

University of Florida

Task Force on Undergraduate Education

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The task force would like to add a note of appreciation to Kim Pace and Arlene Tabag (Provost's Office), Ashley Ramon (graduate student HHP), and Bernard Mair (who succeeded Daniel Wubah in the Office of Undergraduate Affairs) for their assistance in the completion of this report.

Executive Summary

We believe this report represents a credible review of the major assets and challenges of the current undergraduate programs at the University of Florida (UF), in addition to a number of recommendations that will improve these programs.

The first draft of the report was developed in the Fall semester of 2008. The draft was then vetted by various groups and individuals, representing diverse units on campus. In particular, during the Fall semester of 2009, the task force engaged the entire campus in open meetings to obtain their views on the report. This campus-wide vetting confirmed the major portions of the report and resulted in some modifications which are included in this final version. Despite this intensive initial process, we view the report as an evolving document that should be reviewed at least biannually in order to assure that its findings and recommendations remain current and viable in a rapidly changing environment.

All of the recommendations of the task force are listed in the Summary of Findings section beginning on page 10. These findings are presented in the context of the sub-committee reports from which the recommendations were generated. All of these recommendations should be vetted by the Provost, perhaps revised and/or expanded, and then carefully considered for implementation. The complete reports of each subgroup can be found on the Provost web site at http://www.aa.ufl.edu/search_committees/UndergradCurriculum/.

We believe that the following recommendations, synthesized from the larger list, are a good starting point. They are achievable, and implementing them will bring significant results. They are offered with sensitivity to current budgetary restrictions, but some improvements will require resources.

Overall Implementation

- Adopt the vision, mission and values for UF's undergraduate experience proposed by the task force.
- Develop specific tools to recognize and support the undergraduate teaching mission of the University of Florida.
- Increase opportunities for interdisciplinary focus via experiential learning, research, and degree programs.

Signature Experiences

- Work towards the creation of a UF signature experience, initiate a pilot program with the 2010-11 incoming freshman class using the themed approach and begin the development of the electronic portfolio. Also identify junior or senior level students to act as mentors to this class.
- Increase the role of First-Year Florida in the creation of a signature UF experience, including the linking of First-Year Florida classes to residential experiences in some sections.

General Education

- Reexamine the purpose of the general education curriculum, articulate this purpose in all processes related to the general education curriculum, reconsider ways in which the curriculum is fulfilled, and expand the charge of the General Education Committee to include all aspects of the general education curriculum.

Honors

- Develop the Honors Program into a four-year program, implementing the other recommendations regarding this program as a part of this expansion.

Enhancement of Teaching Skills and Advising / Faculty-Student Interaction

- Reconstitute the University Center for Excellence in Teaching (UCET) or some similar center for teaching effectiveness, with a charge to implement the recommendations regarding the enhancement of teaching.
- Address recommendations regarding advising, as a critical companion to effective teaching/learning, in the reinstated center for teaching excellence.
- Coordinate efforts between the UCET, the Office of Student Affairs, and the General Education Committee to implement the recommendations regarding the enhancement of faculty-student interaction.

Global and International Education

- Consider an international certificate program.
- Develop specific suggestions of different ways for students to internationalize their studies, including alternate tracks.

Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity

- Charge a specific office/group, under the direction of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs with the task of assisting in the development of, promotion of, oversight of, and accountability for, interdisciplinary, creative and research oriented studies.

Leadership Development/Co-curricular Activities

- Create a co-curricular transcript for students. This may be part of the eportfolio (as detailed on page 12) or something separate.
- Utilize the themed education model (1st bullet signature experiences) to develop specific leadership opportunities for juniors and seniors.

Resource reallocation

- Reallocate resources in the present budget planning cycle to give adequate support to the implementation of the recommendations concerning the general education curriculum and to the reinstatement of the UCET.

Service Learning and Civic Engagement

- Incorporate service learning and civic engagement goals into the theme-based curriculum and e-portfolio initiatives in clear, accountable ways.

Recommended Timeline

The task force would like to propose a plan of action once this final report is received by the provost. In February of 2009 the Provost should prepare a response to this document which should include the recommendations (revised if necessary) that he has accepted, and a method for continual assessment to determine the effectiveness of the implemented changes and the state of the undergraduate programs. The goal is to be able to present this report, together with the Provost's response, to the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees in March - April of 2010.

During the 2010-11 academic year an implementation committee should be formed and charged with developing an implementation plan with August of 2011 as the date for beginning the implementation.

The University of Florida Undergraduate Experience

Introduction

Our faculty and students at the University of Florida are the ones responsible for shaping the undergraduate experience. This experience takes place within the context of a much larger university environment supported by a cadre of professional staff engaged in rounding out the total curricular and co-curricular experiences that we believe is uniquely UF. To clearly define what that experience is may be our ultimate challenge. As noted by one member of the task force, “Our students are first Gators, then they become a business or nursing or whatever student.”

The initial vision set forth in the charge to the task force to “being ranked among the best in a public AAU university,” was viewed by the task force as rather limiting. With this in mind, the task force proposes the following vision and mission for undergraduate education at the University of Florida including a set of core values that we believe will facilitate defining what a UF undergraduate experience is.

Vision for Undergraduate Education

University of Florida graduates will have a well-developed capacity for intellectual inquiry, demonstrated competency in a chosen discipline, and a strong sense of personal, social, and global responsibility.

Mission of Undergraduate Education at the University of Florida

The mission of undergraduate education at the University of Florida is to support teaching, research and service by developing in our students intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, creative potential, cultural sensitivity and sense of purpose. The University of Florida is committed to providing instruction of the highest quality, opportunities for research and innovation, and co-curricular programs that build students’ capacity for understanding themselves and the world, while fostering their commitment to the service of others locally, nationally and internationally.

UF's Core Values

In the fulfillment of our mission we are guided by these core values:

Creativity

Using imaginative thinking to solve problems and expand knowledge.

Diversity

Embracing and respecting our differences, recognizing that these differences enrich us all.

Engagement

Extending our involvement in the community, the nation and the world.

Intellectual curiosity

Appreciating learning as a lifelong quest for knowledge.

Leadership

Developing the skills to succeed and inspiring others to succeed.

Responsibility

Recognizing each person's role, including our own, in ensuring a rewarding educational experience.

The Charge of the Task Force on Undergraduate Education at UF

The task force was charged by the provost to review the entire undergraduate experience at the University of Florida and to make recommendations toward achieving the vision for undergraduate education at UF. The recommendations were to be ambitious, but achievable.

Although we were encouraged to ignore the realities of the state's looming fiscal situation which could have far-reaching implications for any recommendations our task force might make, we found this somewhat difficult to do. What resulted was some creative thinking related to what might be feasible for more immediate implementation versus what would require additional resources and therefore would be suggested for a future point in time. For this reason, recommendations are presented in a phased approach for implementation with consideration of what might require additional resources, what might require resource reallocation and what may be considered cost-neutral.

