

Provost's Newsletter

Academic Affairs at the University of North Florida

February, 2008

Colleagues,

In this update I would like to share news with you about a number of matters that are receiving attention in Academic Affairs.

We are of course concerned about the university's budget. Thus far, as a result of fiscal foresight on the part of President Delaney and Vice President Shuman, UNF has been able to weather budget reductions more favorably than some of its sister institutions. Recruitment of new faculty has continued unabated, and we have not had to cut back on resources for faculty development such as travel and summer research support. At the same time, there is no reason to believe that our budget reductions are over. There exists considerable uncertainty about the likely extent of further reductions but little uncertainty that they will indeed occur. Anticipating these reductions, Academic Affairs has been engaged in ongoing strategic planning to determine how best to generate its share of the university's lost revenues when that figure is finally calculated. Since last year the deans of the five colleges, the library, and the graduate school, along with Joann Campbell, have been functioning as a budget council; we have invited the president of the Faculty Association and the chair of the FA Budget Committee to join this council to ensure that faculty have a vehicle for input into this strategic planning and a direct source of information about whatever cost-cutting measures we must contemplate taking. One such measure that you may have heard about is the BOG mandate to align enrollments with funding, which thus far has resulted in a freeze on the size of our incoming freshmen class and a likely reduction in the number of upper-level transfers that we will be admitting in the year ahead.

I would like to believe that there is a positive side to our austere circumstances which is the focus that will emerge from our conversations about priorities. Such focus is also the goal of the Provost's Task Force that continues to refine the university's vision and mission statements and strategic goals. This effort has become ever timelier, as it will inform budget allocations—or reductions—as well as the university-BOG compact that we will be developing over the course of the spring. The BOG compact, you might recall, will specify the mission-driven strategic initiatives that the university will commit itself to accomplishing in the next three to five years, on the mutual conditions of BOG support and institutional accountability and funding. The feedback received from the university community on the draft versions of the Task Force's vision, mission, and goal statements was very helpful; in the near future the Task Force will be scheduling some public forums for further conversation about its work.

Another important set of documents on which many people are hard at work is the compliance report that the university must submit to SACS early in the fall semester,

Upcoming Events

03/04/08

On Monday, March 4th, the Academic Affairs Inquiry and Insight Lecture Series will host Azar Nafisi, author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. The lecture is at 7:30 pm in the University Center. This event is free and open to the public but tickets are required for seating. Go to [Media Relations](#) to order your tickets.

04/10/08

The Provost's Diversity Task Force will host a visit and lecture by Dr. Mordean Taylor-Archer, Vice Provost for Diversity and Equal Opportunity at the University of Louisville. The lecture, "Achieving Excellence through Diversity" will be at 7:00 pm in the University Gallery. For more information on Dr. Taylor-Archer's work, go to: provost/diversity/viceprovost.html.

SACS and QEP Updates

The Institutional Effectiveness Team and Quality Enhancement Plan Committee continue their work in UNF's effort to prepare for the 2009 SACS reaffirmation visit.

The QEP Team has now identified a consultant to assist in the overall planning and implementation of the UNF QEP: Community-Based Transformational Learning. Dr. Amy Driscoll with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has accepted our invitation to serve in this role and will be meeting with the QEP Team in April.

Recent Announcements

UNF Reads! – The Undergraduate Studies Council in cooperation with the General Education Council has adopted a new program beginning fall 2008 designed to ease the transition to college level work. Over the summer all incoming freshmen and many faculty, staff members, and upper division students will read *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner. For more information, go to: reads-program.html.

2008. The compliance report will provide the basis for a review of the university by an off-site committee; that review, in turn, will determine the focus of an on-site committee's investigation when it comes to campus early in the spring semester, 2009. I am very grateful to members of the Institutional Effectiveness Team for the effort they have put into drafting components of the compliance report, and also grateful to the faculty and staff of the university for engaging in the kind of planning and assessment that will provide SACS with the assurance it seeks that the university is doing all that it can to responsibly fulfill its mission. Towards this same end the university will join what is called the Voluntary System of Accountability, an initiative developed collaboratively by NASULGC (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges) and AASCU (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, of which UNF is a member), that will require us to document, in a standardized format, a number of features about the university and the success of its students. The benefits to be derived from UNF's participation in the VSA was the subject of a fruitful luncheon conversation yesterday hosted by the Faculty Association and Academic Affairs. More information about UNF's involvement in the VSA will be forthcoming, but if you wish to familiarize yourself with it in the meanwhile you will find information at <http://www.voluntarysystem.org/index.cfm> .

A critical component of our SACS compliance report is the Quality Enhancement Plan that we are committing ourselves to for the next five years. As I trust you are all aware, the topic of UNF's QEP is [community-based transformational learning](#), a theme that evolves directly from the university's mission to serve the community in which it is situated, as well as from the university's promise to help students grow intellectually in ways that will be profound and lasting. More information also will be forthcoming on the QEP in the weeks ahead.

Lastly I would like to report that the Undergraduate Studies Council is formulating a plan for the introduction, on a pilot basis, of undergraduate program coordinators who will be charged with mentoring students within their major disciplines. And a subset of the Council, augmented as its members see fit, will be undertaking an open-ended review of our advising services to determine what innovations we might consider in order to maximize the effectiveness of advising in a university that eventually will be considerably larger than it is currently.

An ideal academic institution was once defined as Mark Hopkins (the president of Williams College from 1836 to 1872 and a professor of "moral and intellectual philosophy") on one end of a log and a student on the other. All the administrative efforts I have recounted above ultimately are geared to facilitate exactly this kind of relationship. My sense is that, our budget situation notwithstanding, the university abounds in intellectual and cultural richness. Which is my way of saying, thank you for doing such fine work at your end of the log.

Mark E. Workman Provost and VPAA

