State of the Division of Academic Affairs

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Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Good morning. It is my pleasure to welcome you, or to welcome you back, to this special place, the campus of Florida Gulf Coast University and the home of the Eagles. We come together this one time at the start of each academic year as the Division of Academic Affairs. This division, our division, exists at the center of our University mission and vision, and our institutional reason for being on this special piece of earth in southwest Florida.

We are a young University, about to enter only our 18th year of operation. Many of us came here to be part of something new, something different, something truly special. While we joined FGCU at varying moments in its short timeline of existence, we have become connected in our shared pride of membership and ownership. Yet, we are still building this University, and it will continue to take our best efforts to achieve our long-term goals.

Among us this morning are those who began to build this University from scratch. Starting at a point in time when FGCU had no buildings, no curriculum, no reputation, no roads, no accreditation, and most importantly, no students. This group of academic professionals planned on paper the first chapters of what we would be initially and what we would strive to become over time. The first chapters of that story were amazing and now we come together to plan for more of them to come, each better than the last.

Lets begin with credit where credit is most certainly due. Will all of you, the faculty and staff who were part of FGCU before we opened our doors in the fall of 1997, please stand and be recognized? Thank you for providing such a strong start. Among the others of you here this morning, if you have been here for 15 or more years please stand and be recognized. Thank you. Those of you who have been at FGCU for 10 to 15 years, please stand. Thank you.
And those of you who have been here for 5-10 years? And finally those of you who have been here from one to five years please rise. As you can see, FGCU has been growing consistently over our brief history, but we have been fortunate indeed that there exists a tremendous continuity of talent to draw upon as a core strength and value of our university.

This year we welcome over 50 new faculty and 60 new staff to our division. Can those of you who are newly embarking upon your careers here at FGCU please rise and be welcomed by your new colleagues? Thank you. I ask our newest FGCU eagles to look around at your colleagues who have come before you, who made so many contributions to our success, and who have paved the way for you to follow and to thrive. I ask you to emulate their dedication, commitment, and their successes.

While our faculty turnover rate has been low, this past year we sadly said farewell to two of our long-time friends, colleagues, and academic leaders. Dr. Aswani Volety, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, accepted the position of Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at UNC-Wilmington. Dr. Hudson Rogers, Dean of the Lutgert College of Business accepted the position of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Valdosta State University in Georgia. Both of these fine academicians noted during their sendoff parties that FGCU had given them the chance to grow, personally and professionally. The success that I know that each will now enjoy in their new academic homes will reflect well upon this institution and their time here with us.

In addition, Dr. Marcie Green, Dean of the College of Education for nearly a decade, stepped down at the end of the past academic year, but fortunately we are not losing her from FGCU. She is taking a well-deserved administrative sabbatical this year that will afford her to an opportunity to prepare to return to us next year as a member of our faculty of education, bringing her career full circle.

I want to take this time to introduce to you the three individuals who are joining us this fall in the three positions just noted and who will provide leadership in their respective positions to move us forward to new levels of success and achievement. Dr. Robert (Bob) Beatty, the new Dean of the
Lutgert College of Business, comes to us from Rowan University in New Jersey where he served as Dean. Bob, please stand and let us welcome you. Dr. Robert (Bob) Gregerson, the new Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, comes to us from Armstrong State University in Georgia where he also served as Dean. Unfortunately, Dean Gregerson had a personal issue come up late last week and was unable to be here with us this morning. He sends his deepest regrets.

Last, but I assure you, not least, I am pleased to introduce Dr. Jane McHaney, who will be with us for one year as Dean of the College of Education. Dr. McHaney comes to us from a highly successful retirement during which time she had leadership roles as wife, mother, and grandmother. Prior to those important team-building activities, Jane had an exceptional career of leadership as Dean of the colleges of education at Kennesaw State University, the University of Central Arkansas, and Armstrong Atlantic State University.

I am so pleased we were able to bring these three exceptional and accomplished administrators, through national searches that, not surprisingly, drew the interest of many, to lead those Colleges. They bring years of experience and a wealth of knowledge to their new roles at FGCU. We all look forward to working with them.

I also want to extend our welcome to Mr. Francisco Marquez as our new Director of Graduate Studies. Francisco comes to us from Florida International University where he served as Assistant Director of the Graduate School and will lead a rebuilt team in Graduate Affairs here at FGCU. Reflective of national trends, our graduate enrollments have slipped over the past few years. Francisco has already in his short time here outlined a terrific vision for graduate affairs that includes enhanced international recruitment. I am absolutely convinced that with his strong leadership and expertise in the graduate student marketplace, we will see our graduate enrollments rebound to levels appropriate for this institution.

In past years at this time I was always able to talk about new buildings to support our academic enterprise. While the pace of campus construction has slowed substantially as compared to all prior years, a point that I will return
to shortly, there are positive changes to our campus as we enter our 18th year of operation. The library lawn is in the final days of a significant transformation into a pedestrian plaza and walking/jogging track. We also have a new residence hall, Eagle Hall, opening in South Village later this week. With that facility, we will bring campus housing to nearly 5,000 students! Imagine the change from 1998 when we had 250 students living on campus; simply incredible when you think about it. But incredible is what WE do here, and by extension, what we have become.

You might say that change on this campus is expected because no other university seems to change, for the better, from year to year more than FGCU. For all of us with more than a few years under our FGCU belts, we have witnessed the rapid and dynamic pace of growth measured in student enrollment, capital construction, faculty and staff, degree programs, and reputation. Earlier this calendar year, at spring commencement, we recognized our 20,000th alum, 20,000 in just 17 years, remarkable!