A Short History of the Process

In June of 2008, the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs at the time, Daniel Wubah, gave a presentation to the University of Florida Board of Trustees (BOT) regarding the future of undergraduate education at the University of Florida (http://www.aa.ufl.edu/search_committees/UndergradCurriculum/documents/BOT_presentation_June2008_Daniel_Wubah.ppt). In his presentation he offered a vision of the "UF undergraduate programs being ranked among the best among public AAU universities." To this end, the presentation challenged the BOT to consider not only the inherent strengths of the current undergraduate experience, but also some of the characteristics of a program that would be developed beyond the limits of even those strengths. The presentation also proposed an ambitious plan to review the entire undergraduate experience and propose recommendations for its enhancement – all within the coming academic year. The Board of Trustees accepted Dr. Wubah's proposal.

In August and September 2008, a task force of 28 members was assembled by the provost. The members of the task force were selected with the goal of having representation from as many parts of the UF undergraduate program as possible and of having a membership that would bring a blend of UF's institutional history and some new ideas.

On October 3, 2008 the task force held its first meeting during which Provost Joseph Glover gave the task force its charge to review the undergraduate experience at UF and to make recommendations that were ambitious but achievable.

The task force began its work immediately, dividing the task force into two subgroups and electing chairs of those subgroups before the first meeting was dismissed. These subgroups were to focus on current practices and best practices within several areas defined as important for the undergraduate experience. William (Andy) McCollough, Professor and Senior Associate Dean of the Warrington College of Business Administration, and David Julian, Assistant Professor of Zoology, were elected as chairs of the subgroups respectively.

As a means of giving some structure to the process, the subgroups were requested to study the undergraduate experience from the following perspectives:

- General Education
- Signature Experiences/Capstone Experiences
- Faculty-Student Interaction
- Faculty Teaching Skills and Advising
- Honors Program
- International Experiences/Global Competency
- Internships, Service Learning, Civic Engagement
- Lifelong Learning
- Residential Experiences
- Undergraduate Research/Creative Work
- Leadership

These subgroups did not preclude the discussion of other areas in the undergraduate experience. They were selected simply as a means to give some initial organization to the project. Subsequent conversation added leadership to the list.

On October 28, 2008 the task force held an all-day retreat, during which progress reports were given and discussed and the collective wisdom of the group was engaged to begin to establish some priorities with regard to areas of focus and possible recommendations.

After the retreat, subgroup members from current and best practices were asked to create an initial draft summarizing their areas of review including recommendations to strengthen or enhance the various areas of the undergraduate experience at UF. Those reports are summarized in this document. The full reports can be found on the Provost web site at http://www.aa.ufl.edu/search_committees/UndergradCurriculum/.

The reports reveal that there are a number of areas of strength in the undergraduate experience here at UF. It is also evident, that these strengths may be in areas that are not actually available to all of our students. For example, all students do not have the opportunity for travel study programs or research with a faculty member and not all students complete their general education coursework at UF. In spite of these limitations, the task force believes that it is possible to structure a number of experiences that the majority of UF undergraduates will recognize as playing a critical role in their development as thoughtful, inquisitive, responsible people with high levels of integrity and respect for others.

During the remainder of the fall semester, another task force subgroup was formed to look for common threads that run through the reports that might be expressed in a clarified mission and vision for the undergraduate programs. The work of this subgroup resulted in the mission and vision statements in this report.

The early part of the spring 2009 semester was spent organizing the recommendations into a cohesive and concise report, with continued review by the task force, primarily through electronic means.

Although there are a number of excellent recommendations, the task force determined to first focus on those that could be accomplished with minimum new resources, although all would require a level of commitment to ensure implementation, the existing organizational structure would most likely be able to support implementation at some level.

In summer and fall of 2009, meetings were held with most of the deans of the university requesting that their colleges engage in some process that would vet the proposal and give the task force feedback. There were also several open meetings for feedback held in mid-September. The comments received through these efforts all listed in Appendix A, on page 30??. The comments were considered carefully. Some offered new insights to the effort and found their way into the recommendations. Most, however, echoed existing parts of the document, giving affirmation that the task force had addressed the major issues on the campus.

Summary of Findings

This section will summarize the findings of the task force related to what is current practice on the University of Florida campus and what is considered best practices by other universities in the United States. We did not restrict the identification of best practices to the UF peer group as there are a number of outstanding academic institutions outside the peer group that are well known for their strong undergraduate programs.

Signature and/or Capstone Experiences

The first step in assessing current practices was defining “signature experience.” One definition could be a common experience for all students that helps to define or distinguish a university. The closest UF has to a common experience for all students is the Common Reading Program <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/nsp/firstyearexperience/commonread>, which distributes one book to all incoming freshmen during their Preview (orientation) session. This program was initiated in 2007. Students are expected to read the selected book prior to arriving on campus. Resource materials are provided to faculty so that the topics and themes from the book may be incorporated into freshman courses. Additional events (such as a visit from the author) are scheduled throughout fall semester. As this program matures, it is expected that faculty throughout the colleges will become more engaged in discussions with students about the book.

Another definition of “signature experience” could be a capstone/defining/culminating experience that a student might describe as the highlight of their academic career. This experience would be different for each student and could include study abroad, research,

internships, service learning, and others. For purposes of this report, the information related to capstone/signature experiences has been combined in this section.

The status of capstone experiences/courses at the University of Florida is mixed: some colleges and departments have them, others do not. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) indicates that approximately half the seniors at UF have taken a “Culminating Senior Experience” before they graduate. One reason the number of capstone courses at UF has increased could be attributed to the requirement for Academic Learning Compacts including Student Learning Outcomes and Individual Student Assessments (Ref – UG catalog).

Beginning in the Fall of 2001, UF has encouraged students to pursue opportunities for Enhancing the Undergraduate Experience <http://www.admissions.ufl.edu/ugrad/experience.html>, and until 2008, this information was given to incoming freshmen at Preview in the Undergraduate Catalog/Guide to Majors. Some colleges have adapted this list and use it in recruitment and orientation materials. The task force initiated a graduating senior survey in an attempt to determine the extent to which students actually participate in the suggested 2 of 5 experiences and found that the majority of respondents (84%) participated in community volunteer service and over half (52%) participated in leadership opportunities on campus. Additionally 36% reported working with faculty on research.

To determine best practices, an e-mail inquiry was sent to the provost’s office of 18 AAU universities; responses were received from 12 (67%) at the time of writing this report. In addressing the question regarding signature experiences, most universities discussed these experiences in the context of the overall goals of the university for undergraduate education – similar to what UF has encouraged that is noted in the above paragraph.

