

Provost's Newsletter

Academic Affairs at the University of North Florida

April, 2008

Colleagues,

Academic years come and go, but the one now nearing completion seems to me to have been extraordinary. It stands out in my mind for three reasons: because of the impact on the SUS of Florida's fiscal crisis; because, even as the UNF community has been engaged in developing strategies for dealing with its austere circumstances it has, at the same time, given fruitful consideration to new vision and mission statements that will direct the university's rising trajectory into what is certain to be a brighter future; and finally, because the university is poised to pursue the goal of diversification in a way that promises to advance the intellectual and cultural richness of the institution.

The budget rollercoaster

We have gone up and down with regard to the possible severity of our budget reduction. In the 07-08 fiscal year we will have endured—with relatively little pain as a result of the foresight of President Delaney—a 3% reduction in funding. It's the uncertainty of what is yet to come that has been the cause of understandable anxiety. At one point it looked like the university would incur an additional budget reduction of at least 9% beyond this year's cutback. With an annual divisional budget of approximately \$85 million, the reduction to Academic Affairs alone would have been very substantial. As we approach the end of the current legislative session indications are that the SUS reduction will be closer to 5 to 6% rather than 9%. Fearing worse, the lesser figure has provided a degree of relief.

It is a relief because it means that Academic Affairs can meet its share of the university's reduction largely by capturing the resources that will be generated by leaving unfilled the 24 faculty and 11 staff positions that we know will be vacant next year. (No searches were canceled this year as a result of the budget reduction.) In addition, we will have to do some program reorganization, increase chair teaching loads, and reduce operating expenses, adjunct usage, and faculty overloads (the last two strategies made possible by the reduction in enrollment that we are intentionally planning for). Based upon the current budget projection what we will not have to cut is currently filled lines, either of faculty or staff, nor, happily, funds supporting faculty development.

From a larger perspective, it appears that the legislature is responding to the concern that has been vigorously expressed by the Board of Governors (uncertain as its status may be), the university Boards of Trustees, and the university presidents. Thus, even though the prospects for an immediate rebound in the Florida economy are not great, there is reason to be hopeful that the SUS will be funded at a more adequate level than it has been in the past. The budget situation of course remains volatile, and we will do our best to keep you apprised of the local ramifications of any further downturn in the state's economy. And in the meanwhile, the president will take steps to rebuild the university's budget reserve in order to buffer the university from possible future reductions.

A bold vision for the future, a clear mission for the present

Upcoming Events

05/02/08

Student Awards Convocation 10:00 am,
Robinson Theatre

Spring Commencement, UNF Arena
3:00 - College of Education, Brooks College of Health, Coggin
College of Business
7:00 - College of Arts and Sciences, College of Computing,
Engineering and Construction

Vision

The University of North Florida aspires to be a preeminent public institution of higher learning that will serve the North Florida region at a level of national quality. The institution of choice for a diverse and talented student body, UNF will provide distinctive programs in the arts and sciences and professional fields. UNF faculty will excel in teaching and scholarship, sharing with students their passion for discovery. Students, faculty, staff, alumni, and visitors will enjoy a campus noteworthy for its communal spirit, cultural richness, and environmental beauty.

Mission

The University of North Florida fosters the intellectual and cultural growth and civic awareness of its students, preparing them to make significant contributions to their communities in the region and beyond. At UNF, students and faculty engage together and individually in the discovery and application of knowledge. UNF faculty and staff maintain an unreserved commitment to student success within a diverse, supportive campus culture.

Recent Events

Academic Affairs spring 2008 retreat was held on April 4th and included an update on AA initiatives, the budget situation, SACS and QEP and a discussion led by Dr. Amy Driscoll from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. More information on the AA retreat can be found at:
[AA retreat spring 2008](#)

Tuesday, April 15th, the Office of Undergraduate Studies held its first TLO symposium highlighting student and faculty projects ranging from Music to Marketing. More information on the TLO symposium can be found at:
[TLO symposium](#)

Wednesday, April 9th, the School of Nursing in Brooks College of Health celebrated Community-Campus Partnerships with an all-day event which included discussion and poster sessions as well as student awards. April 9th was a culminating event for the Community Nursing Flagship Program. More information on the flagship program can be found at:

The work of the Provost's Task Force, about which I have reported to you throughout the year, reached a significant milestone when the Board of Trustees, at its meeting on April 17, 2008, approved the new vision, mission, and goals statements as well as a statement of institutional values. These statements were the subject of a campus-wide survey as well as focused conversations between the Task Force and members of the faculty, the A&P Association, the USPS Association, and the SGA and members of the student body. The statements were revised many times as a result of the feedback provided to the Task Force. What endured throughout these revisions is an expression of the abiding dedication that UNF maintains to student learning and to the region that it serves. Fundamental to the former is the relationship between students and the scholarly faculty who mentor them and contribute so significantly to their education. And fundamental to the latter is the crucial role that UNF has played and will continue to play in meeting the emergent educational and cultural needs of a region that grows consistently more complex and cosmopolitan. I am especially pleased by the commitment expressed in the vision statement to the achievement of national quality. Challenging on occasion as it will be, we must invoke this aspiration to guide our actions, whether they be the allocation of finite resources, programmatic innovations, or personnel decisions. If we do so, and if we serve our students and region as deliberately and effectively as we possibly can, I am confident that the reputation of the university will far transcend the region in which it is situated.

The vision, mission, goals, and values statements can be found on the Academic Affairs web page at www.unf.edu/acadaffairs/taskforce1.html. So too can a list of Task Force members, with whom it has been a pleasure to collaborate on this important project. There will be more to report on the work of the Task Force in the fall.

Achieving excellence through diversity

The Provost's Diversity Task Force also worked diligently and productively over the course of the past year. Its work culminated two weeks ago in the visit to campus by Dr. Mordean Taylor-Archer, the Associate Provost for Diversity and Equal Opportunity at the University of Louisville. Dr. Taylor-Archer was a source both of inspiration and of enormous practical advice. Most importantly she made it clear that no university that aspires to national quality can achieve that status without making diversity part of its fundamental texture and system of values. She affirmed the work accomplished by the Task Force thus far and provided a useful roadmap for extending its work into the future. While it will continue to advance the recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty, the Task Force also will begin to focus more of its attention on the ways in which diversity, as a concept and as a lived reality, can be incorporated into the curriculum and into the everyday experience of the UNF community. One immediately tangible effect of Dr. Taylor-Archer's visit is that the Task Force, in recognition of the fact that its important work inevitably will be ongoing, will henceforth be known as the UNF Commission on Diversity.

A record of the Diversity Task Force's effort can be found at www.unf.edu/acadaffairs/taskforce2.html, as can a list of its members. I would like to express my gratitude to all the members of that group, under the able leadership of David Fenner, for the time and effort they devoted to this vitally important initiative.

Etcetera

SACS, the QEP, the VSA (Voluntary System of Accountability), and other initiatives known by acronyms or not, while displaced from this newsletter, have hardly been displaced from the attention of Academic Affairs. These and other matters will continue to occupy us over the summer as we prepare for the momentous year ahead. But since, indeed, in the words of the ancient folksong, "Sumer is icumen in," let me wish you a summer both of relaxation and productivity in whatever proportions suit you best.



