and staff participate in significant decisions affecting the University.” (Source: Board of Trustees Resource Manual, taken from the American Association of University Professors [AAUP])

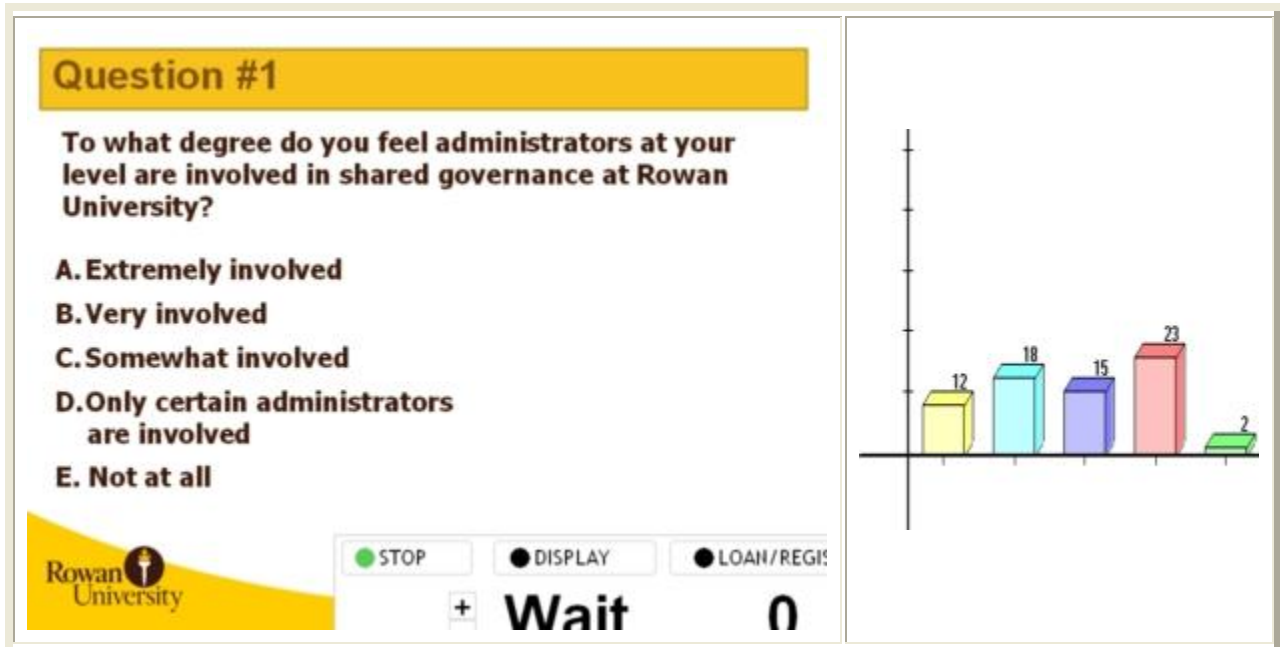
Administrators were then asked to participate in an iclicker survey. The responses are as follows:

Question #1:

To what degree do you feel administrators at your level are involved in shared governance at Rowan University?

- |   |    |
|---|----|
| a. extremely involved                       | 12 |
| b. very involved                            | 18 |
| c. somewhat involved                        | 15 |
| d. only certain administrators are involved | 21 |
| e. not at all                               | 2  |