Related to the capstone experience, none of the universities responding required a university-wide capstone; however, some universities are moving in that direction, either by requiring it of entire colleges (e.g., Rutgers) or encouraging it of all programs (e.g., University of Wisconsin; Texas A&M -moving towards making the capstone an option for all students in all degree programs). Only one university defined the nature of the capstone at the university level (Texas A & M specifies that a student must complete a course project, research experience or senior thesis) although these capstones were still typically administered at a departmental level. The nature of the capstone experience cited included: integrative courses or senior seminars, a research project and/or a senior thesis, an arts portfolio, and internships.

First year seminars were commonly offered but not required for all students. Most follow the format of UF’s First-Year Florida, designed as small groups (e.g., 20-25 students) of students. An interesting program offered at the University of Washington for freshmen only is an intensive month-long 5 credit class designed to meet the needs of incoming freshmen. According to the UW Web site the month-long class is designed to emphasize “interdisciplinary study, focused inquiry and writing” (www.artsci.washington.edu/discovery/).

Half the programs polled specifically mentioned research as a signature experience; however, programs were quite varied, ranging from inquiry being part of a freshmen seminar (Rutgers) to upper division programs and research forums (e.g., Ohio State). One example is a summer

research program in biology at Arizona, which is open to engineering, computer science, math, and physics students (<http://ubrp.arizona.edu>); this program is supported by National Institutes of Health funding. A program at the University of Virginia combines research and service in a new public service program called Jefferson Public Citizens. (Press release: <http://www.virginia.edu/uvatoday/newsRelease.php?id=6619>).

Some universities, including UF via the University Scholars program, have financial support for research experiences, ranging from small amounts for project supplies (Texas A&M) to larger amounts to provide research support dollars for faculty (Rutgers, Ohio State) and combine efforts through both honors and undergraduate research offices.

General education was also used to create integrative learning or connections between theory and application as illustrated by University of North Carolina, that created an experiential and supplemental general education program for arts and sciences (www.unc.edu/depts/uc/06description.html).

Further consideration of the five experiences that UF encourages their undergraduates to have led to the concept of capturing for the student and the university the many and varied experiences from leadership to community service to research to international travel that our students have while completing their baccalaureate degrees. Creating a signature experience could be expressed in a themed approach for each year at UF such as the following:

- Freshman year: **Awareness** – First-Year Florida, common reading experience, residence hall.
- Sophomore year: **World view** – study abroad, foreign language, in-depth exploration of other cultures via coursework, or experiential learning.
- Junior year: **Service** – internships, community service, tutoring, alternative spring break.
- Senior year: **Leadership** – mentoring freshmen or other students in one of the areas above, more active role on campus and in the community.

The student would then be required to create an electronic portfolio (e-portfolio) of their UF experience including a culminating reflection page in the e-portfolio of the UF experience and goals for the future. This e-portfolio would be an excellent way to capture the 4-year experience, and serve as reference material for scholarship, graduate or professional school applications or as a foundation for the student's résumé for job applications.

Within any one of these themes the student might have the opportunity to also engage in research or other creative work that could provide an umbrella for the four-year experience. For example, a senior student who has engaged in research with a faculty member could serve as a mentor for a freshman who may have an interest in working with the professor's research. Thus the first-year student's awareness year revolves around research as does the 4th year student's leadership/mentoring experience.

Recommendations:

- Signature or capstone experiences should be part of a broader expression of student engagement and professional development and all university programs are encouraged to offer such an experience.
- An informational Web site for students capturing the values of the institution and/or goals for undergraduate education and the signature experiences aligning with these values/goals would provide an overarching context in which these experiences take place.
- Toward the creation of a UF signature experience, initiate a pilot program with the 2010-11 incoming freshman class using the themed approach and begin the development of the electronic portfolio.
- The college and/or program should define and manage capstone experiences.
- Multiple options at various levels of academic progression should be available to encourage participation and provide students with flexibility and choices matching their professional development interests and needs.
- UF should strive to assist students in connecting the meaning of being at a Doctoral/research extensive, land grant university from the beginning of a student's academic experience.
- Further exploration of other signature programs, such as the ones cited above, for possible adaptation at UF would be helpful to improving the UF program.
- In situations in which individual programs do not offer a capstone experience for all students, the university is encouraged to consider developing cross-disciplinary or theme-based capstone options.
- Funding and associated criteria for such funding to support signature experiences should be considered

General Education Curriculum

The General Education Requirement of 36 semester hours at UF follows closely the state mandated distribution for courses with the additional requirement that students take coursework described as international and diversity. The international and diversity requirement is met with courses within the identified areas of composition (3 credits), humanities (9 credits), mathematics (6 credits), physical and biological sciences (9 credits) and social and behavioral sciences (9 credits) having either an N for international or D for diversity designation. The state mandated limit of 36 hours was a result of the legislative requirement that baccalaureate degrees conform to a 120 hours of credit for the degree. Even at the time this legislation was passed (~1996) it is evident that the university was cognizant of the need to produce more culturally competent graduates.

The General Education Committee is charged with establishing a philosophy for what constitutes the general education component for a baccalaureate degree. The committee has submitted that it does not currently accomplish its intent or provide a meaningful direction for the general education curriculum at UF. Despite the dedicated efforts of a number of faculty as members of the General Education Committee, progress towards purpose has been slow. In the last few years the development of Student Learning Outcomes, the requirement of a minimum C grade, the restructuring of the International and Diversity categories, and the annual review of a limited

number of courses has provided a motivational threshold. However, the most often used descriptors of the current status of the general education curriculum would include:

- 1) Fragmented; no systematic relationship to purpose;
- 2) driven by college major programs;
- 3) diluted by transfer and examination credit; and
- 4) service course syndrome with limited faculty ownership.

Although there are commonly held views about the purpose of the general education curriculum, it does not seem that these values are fully or adequately articulated or incorporated into the working philosophies of the institution. It would seem that regardless of the specific recommendations or alterations to the curriculum of general education, the purpose of general education at UF needs to be more clearly articulated and more fully ingrained into all the processes and decisions regarding the general education curriculum.

Even though all students at UF complete general education requirements, not all students complete these requirements on the UF campus. A substantial number of incoming students (~40%) complete some or all of these requirements via dual enrollment, transfer courses from community colleges, Advance Placement, or International Baccalaureate programs. This reality, however, should not preclude the desire to create an effective and rewarding general educational experience for UF students completing the requirements via UF courses.

The best practices subcommittee took a look at several different universities general education programs as well as material from the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education, & America's Promise (2008) <http://www.aacu.org/leap/index.cfm>. Although the report focused on the overall undergraduate education, there are within the context of this report learning outcomes that could be used to create a framework for the general education curriculum while continuing to meet the distribution mandated by the state of Florida (36 semester hours in general education courses in the subject areas of communication, mathematics, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences). To accomplish these outcomes might require a somewhat different framework for evaluating courses requesting to be categorized as general education, but the current framework used by the General Education Council has many of these elements even though they may not be termed exactly the same.

