

Provost's Newsletter

Academic Affairs at the University of North Florida
October, 2007

A Recent BOG Action

I have developed this newsletter as a means of periodically sharing with you what I regard as vital information that warrants your attention. As we do not live in dull times—within our university, the SUS, the State of Florida, or American higher education—at any given moment there will undoubtedly be a number of issues that I believe you will find to be of timely interest, especially as these issues might impact you or the future of our university.

Given the understandable consternation generated by the recent Pappas Report and a number of subsequent editorials that appeared in the Florida Times-Union, which invoked the possibility of relegating UNF to the status of a state college, I am particularly pleased to report to you a decision reached at last week's Board of Governor's meeting that formally recognizes the ten existing SUS universities (not including New College, in other words) as having exclusive authority to offer graduate-level degrees at Florida's public institutions. The ramifications of this action are two-fold: first, anticipating the need for more state-wide providers of baccalaureate education, most likely to be developed from existing community colleges and branch campuses, the BOG in advance has restricted their evolving degree granting authority to the baccalaureate level only; and, of more profound significance for our university, the BOG's action affirms UNF's status as an institution whose responsibilities will continue to cover the entire range of degree programs from the baccalaureate level through the doctoral.

UNF's mission has been and always will be to serve as a fine public university dedicated to meeting the educational needs of the citizens of the region. Unquestionably, it will make sense for certain degree programs to be offered at larger, more research-intensive universities. But within its appropriate range—a range now safeguarded by the Board's action—UNF will strive to provide the fullest possible array of excellent undergraduate and graduate programs to advance the educational and professional aspirations of its students and thereby fulfill its responsibility as "North Florida's University."

As I noted in my convocation remarks, "UNF has the potential to build upon its strong foundation to become an institution of true distinction. We can do so, I would suggest, not by radically redefining our values or priorities, but in fact by further intensifying our commitment to those that have guided us thus far, by being bolder in our reach and more strategic in our advancement towards our goals. Where we might previously have regarded UNF as a regional institution, it is time to acknowledge that our region has itself grown into a far more cosmopolitan area with a correspondingly complex range of educational and professional needs which are the responsibility of this institution to address through the generation of knowledge, intellectual capital, and civic-minded graduates. And where previously we have always sought excellence in our programs and our people, the time has come to advance to a level of national quality throughout every aspect of the university."

With the support of President Delaney and the Board of Trustees, I have convened a special task force for the purpose of systematically considering what it means for UNF to be a *metropolitan university of national quality*. This seems to me to capture both our role and the level on which we must seek to carry it out. I am certain that the task force will be seeking broad input from the university community, most especially from the faculty.

In addition to undertaking this initiative to better define UNF, we are about to engage in our recently selected **Quality Enhancement Plan**. Our QEP, "Community Based Transformational Learning," is in perfect alignment with



our commitment to being a metropolitan university of national quality. Our QEP ought to significantly advance us towards our goal of providing all our students, regardless of their fields of study, with enriching learning opportunities, at the same time that we extend UNF's reach and impact on the communities that it serves, near and far. The QEP is a crucial component of the SACS reaccreditation process; that process will be the subject of a great deal of concentrated effort this year as our confirmation report is due to SACS just over one year hence.

While we are now already through the first month of the fall semester, I hope it is not too late to wish you a stimulating and rewarding academic year. Please feel welcome to contact me or to visit if there are matters, whether elevating or vexatious, you would like to discuss.

Mark E. Workman Provost and VPAA