

# Provost's Newsletter

Academic Affairs at the University of North Florida

Archives Academic Affairs University of North Florida

## February 2009

Dear Colleagues,

By now you are all aware of the very positive outcome of our SACS visit. After reviewing our focused report (prepared in response to the initial findings of the off-site committee) and conducting some follow-up interviews on campus, the on-site committee determined that the only compliance issues we need to address are a handful of faculty teaching assignments (where credentials don't align with the level of instruction) and a few audit matters that can only be resolved when the State provides us with the necessary information this spring. (The QEP recommendations are addressed below.) Otherwise, the institution was deemed to be sound, which to SACS primarily means that we presented compelling evidence that we are purposeful and measured and committed to ongoing improvement. All in all, the visit and the review more generally were extraordinarily affirmative. I cannot thank enough all those who contributed to this successful effort, especially because it was years in the making and not without its moments of trial and tribulation.

The actual decision about our reaccreditation won't be rendered until next December, after we have addressed the issues identified by the visiting team and our status is voted upon by SACS officials. While I am optimistic that we will receive reaccreditation, that confirmation will not provide the occasion to relax the protocols we have put in place in preparation for the on-site visit. As someone who has been a faithful runner since 1963 (not counting a year or two in college during which good health took a back seat to good times), I know from personal experience that it is far easier to stay in shape than it is to get in shape. After our last SACS review ten years ago I am sorry to say that UNF failed to maintain whatever momentum it had gained as a result of preparing for and undergoing that review. That is not something we can permit ourselves to do now. Since the last review, assessment and accountability have acquired a gravity that they did not have then. Neither can be practiced intermittently; on the contrary, both must be engaged in continuously and in earnest. As I told my colleagues on the Institutional Effectiveness Team (which will continue to function, by the way), their real legacy to the university will be not simply that they were instrumental in helping UNF achieve reaccreditation but that they contributed to the permanent institutionalization of the rigorous measures that enabled us to achieve that reaccreditation.

To that end, the IE Team is reviewing commercial software packages that hold the promise of facilitating our assessment and strategic planning processes. This software would replace the "home-grown" version that was developed for the purpose of the SACS review. We will consider adopting a new product only if it is cost-effective, powerful (in its ability to integrate assessment, planning, and budgeting), and more user-friendly than the multiple programs it would replace. The IE Team has been augmented by a department chair and a member of the writing faculty for the purpose of reviewing software programs, and further vetting will take place before any selection is made.

In addition to judging our compliance report and the focused report that we submitted in response to the initial determination of the off-site committee, the SACS visiting team focused considerable attention on our QEP. The team made some very helpful recommendations (to which we are obliged to respond) regarding the refinement of our QEP that should result in a plan that is more conducive both to implementation and assessment than the draft

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### Current Projects

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) will remain open to a random sample of freshmen and seniors through early April. During the month of March, Indiana University will begin distributing the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) to all faculty. To view UNF's NSSE results from the spring 2006 distribution, go to the NSSE website. [NSSE](#)

A requirement of VSA participants is the posting of a College Portrait. View the UNF Portrait on the Institutional Effectiveness website. [VSA](#)

### Upcoming Events

04/03/09

On Friday, April 3, 2009, the Undergraduate Scholarship Program, Honors, and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs will co-sponsor the Scholars Transforming Academic Research symposium from 9:00-5:00 at the University Center STARS

04/18-24/09

Final Exams scheduled. [Finals](#)

04/24/09

On Friday, April 24, 2009, we will hold our spring commencement at 11:00 and 3:00: [Commencement](#)

05/11/09

Summer A&C classes begin: [Academic Calendar](#)

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### Faculty Development

The Office of Faculty Enhancement will present discussions focusing on community-based scholarship. [OFE Events](#)

Jennifer Kane and Chris Janson - Learning Partners: Developing Community-Based Transformational Partnerships 2/25 3:00-4:00 51/3201

Brown Bag - Engaging the Community through Community-Based Scholarships 3/4 12:00-1:00 42/2004

The Center for Instruction and Research Technology provides

program that we submitted for their consideration. These recommendations centered upon four issues: the concept of transformation itself; the meaningful assessment of transformational experiences; faculty development activities pertaining to community-based transformational learning; and the resources necessary to launch and sustain our CBTL initiative. Our new colleague Dr. Mark Falbo will be playing a prominent role in leading conversations on these issues. He will be assisted by Dan Richard, our director of Faculty Enhancement, our new director of assessment for whom a search is well underway, and other colleagues from Academic Affairs, Administration and Finance, and Student Affairs.