In addition, it would be worthwhile to consider other models of general education. Brown University (2008) recently completed a review of its undergraduate education program which resulted in a commitment to retain their long standing approach to general education. In many ways, UF's somewhat open approach to general education is similar to that of Brown in that students have a large array of courses from which to choose and they have from admission to graduation to complete the general education requirements. Students at UF do not share a common set of courses, but a common distribution of courses. At Brown the students "share a responsibility for arranging their own core

programs. Such responsibility highlights a basic goal of liberal learning – creative and independent thought” (Brown report¹, p. 3).

Other institutional approaches toward general education range from theme-based programs to more course specific programs. One program that uses a combination of specified courses and theme-based areas is that of Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. Its model would be a useful springboard for further discussion about the model for the delivery of the general education curriculum at UF.

At UF students are often tracked into specific general education courses due to tracking requirements for their major. These requirements along with the state distribution requirements suggest that UF students may not necessarily be “arranging their own core programs.” This is not to suggest that such an approach might not be feasible here. Another element of best practice with general education programs identified is the emphasis on the educational values expressed via the general education experience.

While not specifically a part of general education, students in the university’s AIM program work largely in the general education curriculum while under the mentorship of the program. Thus, it seems appropriate to mention it here. The University of Florida’s AIM Program serves as an admissions access point for academically at-risk first-year students, as defined by the state of Florida Board of Governors Regulation 6C-6.0002 (Undergraduate Admission of First-Time, Degree-Seeking Freshmen)², which mandates that certain students who do not meet the “regular” admissions requirements of a particular SUS institution must participate in an individualized Educational Learning Plan (ELP). Since its inception in spring 1997, AIM’s foundation has been its enhanced academic curriculum in math and writing and its proactive advising strategy for participating students. AIM also was conceived as a coordinated effort of existing resources working together to provide a comprehensive transitional and retention program that begins shortly after AIM students are admitted to UF and continues throughout their first year. Thus, AIM has always relied on several university-wide offices to ensure that its students are provided with the academic development, advising support, pre-enrollment planning assistance, and enrichment activities necessary to succeed at the university. Over the course of the 10-year history of the program, roughly 3,500 new students have been provided access to UF through AIM, which historically has enjoyed a first-year retention rate only slightly below that of the general student body.

¹ *The curriculum at forty: A plan for strengthening the college experience at Brown*, (2008). Brown University, Office of the Dean of the College, Providence, Rhode Island.

² BOG 6C-6.002 (6) (b) 3 reads: “Each university will provide an individual learning plan for each student enrolled who does not meet the standard admissions requirements listed in Board of Governors regulation. The board of trustees will review the success of students admitted under the profile assessment process to ensure that their rates of retention and graduation remain near or above the institution’s average.”

Recommendations:

- Reexamine the purpose of the general education curriculum, with an eye toward considering that UF's general education curriculum may, indeed, have a purpose beyond that of the state legislature's view of the curriculum.
- The determined purpose should be clearly articulated and incorporated into all processes and decisions regarding the general education curriculum.
- Rethink the ways in which this curriculum might be fulfilled more creatively/comprehensively than in its current fragmented model.
- Enlarge the charge of the General Education Committee to specifically include all aspects of the general education curriculum. It is important that the oversight responsibility be faculty driven and if the existing General Education Committee is not the entity, then the alternative must have faculty ownership.
- In addition, these increased responsibilities must have resource support. The current budget (zero) cannot maintain an enlarged set of responsibilities.
- Retain the AIM program and study it for potential tools and services that might serve the larger UF student community.

The Honors Program

A review of the current practice with the UF Honors Program indicates that the current program is restricted to students during their freshman and sophomore years. Students with the appropriate grade point average are encouraged to write an honors thesis through their home departments, but the honors program has little involvement in these activities other than being the repository for the completed work.

The staff in the honors office is small in number and there is no program-dedicated honors faculty. Faculty members in the various colleges are, in effect, on loan to teach in the honors program. In the opinion of the task force members reviewing this program, the classes offered through the honors program are often among the most exciting and creative courses at the university.

Honors students (in the first two years) are required to provide documentation of specified levels of participation in at least one of the opportunities for Enhancing the Undergraduate Experience (<http://www.honors.ufl.edu/aboutus.html#requirements>) in order to receive the honors program certificate of completion. The only upper division (junior and senior year) honors program at UF is in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs).

According to the CALs Web site, "CALs Honors course work **integrates** with required and elective courses....To graduate as a CALs Honors Scholar, students must complete each of the five experiences listed below and maintain an **upper division GPA** of at least a 3.75. All participants must complete these five experiences: ALS 4921 (Honors Colloquium - 3 Credits); ALS 4932 (Honors Orientation - 1 Credit); XXX 4909 (Honors Project 3 Credits); 2 - 3 credits of additional Honors course work - see the Honors courses web page for further details; Write a project report or Honors Thesis" (<http://www.cals.ufl.edu/honors/index.shtml>).

A review of honors programs at peer institutions (including Penn State, Ohio State, Minnesota, Texas at Austin, Georgia, Illinois, and Maryland) indicated that a four-year program was the norm. Group discussion and further examination of the best practices at peer institutions resulted in the recommendations that follow. The task force is aware that to expand the program to encompass four years will not only require greater coordination with the college in which the student's major is housed, but additional resources as well, thus making the recommendation for a development officer extremely important.

The University of Georgia raises \$2-3 million a year from honors alumni. UF's success in this area is much more modest. The UF Foundation raised the funds to establish the Lombardi Scholars program to fund honors students. Additionally, close to \$2 million has been directed to the UF Honors Program via the Wentworth Foundation and the Dunlevie Family. Annual contributions from parents of current students have continued to increase over the years. The youth of the program (initiated in 1989), the fact that students may not feel the strong affiliation to honors after only two years, and no dedicated development officer have interacted to hamper current fundraising efforts.

Many honors students enter the program with significant advanced placement hours and are in effect sophomores (or even juniors) when they arrive on campus. This presents an excellent opportunity to encourage the 4+1 degree programs. A number of students can take advantage of these 4+1 programs, but all honors students should be encouraged to complete both their baccalaureate and master's degrees in four years, acknowledging that some degree programs (many in the health sciences) do not lend themselves easily to this concept. This endeavor also allows the university to meet its goal of increasing graduate hours and distinguishing itself from other state institutions. Encouraging students to earn a graduate degree also may involve alerting parents to the fact that in four years their child could have not only an undergraduate degree but also a graduate degree. Involving parents in this effort is important because often the parents will need to contribute some amount of financial support when their child takes the graduate courses.

