

Provost's Presentation to Academic Affairs Division

On Alignment of Instructional Units

16 August 2010 – Student Union Ballroom

Good morning and thank you very much for being here. I am truly appreciative of your taking time from the frenetic activities that lead up to starting a new academic year, and the responsibilities of your various positions. As you know, tomorrow morning, President Bradshaw will formally welcome back the entire campus community for this new academic year. It is not my intention to preempt the significance of that event. Unfortunately for me, I will be in Miami tonight and tomorrow morning representing the President and will not be a participant. So this IS my chance to say that I hope that everyone had a productive summer, and at least some opportunity to recharge and refresh.

For those of you who are new to FGCU, I welcome you to the Division of Academic Affairs. Your new colleagues, the returning faculty and staff are dedicated academicians and professionals and you could find no better group of colleagues to serve as mentors and role models. You have much you can learn from them, and much to contribute as well.

This morning's meeting is significant in several respects. To begin, I believe this is the first time that we have convened as the full Division

of Academic Affairs. We are large and we are dedicated to the values of the core mission of this University: academic excellence, lifelong learning, advancement of knowledge, and the pursuit of truth. But our purpose this morning is far from symbolic. I asked for you to join me to reflect briefly upon our past, take stock, if only for a moment, of the incredible institution that we have become, and launch a process that will focus on the alignment of our instructional units and thereby position us for even greater accomplishments in our shared institutional future.

Measured against what we sometimes refer to as the ‘academy,’ the American system of higher education, our institutional history is as astounding as it is short. We were chartered in 1991. We hired our first faculty in 1995. We opened our doors to an initial student enrollment of 2,584 in 1997. We surpassed a student enrollment of 5000 students in 2002; 7500 students in 2006; and 10,000 students in 2008. And we celebrated our 10,000<sup>th</sup> graduate in 2009. During that time we earned accreditation by AACSB, CANAE, ACOTE, CAPTE, CACREP, CCNE, CSWE, NASPAA, NAACLS, PGA, and CAATE. We are holding our breath on word of successful accreditation by ABET, which should come to us in a matter of days, and We are actively engaged in the hunt for accreditation by NCATE and NASM. OUR institutional

achievements have been heralded by numerous other external constituencies near and far, as have been the individual and collective contributions of you, our faculty and staff. As we stand at the door of 2011, who could have possibly imagined all this in 1991, or even 2001?

Not surprisingly, Our University, Southwest Florida's regional comprehensive public university, has gone through transformations of varying types and magnitudes since our opening. Growth and change are not unfamiliar to us. Rather, these qualities have been part of the fabric of this institution since its inception and they have served us well. Just a few examples: economics moved from Arts and Sciences (A&S) to the Lutgert College of Business, Clinical Lab Science moved from the College of Health Professions to A&S and then back again; and Political Science transitioned from A&S to the College of Professional Studies. The College of Education began as a School and several new schools came into being within colleges.

With regard to our students, we became more residential in nature. And we added real estate, including our marine lab and a 500-acre site, the Buckingham property that we will grow into over time. We very successfully transitioned to Division I athletics and are now looking at the feasibility of a football program.

Where do we stand right now in terms of important indicators of our success? We continue to experience significant growth across just about every dimension and metric associated with our profession. Over the past two years we have added nearly 45 new faculty positions. President Bradshaw has just authorized the addition of new staff lines to be filled as soon as possible in this fiscal year. Student retention last year increased, as did our six-year graduation rate. We saw the number of degrees awarded increase significantly. We witnessed the opening of the Kapnick Education and Research Center in Naples and, on our campus, Academic Building 7 came on line to support the laboratory sciences. In a matter of days we will welcome students to our new home for the Bower School of Music and the final phase of Sugden Hall has now been completed with ballroom, wine tasting room and spa facility. We will soon break ground on the Health Professions building, having received a well-deserved and sizable state PECO award. We have received generous gifts in support of our academic mission including \$1,000,000 to endow the Backe Chair in Renewable Energy and have developed powerful partnerships with the private sector. We launched new degree programs and will continue to do so. And our EdD will be, I repeat WILL BE, approved by the Board of Governors next month.

