

**UG Task Force
Feedback Sessions
September 2009
Summary**

Commendations

- The process is open to the whole campus
- Vision Statement:
 - o Consistent with other peer institutions
 - o Simplistic yet captures the complexities of having such a diverse campus with many different colleges, departments, programs, services and people
 - o Looks good, effective

Recommendations

- General
 - o We need to get away from tired thinking and be creative
 - o We have to tie incentives to behavior if we want to make significant changes
 - o We need to design a system that does not place colleges at odds with each other but encourages participation and collaboration
 - o Primary complaint heard from students – UF does not provide enough information about major options and career options
- Signature Experiences
 - o Good opportunity to incorporate a creativity experience/project/class
- Languages
 - o Business (perhaps all schools) should have a language requirement
 - Currently they are addressing the lack of one by advising, where they encourage foreign language study and study abroad. They even have a video promoting foreign language study:
<http://www.warrington.ufl.edu/ciber/>.
 - However, faculty resistance to language study requirements and/or accepting credits for foreign courses is hampering important internationalization efforts.
 - Students cannot get into language courses. Recent cuts have imperiled a critical component of what a UF education should be.
- General Education
 - o Surprised to see it listed among 5 areas in which we are similar to peers; because not listed among 3 “lag areas”, concerned that we will lose this issue as one upon which to focus
 - o Too much emphasis on cafeteria style course selection
 - o Although have legislative considerations, how we shape general education is within our control
 - o Worry that general education has not kept up with increase in quality of students
 - o Consider creating a pathway through general education – should be a more integrative experience in which different courses fit together
 - o Should focus on building critical skills and general education as an integrative process– communication, issues around writing, critical thinking, leadership

- Writing should be built into the curriculum throughout the student's program, not just a means to satisfy general education
- Need task force to look at general education specifically
- Students bring in many credits and do not have to take general education – what is the mission of general education?
- In physics, students not doing well even with advanced credit from high school – require students to take all “major” prep courses at UF
- Need to get away from “jobism”, in which course selections are made only to help obtain a job – we should be focusing on education rather than training
- Lots of students come in with general education or placement credit so do not necessarily acquire UF general education; need to expand how conceive of general education beyond legislative construction
- RCM is not currently tied to general education specifically so no incentives to participate
- Need for quality assurance
- Do all B and P courses provided a good foundation of knowledge?
- Too many courses have no substance
 - We need more substantive courses.
 - General Education needs to have an enveloping goal for the whole experience. Now it is something of a buffet – with some good items and lots of junk food. French fries.
 - We have created barriers (pre-reqs and majors only) to many of the really great courses.
 - The accumulation of General Education courses do not really lead to anything – do not have any clearly articulated, overarching purpose. “What do we want to learn from Gen Ed?”
- Incorporate language/culture
 - We need to create a campus environment that is attuned to international issues and cultures.
- International Education and Globalization
 - We need to be thoughtful about how we define this
 - This is more than study abroad
 - Could build a program on campus even without study abroad
 - Languages, performing arts, service opportunities are all examples of what can be part of global understanding and experience
 - Look at opportunities for colleges to collaborate
 - Need to think creatively
 - UF has a challenge of guiding students to academically worthwhile programs. Most of the available programs are short-stay summer programs. Colleges need to develop and nurture semester and academic year programs that have substantive discipline/major content.
 - Half of the students advised in the College of Business are not business majors. They come to him because the College of Business is the only college with a study abroad office.
 - International Center is not equipped to do academic advising for all the students who could possibly study abroad if it was facilitated by colleges/departments. We

only send 3% of UF students abroad. What if our goal was 10%? The UFIC does not have enough advisors for that type of growth.

