

Chair-elect Nominee Essay for Charles Guy

Rapid and enormous change is underway in American higher education, and at the University of Florida. Where it is leading no one can say for sure. There is no stopping this change, and the question is whether university faculty will be participants and agents of the change, or let it be determined by others. UF has changed a great deal in the 29 years I have been a faculty member in the Department of Environmental Horticulture, but what lies ahead may be much greater and much more rapid.

At its beginning UF was tiny, and all aspects of its day to day operations were shared and joint endeavors of the President and his faculty. In 2013, UF is immensely more complex with many moving parts, and there is no way the President and Administration can work together so closely with faculty as was once the case.

In my view, shared governance is simply effective communication. It is not rocket science, but it is not easy either. It is the bi- or multi-directional sharing of information in a timely way to achieve the best policy-making and decision-making possible. True shared governance creates a vertically integrated neural network of limitless intellectual power that assesses the merits of ideas, policies and processes, and refines, improves and optimizes them. It is not the purpose of shared governance to pit adversarial points of view against the other, but to achieve a more holistic understanding in the service of decision-making and moving forward. It is also not shared governance if truth cannot not be boldly spoken to power when necessary. My view of shared governance has been shaped through participation on the IFAS Constitution Drafting Committee, as the first ever Chair-elect and then the second Chair of the IFAS Faculty Assembly, and through service on the Assembly's Executive and Infrastructure and Resources Committees, and most recently as a member of the Senate. My goal, if elected, would be dedicated to maximizing the benefits of shared governance for the advancement of the University in its missions through transparent information sharing, effective communication and mutual understanding.