

Florin Curta

Serving as a senator (2010-2012), I had the opportunity to see the difference between shared and self-governance. I also came to realize that effective governance requires a creative counterpoint between the faculty's emphasis on professional academic priorities and the administration's representation of financial limitations and the comprehensive mission of the institution. The experience I gained as a member of the Faculty Academic Advisory Committee (2005-2007), the Senate Nominating Committee (2007-2009), and the Academic Freedom, Tenure, Professional Relations and Standards Committee (2010-2012) solidified my unwavering commitment to the ideal of self-governance. From being a member of the Preservation of Historic Buildings and Sites Committee (2008-2010) and of the Senate Compensation Committee (2007-2010), I have learned first-hand about the delicate balance between participation in decision making and clear accountability.

With a M.A. in Medieval Studies from Cornell University and a Ph.D. in History from Western Michigan University, I joined the Department of History at UF in 1999. I have since then initiated an archaeological summer school, which takes place every year in a different country of Europe; launched a graduate certificate program in Medieval Archaeology; and published nine books, one of which— *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500-700 A.D.* (Cambridge University Press, 2001)—received the Herbert Baxter Adams Prize of the American Historical Association.

I have met people from many fields, with many backgrounds, and with many ideas, and I have learned from all of them. I have also learned to respect their opinions, while defending mine. Many times, it has also been a way to build collaboration, to reach compromise, or to gather support. I came to appreciate that as the *modus operandi* of a healthy academic life and of a true self-governance.

At the first senate meeting I have attended, one of the issues on the agenda was a review of effectiveness of shared governance. Different problems confront us today: the renewal of the graduate program and the Good Life course for all freshmen, on one hand, self-insurance and a restructuring of the faculty benefits, on the other hand. There are opportunities in every one of those changes, as well as challenges and even risks. Over the last few months, the university-wide debate on every one of those matters has brought a new dimension to the question of how effective shared governance is at the University of Florida. The Senate chair participates in decision making, and in that capacity represents the interests of the faculty to the administration, the Board of Trustees, and the general public. My goal is to turn that representation into a solution to the multiple challenges we face today.