- Academic departments need to promote semester abroad programs and to more liberally accept foreign credits that students earn toward graduation.
 - We need a campus-wide equivalency database. See the business db for example:
<http://www.warrington.ufl.edu/sb/advising/courses/equivalency.asp>
- College of Business in four years has raised study abroad numbers from 4% to 30%. We should look at some of the things they are doing right.
 - However, their biggest competitors are at 100% - 40% is not adequate.
- Teaching/Advising
 - Advising is neglected in the Report
 - Advisors need to be credentialed and have on-going training.
 - With faculty doing little advising now, the advisors are a key part of the retention and success of students. The whole advising situation needs careful study and improvement.
 - Perhaps a certification process
 - New advisor training
 - University-wide manual for advisors
 - We have faculty mentors for faculty, but not for graduate teaching assistants. They need mentors, too. They teach huge numbers of the undergrads.
 - Perhaps a certificate program for TA's also.
- **UFLOUR and Honors and Creative Work**
 - There are too many undergraduates at UF so many faculty do not want to do research with them at UF. Posting an ad could bring in too many responses so some faculty are adverse to working with them.
 - General consensus is in favor of creating the undergraduate research office and centralizing this operation.
 - Why not have Honors be more of a service function, with the students doing community service or tutoring others?
 - Why not require them to earn combined degrees?
 - Honors under RCM will be a problem. They are a second order priority and they will not receive support from colleges unless the Provost's Office explicitly requires colleges to provide courses
 - The number of Honors students was too low this year—they did not fill the Honors residence hall.
 - Students interested in research and advisors sometimes find it very difficult to navigate UF to identify research opportunities and resources; strongly support an office of undergraduate research
 - Research experience – need to recognize that this is broader than the hard sciences; provide resources for faculty who participate
 - Acronyms matter – UFLOUR does not communicate anything exciting
 - Initially recommended OUR-FL or OUR-UF but this may be confusing with the Office of the University Registrar (OUR). Instead, consider UR -FL or UR-UF; these communicate being part of UF

- Consider allocating dollars to colleges to support undergraduate research stipends (stipend, not tuition so pool of money would not have to be really large); this program could facilitate multi-year research experiences for students, one possible funding source is to direct current funding from the University Scholars Program toward this program instead to allow a broader and/or more in depth experience than what one year provides
- Organized effort needed
- More interest in year-long effort versus summer or short term experiences
- Physics offers “fellowship” of \$1600 for research to undergraduates. 40% of physics students doing research
- Harn: offer lots of internship experiences - students can try different things on as they decide what they are interested in doing
- Offer “showcase” opportunity for science and fine arts students
- Need senior faculty engaged in teaching honors courses
- Harn: - Dean of Education and Harn director taught a very successful summer B course – students connected to faculty
- How do you engage the “best” teachers on campus?
- Designate a group of “honors” faculty in every department to support upper division students. Faculty would rotate into this group
- **Mission, vision statement, value of teaching, and more general comments**
 - Mission statement should differentiate who we are; core values should tie everything together
 - Vision statement – how is ‘demonstrated capacity’ addressed? ALCs? Feedback from employers
 - Vision statement – what is meant by ‘strong sense of’? Students feel good? Results? Understanding?
 - Competence in a discipline is missing from mission statement
 - Add “integrity” to core values
 - Needs recognition of importance of communication skills and teamwork for future success
 - Teaching undergraduates is not a value in Tenure and Promotion
 - Is teaching a value to the University?
 - Changing the culture starts from “higher ups” – Is teaching excellence an expectation of the BOT for the President?
 - “We dare to be average” in teaching; there are no real incentives toward teaching excellence; if we really want to achieve teaching excellence, we need to change how tenure and promotion are viewed and implemented
 - Class performance needs to be tied to tenure
 - Majority of undergraduates are taught by graduate students; disincentives to place best faculty in the classroom
 - Recommend initiatives to teach research to undergraduates
 - Faculty talk about not having enough time to teach – recommend reviewing essential and non essential elements of discipline that are taught – perhaps some of nonessential could be replaced with courses that integrate core skills (e.g. critical thinking and communication) and knowledge

- Excited about recommendation to bring UCET back; faculty need these development opportunities
- Summer salaries can be an incentive for some faculty
- “We are just trying to put frosting on a cake that wasn’t well made in the first place.”
- Mission seems to be lacking “commitment to excellence.”
- Should add “demonstrated competency in chosen discipline.”
- Need to reconcile the tenses and rewrite for general improvement
- The mission depends on quality instruction. Will need to consider doing some new models, spending money on laboratory space and equipment, resources to support quality instruction
- The mission doesn’t address the NSSE results which showed that UF is not challenging its students academically
- The mission has a broad scope about the mission related to instruction. Is this focusing on undergraduate only or graduate students too? Should be clearer.
- Academic affairs needs to support expanding programs like First Year Florida (by actually paying instructors appropriate amounts) and Convocation. Why does the money brought in from tuition not go to support paying for instructors? What happens to courses like FYF under RCM, which is taught by advisors and student affairs?
- In fact, where are the NSSE results? Where did they go?
- SERU does not need to happen every year if we are not going to act upon the results before the next one
- **Teaching and Course management**
 - What happened to the Academy of Distinguished Teachers? What do they do? (other than participate in interview time slot for Honors director and gave ridiculous comments to candidates)
 - The statement “UF is committed to providing instruction of the highest quality” is false. We should add “”at the lowest cost” at the end, at least that is honest. The first thing we do at UF is negotiate release time from teaching.
 - Discussion about lecturers—should we rely on them?
 - We should have a group that vets courses with sunsetted approval, specifically for internet classes. We currently review General Education courses but that is about it. See e.g. the course Age of Dinosaurs.
 - We have to provide classes for people to graduate; we must identify and remove bottleneck courses
 - Need more good teaching assistants so need more money. The good ones do not want to teach hard classes
 - Need more awards and incentives and rewards for teaching, like the old TIP awards program provided
 - Could do more with interdisciplinary centers and teaching
 - The quality of the undergraduates is higher than the way we are teaching to them
- **Communication (Writing/Presenting) Issues**
 - Communications skill development should continue throughout student’s progression, not just part of general education (as noted above) but rather viewed as a core skill students should develop over the course of their UF education