We successfully agreed to a new contract with the UFF, and eligible faculty and staff will be receiving bonuses and a raise over the coming months. And all of our colleagues in all divisions remain with us without layoffs or furloughs of any kind. These substantial investments, ranging from human capital to capital construction, are particularly remarkable because during roughly the same period of time we have responded to the challenges imposed by a reduction of just over 25% in general revenue from the State of Florida.

We are now embarking on the implementation of our 4<sup>th</sup> institutional strategic plan, which was developed under the aegis of our Planning and Budget Council and enthusiastically accepted and approved by our Board of Trustees at their June meeting. While all seven (7) goals embraced by our new strategic plan have equal merit and value, three (3) of them arguably speak most directly to the academic core of the university: academic excellence, the discovery and application of knowledge, and strategic growth. To maximally achieve these goals, and move us forward on the path to continued academic success, I believe that we need to examine the alignment of our instructional programs within and across colleges.

What specifically drives my call for you to think about alignment?  
There are numerous convergent factors. Our growth projections

identify that we will be a University of 20,000 students in about 8 years. To get there, we will realize our goal of becoming a fully comprehensive university with about 15 additional undergraduate and 8 additional graduate programs, added incrementally and strategically, over that time. Increased student retention needs to, and should be, part of that growth. Increased student success will drive that additional retention. Excellent marketing strategies directed toward more numerous, high quality programs will facilitate student recruitment. And expanded national and international institutional reputation will be rewarded with the increased interest of highly qualified faculty and staff candidates who will populate new faculty and staff positions.

To achieve this vision we must act intentionally and be responsive to important questions that we ask of ourselves. Are there natural synergies among disciplines that will enhance our instructional delivery, our agenda for scholarship, and the needs of our students? Are there academic alignments that anticipate growth by facilitating implementation of new degree programs? Can consideration of our disciplinary 'ways of knowing' and the various ways that we foster the development of intellectual habits of the mind provide guidance related to alignment of programs? How should aspects of the

acquisition of knowledge inform instruction? How can building relational alignments help us to help each other be more successful? How do we position ourselves within the complicated and rapidly expanding higher education market to realize our competitive advantage? How can our special emphases on environmental sustainability and service learning be more holistically actualized? Also, as a collateral benefit to reviewing alignment, can we become more intentional regarding equitable distribution of all forms of resources and establish greater parity of job descriptions?

Is it appropriate to even consider this discussion in such difficult fiscal times? I believe so. These are exactly the times that require us to join this conversation and respond with collective reaffirmation. When other institutions of higher education are reeling from this period of time, bruised and in very real ways dismembered, I envision an FGCU that is eager and ready to return to better times and positioned with enhanced synergies and the energy and vigor to optimize for that future. As other institutions struggle to rebuild and determine their futures, we can truly watch our FGCU eagle soar.

Is this exercise merely an effort to economize and reduce expenditures? Absolutely not. I am not asking that we do more with less. Rather, I ask that we become more strategic so that we can

accomplish as much as possible with the resources available to us. As we, hopefully, reach the end of a very difficult economic period, we should position ourselves to optimize for increasing resources that will come to us in the better years ahead.

Is there ever a best time to take on a task of this type? Probably not. But I believe the moment to accept the challenge of proactive conversations on strategic alignment and growth is now, and not after further substantial growth has occurred and potentially becomes more burdensome or counterproductive to the process.