The laudatory comments of our SACS visitors, delivered to a joint meeting of president's staff, the QEP development team, and the IE Team, provided for a moment of euphoria and at least a brief respite from concerns about the State's economy and its impact on UNF's budget. While that respite has passed, the general anxiety over the university's budget remains just that. There is so much uncertainty about the potential extent of a reduction, and the extent to which it could well be offset by some combination of a tuition increase and federal stimulus funds, that no one, including our man in Tallahassee, knows with any precision what to expect. In anticipation of a shortfall, Academic Affairs is holding in reserve approximately 35 positions that either currently are or will be vacant next year. Not surprisingly, given the disproportionate sizes of the five colleges, the majority of these vacancies are situated in the College of Arts and Sciences. Their permanent loss would have two deleterious consequences: a difficulty in meeting college-specific FTE targets, and a difficulty in delivering essential components of the college's curriculum. We are mindful of these problems (which exist, albeit to a lesser extent, in some of the other colleges as well) and will address them as effectively as our resources permit. One fact that this method of budget reduction makes clear is that further "opportunistic" cuts (that is, cuts achieved by grabbing whatever resources become available rather than through the strategic identification of programs determined to be less mission critical, such as the Fine Arts Center) will seriously erode the quality of our academic programs. While this observation might sound portentous, I would like to emphasize that the president remains optimistic that we can weather—and have reserves set aside to do so—all but the most severe revenue reduction.

While Academic Affairs is conducting its normal cycle of program reviews this year, one that transcends the department level is the review of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. Thus far we have received the report of an internal review committee (constituted of Professors Lev Gasparov, Becky Marcon, and Rose Marie Rine, who generously gave of their time to prepare their report). This report will provide a starting point for another review to be conducted by an outside consultant who, I am certain, will wish to conduct his own interviews with the full range of ORSP clients and relevant AA staff. I trust that this process will result in a more effective ORSP, something that I know everyone regards as an institutional priority. One component of the ORSP that has been of particular concern has been the IRB process, which for a number of reasons accumulated a backlog of proposals awaiting IRB consideration. Long-term improvements are being contemplated while ad hoc measures have been taken to reduce and hopefully eliminate the immediate problem.

President Delaney's service as "president in residence" has met with well-deserved accolades from the leaders of the SUS. While he has performed his duty with all the skill and grace that everyone knew he would bring to that position, he would be the first person to remind everyone that it is indeed a temporary one. A search has in fact commenced for a new chancellor. This search, along with the fundamental changes that are taking place in the State's economy and the restructuring of educational institutions as a result of the emergence of the new state college system, all confirm that we are going through a transitional phase in higher education in the State of Florida. I believe that this transition requires us to be that much more strategic in our thinking and planning so that when UNF emerges from this transition it is as the kind of institution we want it to be. I continue to believe that we have adopted the perfect aspiration for our time and place: to be a regional university of national quality. As a result of the successful SACS review, the progress we are making in operationalizing our strategic plan, and the positive outlook regarding our ability to endure through the rough financial times that inevitably lie ahead, I remain strongly optimistic that, working together, we will achieve our goal.

workshops and brown bags on a variety of topics including data security, Blackboard, and copyright issues. Upcoming events can be viewed on the CIRT website. CIRT

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## Announcements

The search committee for the Executive Director for Assessment will be scheduling on-campus interviews during the month of March. Please check the Campus Update for confirmed dates and times.

A final reminder: Spring Student Award Convocation: We have moved spring student convocation to the college level. Each college will now be responsible for coordinating a student award ceremony. The decision to move from a university-wide to college-wide program is to help create a more personal and meaningful award ceremony for our students. Most colleges plan to build this event into their reception for graduating seniors.



*Mark E. Workman Provost and VPAA*

[www.unf.edu/acadaffairs](http://www.unf.edu/acadaffairs)