- At least one course in the major should have a major writing component, such that development of writing skills extends beyond general education as it is currently conceptualized
- Small group oral communication practice should be incorporated into a communications course at upper division
- Need to consider how communication skills' development interfaces with writing requirement and academic learning compacts
- **Comparison to other universities**
 - Does not seem to recognize that many UF students (about 40% of CALS students for example) are transfer students with a 2-year experience at UF. Are we only interested in improving the experience of 4-year students? How are we engaging with Community Colleges to enhance the transfer student experience?
 - Was report from AACU, Greater Expectations, examined by the committee? <http://www.aacu.org/gex/index.cfm>
 - What is the status of use of distance education at UF in comparison to peers?
 - Need resources for fostering engagement in distance education
- **What's Next:**
 - Establish "Evidence of success"
 - Develop measurable outcomes
 - Assessment should be done on a regular basis
- **What's Happening Now:**
 - Humanities Project – Develop a unique experience that is interdisciplinary and that all UF students would be required to take. Would not replace any general education experience/requirements.

Not categorized

1. I did not see much new. There was a formal reiteration of existing practices and a few generic suggestions based on experiences of other universities. As far as our department, we currently have a rather strong undergraduate research emphasis and even accept non majors into the labs of our faculty for formal research. Two of our degree tracks require internships and most of our preprofessional students do them to enhance their resumes even though such is not a graduation requirement.

2. We are weak in relationships between our undergraduate students and faculty. In the modern environment, I am hesitant to engage in twitter, facebook or other such electronic media with undergraduates. That would appear to be risky. My office is open to my students and they visit often. I am the sole faculty here that engages our undergraduates in advising, discussions, social issues, etc. Those that work for me as TA's are invited to lunch and a social discussion as their employment terminates. The vast majority of our faculty do not have much knowledge of nor desire to participate with undergraduates save as research providers or enrollees in formal, required classes.

3. I have mixed feelings about the honors program. Faculty participation in the instruction of those honors courses had to be, in essence, enticed to teach with incentives such as computers, etc. In many ways the program was and is elitist especially since being in "honors" has nothing to do with graduation with Latin distinction. It has always been primarily a recruiting tool. Given the dead last ranking of the Florida public education system, more and more students seem to find high school easy and come out with "honors" credentials. The most practical thing that program does is give those kids priority registration. Honors advisors can override registration and put them in any class they want. General students, as you can imagine, do not appreciate that very much.

4. The task force reports seem to imply, much like the "spock philosophy", that faculty should be buddies with undergraduates. That's what their parents have done. Frankly, I think they need strong faculty, not more best buddies. As a faculty member who cares a great deal about the well being of undergraduates, I don't want them as friends....I want them as focused students. I am not so sure that these suggested outside-of-class social interactions might not do more harm than good. I, like other humans, want to be liked by my students; however, the State of Florida does not pay me to be popular. They pay me to be effective. I can be most effective when they respect my opinion and seek it, not when we socialize.

5. General Education is a great thing. The thing I treasure most in my own education was a liberal arts undergraduate degree. It has been more valuable to me than a focused Ph.D. More and more kids coming to UF now have completed their general education requirements before they get here. It is my personal opinion that AP or IB credits that fulfill general education are not as effective as a university real class taught by a caring, knowledgeable professor. I wonder, in today's environment, just what general education does except present a checklist for graduation. The entire intent of university level coursework across a broad range of topics, designed to help students learn what they want to do, has been circumvented by high school counselors and parents who advise students to get that "gen ed stuff" done while they are still in high school.