

October 25, 2012
Report on the Meeting of the Faculty Senate
with Internal Governance Consultant Rod Smolla

President Smolla was introduced by Dr. Laura Jacobsen, president of the Faculty Senate, who observed that the IG Task Force that has been working with President Smolla represented all constituencies: student, staff, AP faculty, and TR faculty.

President Smolla first spoke about his role, reviewing both the limitations and potential benefits of bringing in a consultant. As a limitation, he observed that he cannot have the feel for the culture of RU that is possessed by members of the RU community. He also observed that as a consultant he has no prescriptive authority, nor should he. Such authority would be unrealistic and not representative of the culture of higher education. He stated that changes to internal governance at RU must reflect widespread buy-in by all constituencies and that there must be a widespread sense of shared values and an enthusiasm that arises organically.

President Smolla also pointed out that the obverse of arriving without in-depth knowledge of the culture of RU is that he was not burdened with the baggage of bias and would be able to bring to bear objectivity and a fresh perspective. In addition, his lack of prescriptive authority freed him to be candid and to ask hard questions and allowed him the neutrality to help channel conversation without steering it toward a position in which he was invested.

He also stated that the meeting was intended to be an open forum rather than an occasion for him to deliver a report or an assessment, as delivering a report or assessment at this stage would cut off conversation. He did, however, provide a general overview of what he perceived to be the nature of the frustrations with internal governance at RU. He characterized these frustrations as falling into three categories. Some were responses to institutional values or culture. Some reflected managerial issues. Others were responses to inefficiencies arising from a cumbersome IG structure that had created a machine that was large, slow, and difficult to understand.

At this point President Smolla opened the floor to discussion.

The first speaker stated that “shared governance” was a contradiction in terms because by definition power is not shared. The TJEET1 0 0 1 1015f-m2037m(not Th(a) is da 1. (r) (dless of how boards)/a

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governance culture the precise governing structure may not matter. Often of greater importance is whether members of the university community feel enough trust in other members to work their way through an issue.

The next speaker asked for President's Smolla's perception as to the strengths and weaknesses of the current IG document. President Smolla replied that its greatest weakness is its complexity,

that appointments to IG committees are made but that committees are not convened. As a result, faculty feel that such committees are not valued. It may be the case, however, that the administrator was unaware of the role it was supposed to play in convening these committees.

The next speaker asked about the decline of tenure and suggested that adjuncts don't feel the same connection with an institution as tenured/tenure track instructors. President Smolla stated that academic freedom is the soul of tenure and that tenure is not going away. He also stated that there are issues of cost and efficiency behind the hiring of adjuncts and that these are not dirty words: efficiency makes higher education accessible. He offered the analogy of law firms that rely on both equity and non-equity partners. In a follow up, another speaker asked whether it is better to have one adjunct teaching three courses or three adjuncts, each teaching one. President Smollas replied that Radford is complex enough to need the flexibility of "utility players" as well as adjuncts carried a larger load.

The next speaker asked whether Radford should be "starting over" versus reforming, observing that the university has a structure in place for reforming. President Smolla answered by outlining what he sees as desirable changes. Radford needs to eliminate duplication, e.g., multiple curriculum committees. The process requires the establishment of a representative group "with legitimacy" that, with consultation, can come up with streamlined structure,