Last spring, I informed the Faculty Senate, Staff Advisory Council (SAC) leadership and several groups of faculty and staff that it was my intention to have us engage in a series of conversations to inform a review of the alignment of instructional units within and across colleges. I also noted that we would use the summer to develop a process for those conversations to occur. I asked the Council of Deans to assist me in the development of this process during a retreat. Also, I had multiple conversations and meetings with Senate President and member of our Board of Trustees, Chuck Lindsey and with Staff Advisory Council President Raymond Rodrigues. I twice met with representatives of the Summer Senate and SAC leadership through an iterative effort directed toward refining that process and the document

that codifies it and its explicit timeline. The constructive advice and input from all three leadership groups, now embodied in that document, has benefitted it immensely.

Today I want to share with you the process that we developed for moving forward. First, I want to assure you that it is not the intention that this process will result in the elimination of programs nor will this process result in layoffs, furloughs, or salary reductions. Nor will the outcomes of this process result in the loss of accreditation of any of our programs. This cannot happen and I will not allow it to happen. And again, this process is all about identifying an organizational alignment that embraces our strategic plan, contributes to and supports positive synergies between and among instructional units, contributes to student success, and invests in institutional effectiveness.

While the outcomes of this effort will be tangible, the process that we will use to take us there, dialogue and discussion, should also tangibly foster community building, and enhance cross-disciplinary understanding. Beginning today and throughout this week, annual College retreats will be held and will include, in part, the topic of alignment. During the month of September, a series of open, drop-in style conversations will be held at different times and on different days of the week to facilitate cross college participation. These conversations

will include discussion questions and interactive exercises designed to elicit feedback to inform the alignment process. Feedback loops to provide for sequential conversations are built into the process and are explicit.

So who will facilitate and consolidate these discussions? Next week, I will announce the establishment of an *ad hoc* Positioning and Alignment Task Force comprised of approximately nine (9) individuals representing Faculty, SAC academic membership, the Council of Deans, and the Office of the Provost. SAC President Rodrigues has already provided to me a short list of names, from which I will select two Task Force members. Senate President Lindsey will provide more information to you on a similar faculty selection process when he visits with each college this week during your retreats. This Task Force is the group that I will soon charge to manage the process. It is also the group that I will rely on to inform my decision making.

The Task Force will be responsible for organizing the sessions that are to occur in September. It will use the month of October to review and analyze the input from those sessions and all other input into the process. During the first half of November, the Task Force will present a series of overviews and analysis to the major stakeholder groups

within Academic Affairs. During the third week of November, the Task Force will provide to me their findings.

Between Thanksgiving and the start of the new calendar year, I will review and consider all the information provided to me, and during the second week in January, I will announce to the University community a plan for moving forward. Following that announcement, in consultation with an implementation task force made up of faculty and key administrative and staff members, to include representation from the registrar's office, admissions, advising, IT, student affairs, administrative affairs, institutional research, advancement, and other appropriate key areas, we will successfully implement the plan in time for the start of the fall 2011 semester.

To ensure effective communication throughout this process, the Task Force will maintain a website, which will become active immediately following this meeting. On the website you will find the full text of this presentation, and the detailed process timeline document that was developed with the Senate, SAC, and academic leadership, and which includes additional specific target dates beyond those that I have shared with you today. In the days ahead, you will see the list of Task Force members and the charge that will be given to that Task Force.

The website will also serve as an additional vector for input. From start to finish, there are no less than six (6) feedback loops specifically designed to provide for input during critical points in the process.

This may seem like an ambitious timeline and in some respects it is. However, at FGCU we are accustomed to taking on challenges and I am confident that together we will accomplish our goal of positioning FGCU for our continued promising future, with both the deliberate speed and appropriate care that our brief and illustrious past demands, and our students deserve. It is a shared future, a collective future, and we will approach it in a spirit of collegiality.

While many of your immediate questions will potentially be answered by information that is now up on our website, I will be happy to entertain any questions that you may have.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for all that you have done to bring FGCU to the proud position that we hold today. And thank you for all that you will do to advance FGCU even further into the future. As our *alma mater* says: let us continue to soar and go “Where our wings will take us.” GO EAGLES !