TOTAL	68
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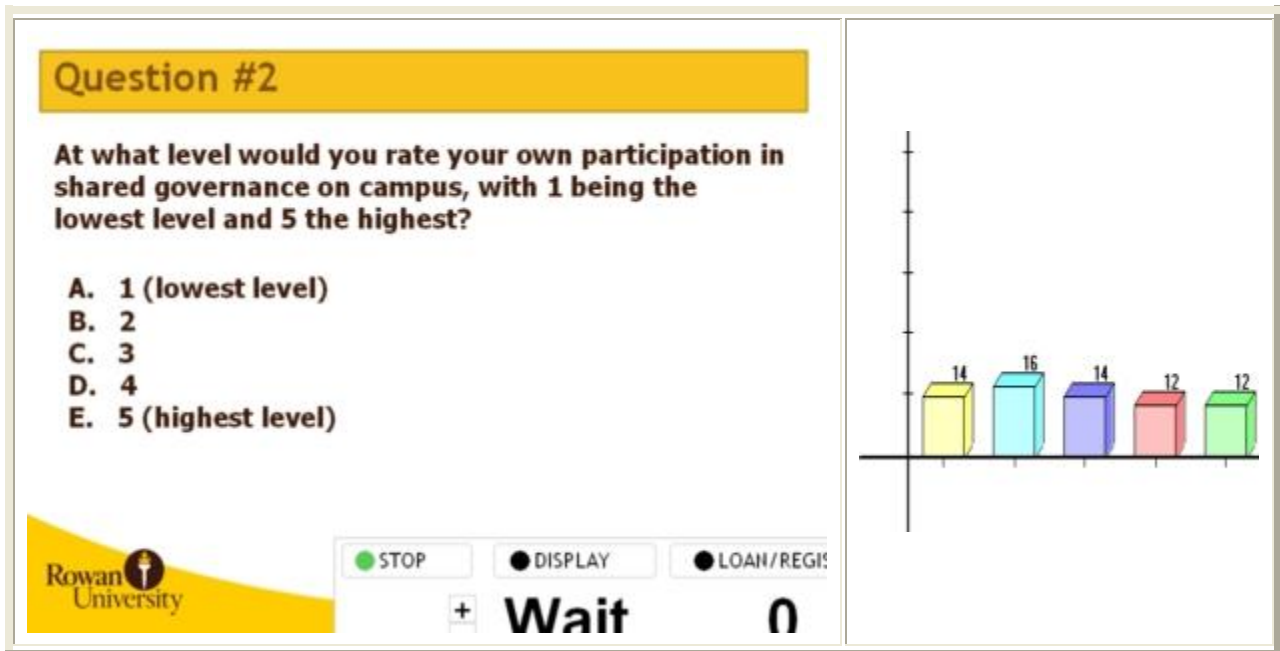


Question #2:

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                    14
- b. 2                    16
- c. 3                    14
- d. 4                    12
- e. 5                    12

TOTAL                68



Question #3:

I most often participate in shared governance by

- a. Consulting my supervisor                    19
- b. Serving on committees                    17
- c. Contacting other administrators                    12
- d. Consulting with campus constituents                    17
- e. Other                    5

TOTAL    70

### Question #3

I most often participate in shared governance by

- A. Contacting my supervisor
- B. Serving on committees
- C. Contacting other administrators
- D. Consulting with campus constituents
- E. Other



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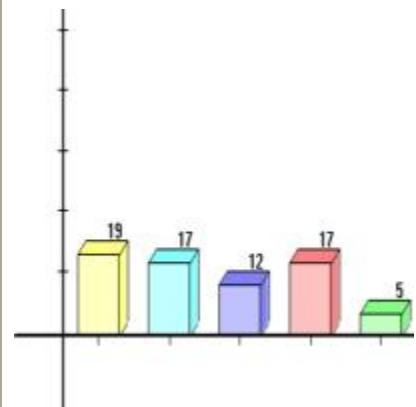
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Question #4:

To what level do you think your opinions are considered in shared governance, with 1 being the lowest level and 5 the highest?

- a. 1                    19
- b. 2                    20
- c. 3                    17
- d. 4                    8
- e. 5                    9

TOTAL                73

### Question #4

To what level do you think your opinions are considered 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)



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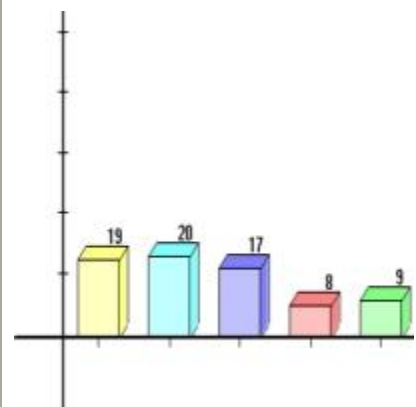
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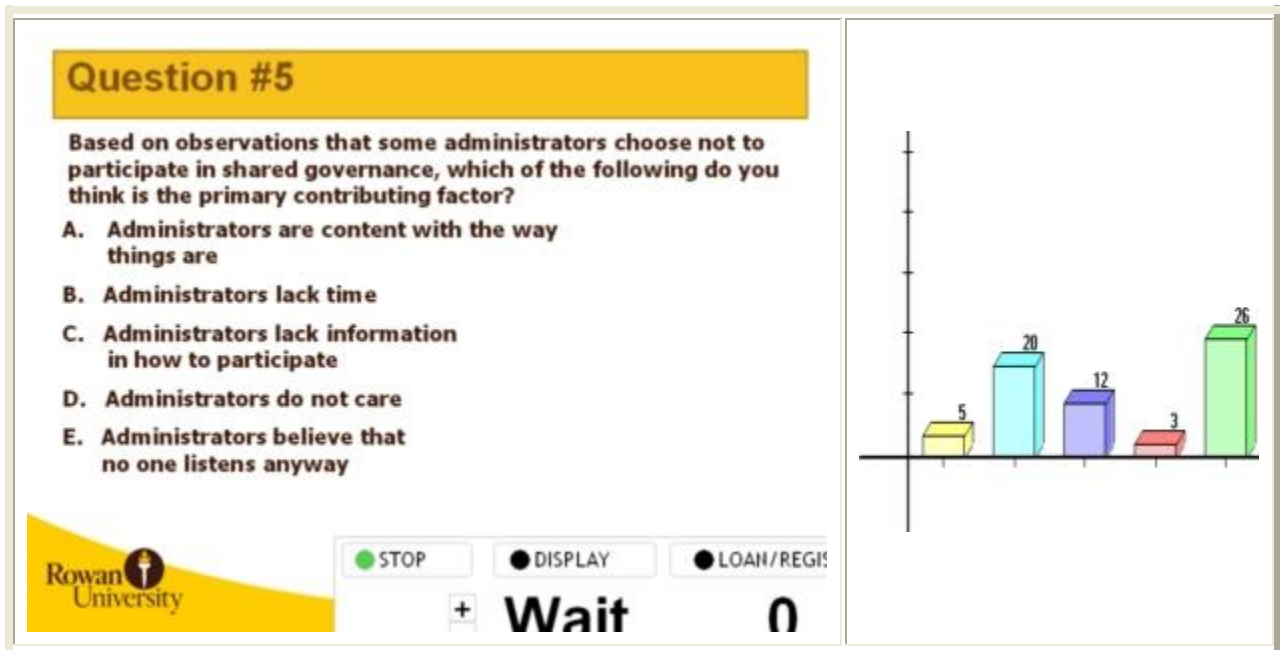
Question #5:

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

- a. Administrators are content with the way things are. 5
- b. Administrations lack information in how to participate. 20
- c. Administrators lack time. 12
- d. Administrators do not care. 3
- e. Administrators think that no one listens anyway. 26

Total

66



Administrators and other individuals present were then invited to participate in small-group discussions, choosing one of the questions from the iclicker survey, a topic of their choice relating to shared governance, or one of the suggested optional discussion questions:

What would it take to get administrators at your level more engaged at Rowan?

What are possible benefits of increased shared governance?

If you perceive barriers to shared governance, how can we work around them?

Are you aware of any institutions that could serve as a model for shared governance at Rowan?

At the conclusion of the small-group participation segment, the discussion opened up to the larger group, beginning with a summary of the discussion at each table but including comments from individuals as well.

Comment #1:

One of the things that came up is time—sometimes we don't have enough time to devote to shared governance. The biggest question is how we define shared governance and if

your views are not used, does that mean you are being ignored? Cynicism could be a result. What unit you're in plays a role. Flow of information is important. Sometimes emergencies get in the way. Responsibility does not always match the power that you may or may not have in your unit.

Comment #2:

Our table talked a lot about the difference between issues in communication and shared governance and concluded that a lot of times communication is the real factor of concern. We want some foreshadowing of a coming event. We also talked about who you are—if you are in the AFT so that you have the Senate to represent you, you have a relatively clear pipeline. If you are not represented by the Senate, it's not as clear what your pathway in shared governance would be.

Comment #3:

Most managers are in their offices working; they don't have the benefit of collective bargaining units. We get on committees, but they're usually search committees, not usually decision-making committees. As a result, we are left out of the loop.

Comment #4:

Our table talked a lot about how the Senate works. If it represents only those in the AFT, should it be called a University Senate? What path is there for other people? In our area we don't feel as if we're part of that at all, and the path to get our concerns heard is not always clear.

Comment #5:

With the Senate being the primary body, it's hard to get representation and it can be hard to get information to the committees—for example, the Aesthetics Committee might discuss something and there might be two or three weeks of discussion before an administrator would be called. The fact that the Senate committees work on an academic calendar means that things are slow to get organized and things are finalized in May, when members of Facilities and Public Safety, for example, are involved in public events that hamper their participation.

Comment #6:

The Senate is exclusionary, unlike other schools where members beyond faculty can participate. It was mentioned at our table that University Assembled meets a couple times a year, but it's not an opportunity for dialogue; people do not feel welcome to express opinions. Some people are afraid of speaking out; others believe there is no venue in which to do so.

Comment #7:

Our table also discussed many of these things, but one other thing we talked about is whether people feel disenfranchised. Although our opinions might have been taken into consideration in decision-making, sometimes we don't close the loop and explain how decisions were arrived at. If you explain the factors for the decision, it will help.

Comment #8:

We took advantage of having an administrator at our table who is new here. We asked her if she knew of any good models of shared governance. She talked about the importance of having focus. When she has been on projects where people were focused and saw the outcomes of the process, it was very productive; people at all levels of the organization got involved. The other part was what was just said—communicating about the outcome. If you participated in shared governance, what happened as a result of that?

