

FGCU Faculty Senate Outcomes and Assessment Task Force
Proposed Operating Principles
October 6, 2011

Background

The Faculty Senate forms teams to understand, develop, portray, and communicate the general will of the faculty in important matters of University business. Any resolution represents an accommodation of a variety of viewpoints at a particular point in time in an ongoing dialogue of values and meanings.

Because of the need to generate an authentic, representative viewpoint on matters of central importance to the faculty, the Senate has conceived a process – developed at the inception of the University – that allows input and advice from a variety of sources, but ultimately rests upon the responsibility and accountability of faculty representatives to their peers as the basis of legitimate decision and action. The faculty’s will is represented through the faculty’s voice as spoken through Senate governance bodies.

The Nature of the Task Force

The Outcomes and Assessment Task Force will express the faculty’s position on the superordinate student learning outcomes that all academic programs are accountable to deliver and assess. The results produced by this governance team will be a statement of the faculty’s view of how to define FGCU-wide student learning outcomes and the methods by which those outcomes will be assessed. The student learning outcomes devised by this task force are fundamentally a statement of the desired accomplishments that faculty—across programs, majors and courses—commit to help their students achieve. While not every faculty member will be responsible for every outcome, every program will provide opportunities for its students to acquire and demonstrate the agreed upon set of institutional student learning outcomes, and will commit to regular assessment of these learning outcomes for the purpose of programmatic improvement.

The results of the task force’s work must be collectively decided by the faculty, because these results will determine some of the measures of success for each program, and by extension some of the measures of success for each course within those programs, and ultimately contribute evidence regarding the success of each member of the faculty in their primary responsibility of teaching. The products of the OATF must be consonant with the goals and capabilities of all programs across the University, and achieving this requires a process that is focused on the faculty, but attendant to all stakeholders’ legitimate needs and interests.

The need for an accountable, transparent and faculty-centric process is reflected perfectly in the original and enduring design of faculty governance teams as described in the Faculty Senate by-laws. Composed of elected, in-unit faculty representing academic units in a system that “encourages transparency and reasoned discourse,”¹ faculty governance teams generate the voice of the faculty with a mix of faculty representatives and *ex officio* members from, in this case, the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. *Ex officio* members provide a critical role in the conduct of policy-making by faculty teams. In some teams, such as the standing curriculum teams, where the expertise and support of the representatives of the VPAA are particularly

important, more than one *ex officio* member is invited to participate. This is also the case with the OATF. *Ex officio* members provide critical input, advice and feedback from relevant administrative offices and perspectives to the faculty representatives on the team.

In order to faithfully execute the unique responsibilities of the faculty in keeping with Senate by-laws, Board of Governors directives,² and SACS accreditation standards,³ the OATF will function as a representative Faculty Senate task force, following the procedural conventions and traditions established by the Senate, and incorporating throughout its work the input, advice and feedback of the *ex officio* members.

The OATF will, as part of its self-determined processes, create methods of understanding and integrating the needs of all involved stakeholders, including students, into their analysis and results. To the extent possible, the OATF should produce final products of its work through consensus of all members, including *ex officio* members of the team. When consensus is not possible, a majority vote of the elected academic unit representatives, with the appointed chairperson only voting in the case of a tie, shall be taken to resolve the issue. Once an issue is resolved, it shall be considered to be closed, unless a consensus of the task force finds new information or sufficient compelling reason to reconsider.

As per its charge from Faculty Senate, the OATF will produce statements of university-wide learning outcomes and assessment tools and procedures and submit these to the Faculty Senate for review and ratification. The Faculty Senate will then forward these approved statements to the VPAA and the President.

¹ Faculty Senate By-Laws, Preamble, Page 2, Line 47. The bylaws also note that “Collaborative and shared leadership among all university constituents is critical to creating a campus environment conducive to advancing student achievement. Fairness, mutual respect, continuous improvement, an informed faculty, and collegial decision-making are the hallmarks of the governance structure.”

² Board of Governors Academic Learning Compacts, 8.016, 3-29-07 (current policy), Section (3) *Processes*:
(a) **Program faculty must develop** Academic Learning Compacts that identify, at a minimum, the expected core student learning outcomes for program graduates in the areas of (i) content/discipline knowledge and skills; (ii) communication skills*; and (iii) critical thinking skills.* Input should be sought from the business and professional community to identify learning outcomes that students need for success in the global marketplace and society.
(b) **Program faculty must identify** the corresponding assessment tools and procedures that faculty use within the context of the program to determine if individual students have met each of the articulated core student learning expectations.
(c) **University personnel must develop** robust and effective program assessment/evaluation systems (which can involve sampling), including external corroboration, to substantiate that graduates have truly attained the expected core competencies.
(d) **Program faculty must demonstrate** the use of results from program assessments/evaluations to continuously improve program effectiveness and student learning. (bold added)

* It will be a university decision as to whether there will be institutional-level definitions and/or required outcomes in these areas of communication and critical thinking skills. Some institutions may decide instead that definitions and/or required outcomes will be established (or supplemented) at the program level.

³ See **SACS Standard 3.4.10**: The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum with its faculty (Responsibility for Curriculum).

Charge

Like other Senate task forces, the Outcomes and Assessment Task Force will begin its work by defining its operational procedures and decision-making processes, including the framework for deliberations and the work flow for iterative documents that are to become part of the task force's official work product. Once that groundwork is completed, it will proceed with the following three charges, with an over-arching goal of simplifying and aligning existing processes while ensuring an effective and efficient University-wide student learning outcomes assessment process.

1. Develop University SLOs for all University levels (lower division, upper division, and graduate programs).
2. Establish a partial list of SLO attributes, as appropriate, and a process for continued attribute identification in academic units.
3. Develop a University-level SLO assessment plan, with specific attention to course-embedded assessments.

Membership

Chair:

Judy R. Wilkerson

Voting Members:

Darlene Andert	LCOB
Tom Bevins	CHP
Anna Carlin	Library
Sim Komisar	WCE
Collin Ramdeen	CPS
Maria Roca	CAS
Xiaoxue Charles Wang	COE

Ex-Officio Members:

Cathy Duff	Acting Associate Vice President for Curriculum and Instruction
Elsbeth McCulloch	E-learning Designer
Jim Wohlpart	Interim Dean of Undergraduate Studies