Recommendations:

- Expand Florida's honors program to a four-year program.
- Secure the services of a development officer for honors.
- More effectively use the honors program as a gateway to graduate study.
- Make better use of the faculty advisory board for the honors program. The board should examine honors course offerings to be certain that quality is maintained.

Undergraduate Research/Creative Work

Undergraduate research can be found in the current undergraduate catalog within existing compacts and curricula in most colleges. These take the form of special or individual study coursework that requires faculty mentorship and supervision with a stated research objective. In addition there is the requirement for all honors graduates to complete some form of individual research and/or creative work as part of the requirement for graduation with an honors designation. These usually take the title; thesis, senior paper, senior project or portfolio of creative work supervised by individual colleges and submitted to the honors program. Many

certificates for graduation in the undergraduate area require individual research or creative work under the mentorship of faculty for the certification.

The University of Florida is also home to one of the premier university based art galleries in the country, the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art. The opportunity for faculty across campus to use the Harn Museum for encouraging and enhancing creative exploration in the form of research or cultural appreciation is extensive. In the Harn Museum's 5-year Strategic Plan (2009-2013) there are two goals which directly speak to opportunities created for and by UF undergraduates. One is to "weave the museum's programs into the academic fabric of the University of Florida" and the second is that we will "use the museum's diverse art collections and exhibitions to facilitate dialogue about global ideas and issues."

To this purpose, undergraduate experiences at the Harn Museum are uniquely rich and varied. In the past year, classes have been conducted at the museum by Harn staff and interdisciplinary UF faculty in such wide-ranging disciplines as English and historic preservation. For example, using a mixture of notable images and art on display, Dr. Rebecca Nagy, Harn Director and College of Education Dean Catherine Emihovich co-taught a Summer B course entitled, "Depictions of Children in Art: From Innocence to Hanna Montana."

In addition, College of Design, Construction and Planning Professor Roy Graham's course on historic preservation provided students the opportunity to connect the Harn exhibition, *Promises of Paradise: Staging Mid-Century Design* with their weekly class sessions, guest lectures and a national four-day symposium also held at the Harn. In another example, for their first assignment, English Department Professor Deborah Greger's poetry class utilized artworks on view in the Maggie Taylor exhibition, *Almost Alice: New Illustrations of Wonderland* for inspiration and then conducted a public reading of their creations as part of the Museum Nights program.

Daniel Pink, in his *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*,³ makes a compelling case that we are entering a "conceptual age" in which leaders will be people who can help society take full advantage of the advances of the "information age." These will be people who can think conceptually, synthetically, innovatively, that is, creative people. Ken Robinson echoes Pink's ideas:

The world economies are caught up in a genuine paradigm change. The new technologies do not mean simply that we have new ways of doing things we did before: businesses, organizations and individuals everywhere are faced with entirely new forms of work, leisure and ways of being.... There are profound consequences for the development of creative abilities and for the whole idea of human resources, educations, training and economic competitiveness.⁴

Mitchell Resnick, the Director of MIT's Media Laboratory, affirms both Pink and Robinson: The shift in focus [during the 1990's] from "information" to "knowledge" is an improvement. But I prefer a different conception: the "Creative Society." As I see it, success in the future will be based not on how much we know, but on our ability to think and act creatively. The proliferation of digital technologies has accentuated the need for

³ Pink, Daniel. *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*. New York: Penguin Books, 2005.

⁴ Robinson, Ken. *Out of Our Minds: Learning to Be Creative*. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Capstone Publishing, 2001, 92.

creative thinking in all aspects of our lives, and has also provided tools that can help us improve and reinvent ourselves. Throughout the world, computing and communications technologies are sparking a new entrepreneurial spirit, the creation of innovative products and services and increased productivity. The importance of well educated creative citizens is greater than ever before.⁵

We believe that the future leadership in higher education will belong to those institutions who understand the new needs, demands, challenges and opportunities of Robinson's "conceptual age" and Resnick's "creative society" and are best able to implement the cultivation and sustainability of the human resource of creativity on their campuses.

The College of Fine Arts is a natural venue for creative work on campus. However, it should not be the only venue for such work. The activities of the Harn Museum and the College of Design, Construction and Planning mentioned above are just two examples of creativity in other areas of the campus. The fine arts can provide a model for creativity and also provide leadership in the university's quest for infusing creativity into the whole campus culture. At the same time, the university's commitment to the development of creative potential in students should be more broadly based than work in the fine arts only. There should be a creativity requirement for all students in the general education requirements.

Research (and, by the above examples, creative work) is one of the five activities UF recommends for students to enhance their undergraduate experience (<http://www.admissions.ufl.edu/ugrad/experience.html>). UF currently provides a variety of activities that encourage and support undergraduate research including: University Scholars Program (<http://www.scholars.ufl.edu/>), Journal of Undergraduate Research (<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/jur/>), senior thesis, interdisciplinary studies major (in CLAS), Science for Life Program (<http://hhmi.chem.ufl.edu/metadot/index.pl>), credit for undergraduate research in some departments and through the honors program, the Undergraduate Research Database (<http://www.honors.ufl.edu/researchdatabase.html>).

Best practices around the country indicate that to go to the next step an office of undergraduate research that provides an organized approach to research across a large university is needed. Among the many successful programs identified, the University of North Carolina provides a superlative example of what such an office can do to provide visibility and support to the research enterprise for students.

With a staff of four, the UNC Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) (<http://www.unc.edu/depts/our/>) "provides the information and resources to engage in original inquiry, scholarship and creative work while you are an undergraduate at Carolina." The office lays out for students what to do starting as an incoming student, freshman, and sophomore and so on. Highlights of this program include a First-Year Seminar that offers a research experience; a sophomore "Reorientation Workshop" sponsored by Student Government; a course, IDST 195 (Modes of Inquiry), to learn about faculty research in many disciplines; course or courses that

⁵ Michael Resnick, *Rethinking Learning in the Digital Age. In The Global Information Technology Report: Readiness for the Networked World*, edited by G. Kirkman. Oxford University Press. (2002) Accessed at <http://web.media.mit.edu/~mres/papers.html> on 15 February 2008.

teach research methodologies. The website itself is very helpful with various kinds of information and advice (Top Ten Questions about Undergraduate Research, for example). OUR also provides skill-building workshops on such issues as research proposal writing, poster design, and navigating the IRB process.

The Carolina Research Scholars Program (CRSP) provides a specific means for students to have an in-depth research experience in a systematic way. Students who complete the program receive a designation on their transcript: "Carolina Research Scholar." All students are eligible to earn the CRSP designation. The criteria for completion of the program are: completion of the IDST195 Modes of Inquiry Course and completion of at least two research intensive courses (6 credit hours). OUR maintains an online list of these courses in each department. There are also lists of courses where a student is "coached" by a graduate student as they initiate a project. Research intensive courses are those in which over half the class time is devoted to students conducting original research and presenting research conclusions. Finally, a student must present their results at the Annual Celebration of Undergraduate Research.

