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Letter to the Faculty : 2009 : 01 : 30

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January 30, 2009

Dear Colleagues:

It doesn't seem possible that I've finished an entire semester as Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and am now already deep into the Spring 2009 term. I hope all of you had a restful and happy holiday season – which now seems far in the past (to me anyway.)

There have been many changes in the past several months. Dr. Karen White has taken on a new assignment for president Genshaft. We owe her a great debt of thanks for her thoughtful leadership over the past 6 years – a period of great positive change for USFSP. Kevin Coughlin (our campus registrar), Dean GERALYN Franklin and Dr. Chris D'Elia have all accepted new positions and new challenges far from our lovely Bayboro campus. We will miss their diligence, commitment to our institution, and straightforward manner, but change is the way of the world and we wish them all the best in their new posts. Dr. Margaret Sullivan has taken the helm as Interim Chancellor. New leaders bring welcome new perspectives and 'fresh eyes' to issues and challenges. Over the next couple of years I know many of you will appreciate and benefit from Dr. Sullivan's experience, her expertise, and her sense of humor. I know you join me in pledging your strong support as she takes the helm and guides us through some continuing rough waters.

Our response to the two issues that SACS has put before us is progressing well. I thank all of you for providing assessment data for your courses for Fall 2008 and for previous years and for documenting the changes you have made in response to those data. I assure you these data are being well-used. The next step will be to gather faculty who teach courses in General Education for analysis and discussion of the data that have been gathered and documentation of actions taken in response to assessment. The General Education Committee will help lead these discussions in two sessions on February 13 with the goal of presenting an integrated report to faculty later in the spring. Each department and program should also be ensuring that their Academic Learning Compacts are up to date and reflect positive changes made in degree programs as a result of assessment. These ALCs should be completed as soon as possible.

In addition to the course-by-course assessments for General Education, the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) test was administered to a group of freshmen and seniors to assess college-level competencies. The results are eye-opening. When the two student groups are compared, the seniors outperformed the freshmen in critical thinking, reading, and in areas such as social sciences and humanities. However, there was little difference in student performance in writing, math and natural sciences. When compared to data from other masters comprehensive institutions, our students performed about as well as students at those institutions, except in writing and math (lower). This is disappointing, but is also actionable.

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With regard to student success, an alumni survey has been done, an employer survey has been started, and data from the senior survey and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) have been collected. Along with employment data from the state of Florida, we believe we have a compelling story to tell about our students, what they are doing following graduation, and the value that they placed on their education at USFSP. We will be sharing that information with all of you when it is formed into a cohesive document.

The bottom line for all of this is that we believe we are on track to offer a cogent response to SACS. We will test this hypothesis with a visit from an external reviewer, Dr. Karen Genteman, Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness at George Mason University, on March 9, 2009. Dr. Genteman will be on campus for a day to simulate the visit by the SACS Special Committee on May 5, 2009. She will have reviewed our draft report in advance and will be speaking with a number of individual faculty and with both the General Education and Institutional Effectiveness Committees. I hope many of you will be available as we develop the details of her visit.

I want to remind you to try your best to be on campus for the **SACS Special Committee on May 5, 2009**. The team will undoubtedly want to visit with the General Education and Institutional Effectiveness Committees as well as with faculty who are teaching general education courses. This is a critically important visit for the future of USFSP.

I also want to tell you about a reorganization we have accomplished between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. Over the past several months, Dr. Kent Kelso, Dr. Frank Hohengarten and I have been engaged in a small “experiment” to see whether we could better optimize our recruitment of new students and the programs that support them. In the face of already-large budget reductions with more on the horizon, we all believed that we had to do something different than “business as usual” if we wanted to continue USFSP’s strategic goal of increasing enrollment and growing a freshman class. We also all felt strongly that the functions of records and registration (registrar’s office) and academic advising must remain in Academic Affairs and that the Academic Success Center was a logical function to move to Academic Affairs. The upshot of all this, and after discussion with Dr. Sullivan and a widened executive leadership team, is that Enrollment Management and New Student Programs will be a new organization within Student Affairs and will combine admissions, financial aid, orientation and campus tours. The Academic Success Center will be a part of Academic Advising and will work hand in hand with advisors to assist students in academic jeopardy. The new campus registrar (search underway) as well as the director of academic advising will report directly to me.

The fiscal environment continues to mirror that old horror movie, “the incredible shrinking budget.” The legislature has made permanent the 4% cut for this year that all of USF

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already planned for. You all should have received the president's message about freezes in spending and hiring. We don't know what the future will bring, but you read the papers too so

you know that the state's fiscal position continues to deteriorate. Prudence dictates that we shepherd funds very, very carefully for the balance of this year – that means, frankly, restricting travel and all purchases to mission-critical priorities. It's a total bummer, but we can have some hope that when the legislature reconvenes for its regular session in March that the Governor's proposal for tuition increases will be favorably acted on and that reasonable people can agree on some revenue enhancements.

I'll be writing to you later in the term about our continuing progress with the SACS response and, as developments warrant, the budget situation. I appreciate your support and I hope your semester continues to progress smoothly. Thanks for listening.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Norine E. Noonan". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Norine E. Noonan, Ph.D.
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

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