

## **Progress Report toward Shared Governance within UF/IFAS**

### **Report to Danaya Wright, University of Florida Faculty Senate President, 2006-07**

In June 2006, the IFAS Senators and members of the IFAS Faculty Council (FC) attended a luncheon provided by IFAS Vice President Cheek to discuss a response to the April 2006 Senate mandate to develop a constitution, or some other formal governance document. The goal was to begin the process of initiating shared governance within IFAS. Members from these two groups volunteered to work as an ad hoc committee to prepare a draft of the IFAS Constitution. The members of the ad hoc constitution committee were: John Davis, Forestry; Curt Hannah, Entomology; Jim Selph, DeSoto County Extension Director; Bill Lindberg, Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences; and Elizabeth Bolton, Family, Youth and Community Sciences. In July 2006, UF Senate Chair Danaya Wright met with the IFAS Senators and charged them and the FC representatives with moving forward with the task of developing a draft constitution. Their goal was to complete this process by April 2007. VP Cheek appointed Kirby Barrick, CALS Dean, to serve as an administrative liaison to participate in the process and keep his office informed of the progress.

The committee decided there would be three phases to the work and that each phase would have leadership provided by a different member of the committee. Phase 1 was to develop the initial draft. Phase 2 was to revise the draft within an expanded committee to include all IFAS senators and members of the FC. Phase 3 was to disseminate the revised constitution to all IFAS faculty for input, revisions, and set a timetable for ratification.

Having access to the UF Constitution and shared governance documents developed by other UF units/colleges enhanced the efficiency of the phase I group. The phase 1 committee met every week for several hours through the summer of 2006. Assignments were delegated to all committee members and completed prior to the next meeting. A draft IFAS constitution was completed and presented during the August 29<sup>th</sup> meeting of the IFAS Faculty Council.

Phase 2 was initiated and invited all IFAS senators and Faculty Council members to participate. Two meetings were held during September and early October and included approximately 20 of the 40 possible IFAS Senators and FC members. During these meetings, it was suggested that a graphic be included in the draft to depict the respective roles of faculty and administration related to the various unit functions. This graphic was excerpted from the April 2006, Senate Task Force Report on Shared Governance. The phase 2 committee prepared a power point that included the graphic and elements of the draft constitution. In addition, an outreach program was planned for phase 3 that would reach all units within IFAS and begin the IFAS wide spread discussion of shared governance and movement toward the ratification of a formal governance document.

Momentum into phase 3 was halted as members of IFAS administration expressed their reservations during the October 2006 meeting of the IFAS Administrative Council. The

Administrative Liaison to the draft constitution committee stated that the draft document represented faculty governance and not shared governance. Members of the phase 2 committee believed that the draft document was not fairly interpreted by the IFAS senior administration and that the ensuing discussion would have gone more favorably if there would have been an opportunity for more dialogue among IFAS administrators and committee representatives. Senior VP Cheek requested that a new committee be reconvened to further revise the draft constitution before widespread dissemination to the IFAS faculty.

During the October and November meetings of the IFAS Faculty Council, members, in conjunction with Dr. Cheek, set forth a plan that included developing educational materials on shared governance for the IFAS faculty and conducting a faculty survey of perceptions and expectations surrounding shared governance. Toward that end, members of the Faculty Council produced a narrated power point presentation on the principles of shared governance. This power point was a revised version of the power point developed by the phase 2 committee. This power point has been posted on the IFAS Faculty Council website and is beginning to receive widespread attention. Dr. Cheek has encouraged IFAS unit leaders to devote a portion of their respective unit level meetings to the playing of this power point. Members of the Faculty Council plan to record the comments from their respective departments and units that this power point generates.

At the April 17, 2007 Faculty Council meeting, members reviewed a third draft of a faculty survey on shared governance. The purpose of this survey is to solicit faculty perceptions of the current status of shared governance within IFAS and solicit the collective expectations on how shared governance should proceed into the future. The Council agreed to finalize the survey content and distribute the survey by the first week in May. The survey would run through most of May and results would be compiled in June. After that point, discussions would begin to reform a constitution committee that includes representatives of both programmatic and administrative faculty.

While the original goal to develop and ratify an IFAS constitution by April 2007 has not been met, progress has been made toward implementing a formal shared governance process within IFAS. First, awareness and need for shared governance has spread from the group of IFAS senators to include all the members of the IFAS Faculty Council. Second, it has been recognized that one of the principle outcomes of shared governance is improved communication between administrative and programmatic faculty ranks. Toward that end, Senior VP Cheek proposed to include 2 IFAS senators as formal members of the IFAS Faculty Council. The Council unanimously endorsed Dr. Cheek's plan and this change in Council membership will be introduced at a meeting scheduled for Thursday, April 19<sup>th</sup> just prior to the monthly UF Senate meeting. Third, IFAS faculty members are beginning to exercise their collective voice and shape aspects of University policy. Evidence of such action occurred during the March 2007 meeting of the University Senate when IFAS faculty voiced their opposition to proposed changes in how the Academic Personnel Board would review promotion packages from IFAS Extension faculty.

The goal for the remainder of the 2006-07 academic year is to reconvene a constitutional committee. The constitutional document drafted by the phase 1 committee and revised by the phase 2 committee will be the beginning point. Information collected through the Faculty Council survey will serve as a guide to modify the existing document and develop a final version. Ratification of the IFAS constitution will, hopefully, occur during the 2007-08 academic year.

Respectfully submitted by:  
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