Recommendation

- Establish a creativity component in the general education requirement.
- Move towards a centralized Office of Undergraduate Research that provides help to students in navigating the research process and provides information on existing programs. An important first step would be to start in a modest way with the long-term goal of having as vibrant a program as UNC's, which is an excellent model.

Enhancement of Faculty Teaching Skills and Advising

In early 1995, the University Center for Excellence in Teaching (UCET) was created at UF. It was a welcomed resource for those faculty and graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) seeking to enhance teaching skills. Some of the services UCET provided included the Faculty Fellow Program (FFP), Mid-Term Teaching and Learning Feedback Program, as well as tailored workshops to focus attention on pedagogically effective and efficient practices for both campus and online teaching and learning environments. In addition, consultation assistance to faculty and graduate teaching assistants for integrating Web and internet communications tools and strategies into their courses was provided.

Since the demise of UCET in 2004 there is little provided by UF in the way of faculty development that focuses on the enhancement of teaching and learning, although there is a Faculty Development Office under the Provost which provides several services that UCET had implemented. There are several links in the Faculty Development section of the Provost's Web site under the heading of "Teacher-Scholar Development"

<http://www.aa.ufl.edu/aa/facdev/develop/index.shtml>.

For the past three years, the Provost's Office has sponsored a one-day Advisers Workshop. This professional development opportunity focuses on strategies for effective academic advising and is open to faculty and staff involved in academic advising. The workshop is coordinated by the Undergraduate Advising Council.

The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences has provided its faculty with an annual one-day Teaching Enhancement Symposium beginning in 2001. This symposium includes sessions on teaching methods, professional development, and student mentoring. Faculty, advising staff, and graduate students actively participate in the symposium, which has a typical attendance of 200-250. Feedback on these symposia has been consistently high. CALS also has a Teaching Resource Center (TRC) housed in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication. The TRC assists with programming for the Teaching Enhancement Symposium as well as provides workshops on teaching/learning/advising topics. CALS and the TRC have begun a program to support new faculty (and other interested faculty) called Teacher's College. The purpose of Teacher's College is to assist faculty members in IFAS seeking to improve their teaching skills and engage as a community of practice around learner-centered teaching.

A number of our sister institutions have teaching centers worthy of emulation (University of Virginia; Texas-Austin; and North Carolina – Chapel Hill to name a few). Having resources where faculty and teaching assistants can go for help is critical for a top tier research university such as UF. To ensure that UF provides the highest quality of education to our undergraduates it is critical that we find ways to enhance the instructional skills of faculty and graduate teaching assistants. Additionally, for our tenure-track faculty, teaching effectiveness has become a more important element in the tenure and promotion process.

Recommendations

- Reinstitute UCET or some similar Teaching Effectiveness Center as soon as practicable.
- Further increase the center's effectiveness with a plan to support *increased collaboration* with the other college-specific faculty centers.
- This collaboration will help create a network of College centers - effectively leveraging college and campus resources (including national resources) for faculty and GTAs, campus wide.
- With regard to advising, the responsibility related to academic questions on degree requirements falls primarily on the colleges or more appropriately the departments, where specific questions on degree programs can be addressed. However, there are skills related to the process of advising that transcend the specifics of academic programs that could well benefit from university-wide programs and support.

Faculty-Student Interaction

For the purposes of this report, "faculty-student interaction" refers to interactions outside the formal classroom setting. The quality and extent of faculty-student interactions have positive effects on student learning, grade point average, intellectual self-concept, problem solving, critical thinking, and student retention. These gains may be even greater for minority students, especially when these students interact with faculty who are in the same minority group (Noel and Smith 1996⁶, Lundberg and Schreiner 2004⁷, Cole 2007⁸). Listed in increasing quality,

⁶ Noel, R.C., Smith, S.S. (1996). *Self-disclosure of college students to faculty: The influence of ethnicity*. *Journal of College Student Development*, 37, 88-94.

faculty-student interactions can be characterized by five typologies: disengagement, incidental contact, functional interaction, personal interaction, and mentoring. Our goal should be to provide all undergraduates with opportunities for meaningful, high-quality, personal interactions with university faculty. There are several ways that this goal can be accomplished.

Small courses specifically designed to increase interaction such as the First-Year Florida classes offer particularly good opportunities for incoming students to initiate faculty-student interactions. Students should be given explicit information about the benefits of building a strong mentoring relationship with a faculty member. Additionally, faculty should create an environment that encourages students to interact during office hours. One successful strategy is to convert office hours into a small discussion group, with students being allowed to come and go. This can also include more relaxed “brown bag” lunches.

Faculty mentoring of students involved in research, creative work, or other activities outside the classroom can provide a high-quality, meaningful interaction. A variety of very successful programs exist at UF, but these should be centralized and organized with the goal that participation in such a program becomes part of the typical undergraduate experience. One good example of how UF facilitates good faculty-student interactions is the Faculty-In-Residence program.

More effort and resources should be invested into facilitating and sponsoring faculty-student interaction in an informal setting. Among other universities, activities include faculty participating in or organizing meals with students (whether on campus, at the faculty member’s home, or at local restaurants), faculty or students organizing extended trips (e.g., to national academic or scientific meetings, to museums or cultural events, on bicycling or hiking excursions), readings or showing of films followed by discussions, team sports activities, and weekly lunch seminars.

There is a clear technology gap between faculty and students, with many students finding online interactions to be quite rewarding (e.g., online chats, Twitter, Facebook and other social networking sites). Faculty participation in such activities is low but is likely to increase. Effort and resources should be put towards encouraging and facilitating the appropriate participation of faculty in such interactions outside the context of formal online courses.

That the university values high-quality, meaningful faculty-student interactions can be most clearly demonstrated by providing the opportunity for faculty to explicitly identify these efforts on the Faculty Activity Report. This would provide an essential incentive for this invaluable aspect of a high-quality undergraduate experience.

Recommendations

⁷ Lundberg, C.A., Schreiner, L.A. (2004). *Quality and Frequency of Faculty-Student Interaction as Predictors of Learning: An Analysis by Student Race/Ethnicity*. *Journal of College Student Development*, Sep/Oct.

⁸ Cole, D. (2007). *Do Interracial Interactions Matter? An Examination of Student-Faculty Contact and Intellectual Self-Concept*. *The Journal of Higher Education* 78.3 (2007) 249-281.