Comment #9:

The discussion at our table was about what shared governance means, and we talked about some of the experiences we have had. Sometimes shared governance means that there is work involved, figuring out how to work out an issue or a problem. Sometimes we would like to share that, but that's often where shared governance breaks down.

Additional question: What would it take to get administrators at your level more involved at Rowan?

Comment #10:

On the iclicker question about why people do not participate in shared governance, I would like to choose multiple options. Sometimes it's time, sometimes it's an emergency, sometimes it's because we feel no one listens anyway. There's one thing, though, that ties into all of them. For faculty, service to the institution is important, something they're "graded on," and time is afforded faculty to do those things. That's not true for administration. We have to give up something in order to get our work done.

Additional question: What are possible benefits of increased shared governance?

Comment #11:

Shared governance leads to better decision-making. For some committees, when they're far down the road with their discussion, they finally touch base with people who have to implement the decision. Then the answer might be "we can't do that" for whatever reason. Better recommendations and decisions could be made, and committees could get the information they need, if they consulted earlier.

Comment #12:

The key benefit is that when people put their thoughts into some process and are accepted as part of the loop, that promotes quick buy-in and a sense of loyalty, a sense that "we are valued and our opinions are valued." That's a long-term benefit, not just a short one.

Comment #13:

It's better decision-making. I've seen faculty colleagues say "those lousy administrators" because it's easier to paste a label than to take joint responsibility. And I've seen administrators do the same in regard to faculty. Where shared governance comes close to academic quality, there are parts of that encoded in law or tradition, but there are many gray areas with wiggle room. Then getting input from everybody is crucial. I think the Master Plan is a good example of shared governance. People have been working on that together, and we've had good results.

Additional question: If you perceive barriers to shared governance, how can we work around them?

Comment #14

I think it's important to speak in an honest, transparent way. What is it we are asking for? What is possible? We need to have conversations about issues before decision-making. The President gave us a good example this morning [during the managers' breakfast held immediately preceding this RU Engaged session] by speaking to us with great transparency.

Comment #15:

Setting up structures so that we can ensure we are not having barriers to communication is important. It would help to look at how we structure communication—Rowan Daily Mail, the calendar, how decisions or meetings are communicated. It would be a good way to have a foundation for us to work on shared governance in its various pieces.

Additional question: Are you aware of any other institutions that could serve as a model?

Comment #16:

People look at shared governance as it exists right this minute, but at Rowan it has over a forty-year history, and shared governance has had lots of different models. At one point administrators were in the Senate, and then they were voted out. They used to be ex officio members of committees. Look at shared governance as an evolutionary thing. A couple years ago the Senate looked at revising its membership. It ended up that all we got was a Camden representative. It's a slow evolution, but this kind of conversation can help us move to what shared governance can be.

Comment #17:

I just want to say that there is no one model, no panacea. Here we enjoy a President who allows us to have this sort of conversation. On many campuses, as well as our own, it sometimes feels as if we don't matter. To the extent that we do continue with this dialogue, we are able to come together, figure out ways we can be supportive of each other, learn about each other's roles and the historical context, and move forward to that next level. As a faculty member, I'm able to engage with individuals in all divisions. Is it easy? No. Do some of us come in with preconceived notions? Yes. There is no one model that we could come up with that we would want to model ourselves on. We have an administration that is at least willing to listen and engage in the conversation.

Comment #18:

I want to urge President Farish to make sure that the conversations on shared governance that we have held this year lead to results. If nothing else, we need a definition of shared governance that we can all agree on.

Comment #19:

There will be a summit at the end of April, with all the facilitators getting together to talk about the next steps. At the end of the process, I'm sure the President will be getting something out as a follow-up to that summit.

Facilitator Question:

How many people would use online discussion mechanisms to keep this conversation going?

Response:

We actually have an RU Engaged blog. We encourage you to keep the conversation going there.

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Written comments:

No feedback is a problem. Validate the participation and time devoted to an issue through giving a rationale as to how a decision was made. Validate every participant's contribution through "debriefing" communication.

Some may feel there is no way to participate because of the structure. Part of the problem may be that the Senate is restricted in membership. University Assembled is an opportunity for presentation but not for dialogue.

New people are interested, but they have little time.

Some have the view "just do your work."

.Need a clear understanding of cogovernance, when it is appropriate, and when it may not be appropriate.

Shared governance must be valued in managerial evaluation and opportunities must be opened for Senate membership.

Certain departments lend themselves more to participation in shared governance.

Shared governance is not to be confused with complete democracy.

Are your views utilized? If not, it doesn't mean you are being ignored.