- The role of faculty in these programs should be expanded to ensure that all students have a personal interaction with at least one UF faculty member during their first semester.
- For programs in which undergraduate advising is performed solely by staff, particular attention should be paid to providing opportunities for students to interact with faculty outside the classroom setting.
- More effort and resources should be invested into facilitating and sponsoring faculty-student interaction in an informal setting. As a first step, resources could be provided for sponsoring faculty-student lunches or dinners.
- Identify ways to facilitate and encourage faculty interactions with students via more common online communication venues.
- The Faculty Activity Report should reflect a faculty member's efforts towards enhancement of faculty-student interactions.

The Residential Experience at the University of Florida

Residence halls are an important component in many undergraduate students' lives. Besides simply providing a place to sleep, residence halls (and Greek houses) provide a source of companionship, community, and can be the center of a student's social activity. These buildings and the staff within them can help make UF a little smaller, provide an enhanced connection to the University, and provide support for the learning that occurs in the classroom.

The undergraduate residential experience at the University of Florida impacts approximately 7500 (21.4% of all UF undergraduates) students each year in 24 residence halls. As of fall 2008, 62% of these students are first-year students, 21% sophomores, 11% juniors, and 6% seniors. Fifty-eight percent are female; 42% are male. Currently 23% of on-campus residents reside in living learning communities in which Housing and Residence Education partners with a college or another department to collaboratively offer specific programs and services to residents who share common interests, characteristics, or majors.

The GatorWell program from the Student Health Care Center has satellite offices located in the Springs Residential Complex and Jennings Hall where residents can take advantage of GatorWell services, staff and programs. The faculty-in-Residence program is structured to promote interaction between students and faculty via out of classroom interactions http://www.housing.ufl.edu/aie/aie_facultyinres.html. Currently there are six faculty-in-residence living in residence halls in Broward Hall, Tolbert Hall, Lakeside Residential Complex, and the Honors Residential College at Hume Hall. Over 40 hours of academic advising occurs in the residence halls each week.

When considering best practices, UF's Department of Housing and Residence Education (HRE) would be identified as one that is helping to set a national standard for housing operations, particularly due to the fact that most of HRE's operations (maintenance, custodial, IT, personnel, etc.) are under one umbrella in-house rather than being outsourced. According to the Director of Housing and Residence Education, Norbert Dunkel, there are areas in which HRE could continue to move forward at UF given the appropriate resources.

These areas include funding, Greek housing, and living learning communities. In terms of funding, donations for building renovations would be a welcome addition to the current housing budget. Opportunities exist for donors to name residence halls or potentially name new residence halls. There is an ongoing pilot program in which housing has contracted with one Greek house to provide selected services. The success of this program has led to a request to extend the pilot program to additional Greek housing units. Also, enhancing the living learning communities that exist on campus could include allowing more upper-class and graduate students from various disciplines live in the halls to serve as role models, tutors, and mentors to the freshman and sophomore residents. Compensation could include reduced rent in exchange for the graduate student's interactions with the undergraduates.

Recommendations:

- Link more First-Year Florida (or other classes) to residence halls and possibly off-campus housing. Residents of the hall or complex would be able to gather in a commons area suitable for seminar-type instruction and the instructor would go to the hall or the complex to teach the course.
- Create a position to raise funds for housing (perhaps ½ time and shared with another office). Fundraising is essential to any academic or support unit on campus. A staff position dedicated to this effort would enhance the facilities and services available to students in the residence halls.
- Link credited courses with residence hall learning communities. This concept is similar to the first recommendation above. Currently, the Career Exploration Community residents have the option of registering for a 1 credit career development course to enhance their experience in the community.
- Explore creation of a living learning community in which students live all four years in the same residence hall.
- Create a living learning community in which residents have the opportunity to live from matriculation to graduation if they so desire. The concept is similar to that of the residential colleges of Oxford and Cambridge.

Global Competence and International Education

The majority of UF's current practice on global competency and international education consists of UF undergraduates who study abroad. The results of the task force's brief senior survey indicated over 89% of the students engaging in study abroad while at UF rated this experience as excellent. This was the highest rating of any of the experiences we want our students to have as undergraduates at UF. In 2007-2008, 2,222 (6.5% of the undergraduate student population) students studied abroad through UF programs, with exchange agreements, through other colleges, or with independent study abroad providers. Six study abroad advisers serve the whole population. The Warrington College of Business has two full-time advisers and a part-time graduate assistant to advise their students about study abroad.

In addition to study abroad, there are co-curricular opportunities for domestic students to work with international students on their English skills and on their cultural adjustment to the United States. Finally, language requirements exist to help expose students to other cultures.

In reviewing best practices a number were identified, some of which UF already does on a limited bases, such as the grants program to assist faculty in internationalizing their courses. The program at Georgia Tech in particular received strong support from the task force members and seems promising for implementation at UF given that it may be less resource intensive, at least initially, than some others.

Georgia Tech's International Plan offers a unique program for its students to develop global competence. It is a challenging four-year program that works in tandem with an undergraduate's academic curriculum to produce globally competent citizens. Successful completion of the program results in a special "International Plan" designation on the Georgia Tech degree and transcript. The program builds global competence by requiring students to engage in a minimum of twenty-six weeks of international experience (work, research, or study) related to their discipline, to develop a proficiency in a second language, and to take internationally oriented coursework.

This experience provides students a deeper global competency than traditional international opportunities. Each participating Georgia Tech degree program in the International Plan has integrated international studies, language acquisition, and overseas experience into the traditional Bachelor of Science degree that works best for that specific discipline. This would mean early interventions by advisers and faculty to encourage students to pursue this opportunity. The overall goal of the program would be to institutionalize global competency and international education as a value of a UF education.

Recommendations

- Offer an International Certificate similar to Georgia Tech's plan (outlined above). This offers a much more substantial option for students who are highly interested in a thorough international experience.
- The opportunity to study abroad should be more strongly promoted through undergraduate opportunities as well as through courses.
- Faculty and staff who are trained and willing to help freshmen and sophomores plan for study abroad in terms of curriculum, financial aid, etc., should be identified. This would greatly increase the number of students who study abroad.
- Faculty should be supported and encouraged to identify ways to internationalize their syllabus to give a more global perspective to their topics.

Internship (Experiential Learning) Opportunities

Internships are generally defined as work-related experiences that usually last one semester but may be longer. Internship requirements and participation rates vary both across and within UF colleges. Although most colleges do not require internships, they are "strongly encouraged" as part of a culminating undergraduate experience and are included in the list of five experiences undergraduates at UF are encouraged to have.

According to 2008 NSSE survey results, approximately 51% of UF seniors reported having completed a practicum, internship, field experience, or clinical assignment, compared to 63% of

seniors at UF peer institutions. Students pursue internships in one of two primary ways: for academic credit or non-credit. Based on a 3-year average for AY 2005-2008, course data indicate approximately 2,000 students annually complete an internship for academic credit. Impressionistic data strongly suggest many more students complete internships for which academic credit is either not sought or not available.

In terms of what might be considered best practice in the area of internships or experiential learning, areas noted were better integration with general education and ensuring an interdisciplinary focus with strong faculty mentoring as critical to successful experiences. Programs that have institutionalized the expectation for internships are most likely to have the strongest programs where both faculty and students value the experience and where participation is an expectation prior to graduation.

Recommendations

- Ensure faculty supervision and support.
- More effective integration with general education.
- Increase opportunities for an interdisciplinary focus via experiential learning, degree programs and research.
- Institutionalize by creating a value for faculty involvement and emphasizing the mentoring relationship with faculty and student.
- Encourage students and departments to ensure the student receives course credit. This is an essential element if a stronger faculty-student mentoring relationship is to be established.

Service Learning and Civic Engagement

At the University of Florida our students are actively engaged in community service as individuals and through student organizations. In the report for the President's Community Service Honor Roll, 13,103 UF students conducted 75,205 hours of community service in the 2007-2008 academic year. In addition to this, 752 students engaged in academic service-learning. The Center for Leadership and Service within the Division of Student Affairs coordinates a plethora of service and civic engagement opportunities for students. Many student organizations also perform community service as groups, raise awareness, and some conduct service trips. Academic service-learning is offered in some disciplines; however, this continues to be an area in need of improvement at the University of Florida.

An education from a land grant institution expects service and responsibility to one's state and community including the global community. Service learning and civic engagement can be woven into the fabric of the undergraduate experience including all of the areas of interest reviewed in this document: "living learning" communities of the residence halls; faculty-student research/interaction; international study; lifelong learning; internships as capstone experiences; and leadership. In reviewing best practices, a number of other universities (Georgetown, Stanford, Utah) have focused goals that connect academic study with community and public service to strengthen communities and develop effective public leaders. These programs aspire to develop aware, engaged and thoughtful citizens who make meaningful contributions to others.

Recommendations

- Service and civic engagement are acknowledged values crucial to a University of Florida education. The strength of this value should be illustrated through greater emphasis in the Five Undergraduate Experiences shared with potential students through the admissions process and at Preview.
- Expand the number of credits for First-Year Florida (FYF)(2 or 3) to provide greater conversation and practice in the areas of service and civic engagement.
- Address global competency in FYF to facilitate students' learning about social issues and their implications for a global society.
- Faculty should be encouraged to teach service-learning courses and utilize community-based research. Additional training could be offered to prepare faculty for this role.
- This emphasis should be highlighted in the tenure and promotion review process to encourage faculty to engage students in experiential learning and increased engagement with the community – all of which are documented outcomes of service-learning and community based research.
- Finally, community service and social responsibility should be infused in the undergraduate experience through residence halls, the Common Reading Program, freshmen convocation, First-Year Florida, and in common general education requirements such as ENC 1102 and other communication classes.

Promotion of Life-Long Learning

The world which our undergraduates will experience in their lifetime will be markedly different from the one which we face today. The ability to continue to learn both within one's area of work and outside it has never been more important. The university's role in encouraging lifelong learning starts when students are at UF, helping them "learn how to learn" and fostering curiosity about the world around them. Once the students graduate, the university can become a resource to help them keep up to date in their chosen field and provide information about anything in which they develop an interest. There are new internet-based tools which can make this a golden age for universities to provide lifelong learning for their graduates and for the public in general.

Two key elements to lifelong learning is the ability to teach oneself outside of a traditional structured course and develop intellectual curiosity. These are two of the most difficult things to teach or encourage. At the undergraduate level, students participating in a research experience, internship, or other capstone experience will be learning outside a structured course. They will ask open-ended questions which do not necessarily have straightforward right answers or even definitive answers, and they will seek out answers and solutions creatively using all resources at their disposal - not just the assigned reading for a course. This is the paradigm for life-long learning. Once a student has engaged in this kind of activity, they should be able to replicate it throughout life.

Recommendation:

- Increase opportunities for the development of intellectual curiosity and the appreciation for learning as a life-long pursuit via experiential learning, research, and interdisciplinary degree programs.

Leadership Development/Co-curricular Activities

The current practices group took the initiative to explore the co-curricular aspect of the undergraduate experience, including leadership activities of UF students and identifying recommendations that could become best practices on our campus. Research indicates that students who get involved on campus have higher GPAs, are more satisfied with their college experience, and are more willing to give back to their institution once they graduate. The term co-curricular is purposefully being used in lieu of the term extra-curricular.

Co-curricular activities allow students to apply knowledge and skills learned inside the classroom to real situations. We believe that all entities of the university are necessary to educate the whole student, so the activities outside of the classroom are to be considered co-curricular and importance should be placed on their contribution to the educational outcomes for participating students.

At UF there are over 700 student organizations with slightly less than 75,000 members listed, with over 118,500 hours of documented service and \$1,868,489 contributed to various charities locally and nationally. The value of these experiences is recognized by graduate and professional schools as well as future employers.

Finding ways to more effectively document student leadership and co-curricular activities would facilitate faculty and adviser identification for nominations for prestigious awards as well as letters of recommendation to graduate or professional schools. The co-curricular transcript could be useful in conjunction with an academic transcript for more fully describing the student's engagement on campus. Students will also be able to track their own involvement and gain a perspective on the breadth of their campus experiences. Such a transcript would verify active membership in organizations and leadership positions the student has held.

Recommendations

- Create a co-curricular transcript for students to supplement the academic transcript.
- A co-curricular transcript serves as an official record of a student's involvement on campus and provides credibility to student involvement outside of the classroom.
- Define co-curricular activities as noted above and develop a value statement related to the extent these activities play in developing an educated and productive citizen.

Conclusion

The task force considered it a privilege to approach this project which addresses an area at the very heart of UF's identity and mission. The project, however, is an ongoing one. This report will need to be vetted fully by the university community, amended as appropriate, adopted and then implemented.

It should also be considered an evolving document that is revisited on a regular basis and reviewed in consideration of the developing needs of the university. While this report concludes the official charge of the task force, we remain, as individuals, eager to assist in the next stages

of work necessary to create the type of undergraduate experience our talented and very bright students deserve.

Once decisions are made related to the priorities supported by the President, Provost and Board of Trustees and the implementation plan completed it is important that ongoing assessment occur. This assessment will ensure that we continue to move forward in the process of actualizing the vision of undergraduate education at the University of Florida. Namely that, “University of Florida graduates will have a well-developed capacity for intellectual inquiry, demonstrated competency in a chosen discipline, and a strong sense of personal, social, and global responsibility”.

The complete reports of the sub-committees’ findings in the key areas summarized above can be found on the Provost web page at http://www.aa.ufl.edu/search_committees/UndergradCurriculum/.