But other types of changes are now upon us, unlike any in our past. We are about to enter a period that might be called our FGCU new normal. Let me explain. As you know, over the past two years we intentionally slowed our annual student enrollment growth rate to approximately 4 to 5%. There were substantial reasons to do so, with classroom, laboratory and office space availability representing key limiting factors.

The so-called Dunk City bounce, the sensation created by the history setting accomplishments of our men's basketball team, the first 15th seeded team ever to break into the NCAA 'Sweet 16', materialized for us this year in a resounding fashion. Our freshman applications for this fall increased 35% in state and over 65% out-of-state. That is highly significant by any form of measure or analysis. As a result, we were in a position to incrementally increase our student entrance requirements and the outcome is that our first-year students arriving on campus over the next several days will be more academically prepared and boasting the highest standardized test scores, SAT and ACT, of any entering class in the history of FGCU.
I want to shift away from growth rates for a minute and move to a second boundary condition that also represents a new normal. In the past, Florida public universities were funded based on enrollment. More students translated into more base funding. More students also meant more capital construction PECO money and more new buildings. While the proportionality of this equation was not always linear, the entire Florida State University System (the SUS), including FGCU, operated largely in this manner. About two years ago, the legislature and the Governor made the decision to hold tuition flat year over year. Even with flat tuition, SUS institutions continued to benefit from the added tuition brought by additional students. But this equation, where funding is tied to growth, is no longer the model. The paradigm has changed and we must change with it.

For returning faculty and staff, you began to hear the term Performance Based Funding (PBF) being used about two years ago and within the past year, used ever more frequently. We are now firmly in the era of Performance Based Funding. So what does this mean to us? First, I want to tell you, straight up, that we were never afraid of PBF. Overall, our programs are solid, our staff and faculty highly dedicated and professional, and our student outcomes strong. In the first year of PBF, utilizing three metrics, we had the second highest point total of any of the 11 SUS institutions. We were bested only by USF and UCF. And, oh by the way, we out-performed a university that you may have heard of: UF.

This past year, with a matrix of 10 metrics that included the three from the prior year, we scored a total of 30 points out of a possible 50. That placed us at the middle of all 11 SUS schools in terms of point totals. But here too there is much to be proud of in that we were bested only by the big four research universities, UF, FSU, USF, and UCF, and by FIU. To put this into greater context, FSU, one of the two preeminent institutions in the SUS, posted a score only three points higher than FGCU, that little new school located somewhere in SWFL.

So now let’s return to the growth proposition. Today I am announcing that we will be further slowing our enrollment growth rate to approximately 2% to
2.5% a year for at least the next two to three years. That target is a big change for us. Further, we expect that the growth will come from increased retention of enrolled students as well as additional transfers and graduate students. In fact, we expect to actually lower, slightly, our targets for our first time in college (FTIC) students, our freshman, as compared to previous years. To be clear, while our target for first year students for the fall of 2015 has not yet been set, we will likely be looking at a reduction of about 100 - 150 freshmen as compared to first years classes of the past couple of years. So, why are we doing this?

We expect that the decreased enrollment growth rates and the transition to performance based funding will align to create a powerful and positive synergism. Going forward, our institutional funding will be determined in substantial part by our performance on the PBF matrix model. But at the same time, we will be redoubling our efforts applied to promoting student success and will see academically better-prepared students entering our door. Carefully managed, the intersection of these two conditions should result in greater funding levels in the form of state support through the legislature while at the same time we will see the reputation of our institution, within the State of Florida and well beyond, continue to rise and thereby drawing the interest of additional high quality prospective students. In short, the new FGCU normal reflects important fiscal fundamentals related to our state support.

Before we look too far down the road ahead, I want to remind you what a successful year we had this past year. In terms of dollars, this success was reflected in the roughly $13 million in new funding that we received from the legislature for the current year. We received $2.2M in the first round of Performance Funding last September. This year we received nearly $6 million in new funding that is now a permanent addition to our base. You should all take great pride in this success. Why? While it’s true that the entire university has a right to be proud, this division, the Division of Academic Affairs, has a special and central place in our success in terms of how our students are prepared for life and for a career once they graduate.
With two years of increased funding, in part coupled to PBF, we were very pleased to be able to provide to all of our faculty and staff a 3% salary increase for all eligible employees at the start of July. This follows upon the 3.5% increase in the prior year. Simply stated, these increases would not have been possible without our success with performance funding. With no tuition or fee increase over the past two years, and with no tuition or fee increases in sight in the near future, performance funding is instrumental in allowing us to strengthen our existing programs, add additional new programs and initiatives and properly recognize the contributions of our faculty and staff.

The reduction of the fiscal strain that adversely impacted our budgets during six, long recessionary years also allowed for substantial end of year distributions to operational budgets across the division. All five colleges, the library and our Academic and Event Technology Services unit received one-time funds to assist with special purchases as investments toward future success.

Also, in that $13M received for this year was $7M for the construction of our Emergent Technologies Institute (ETI) building to be located nearby the university off Alico Road. The 25,000 sq ft building, to be constructed in 2015, will be a showcase for emerging technologies in various areas, with renewable energy technologies as a core focus. The building and the people and work housed there will facilitate continued growth of our U. A. Whitaker College of Engineering, provide opportunities for students to engage in internships, devote space where faculty with students can conduct research and will be a locus for our proposed Master’s program in Engineering. The presence of FGCU within the FGCU Research IHub will encourage businesses to settle in close proximity to the ETI where they will benefit from the faculty expertise and talented students working there.

The past year also witnessed our Board of Trustees approval and the implementation of our first self-sustaining academic program, a condition that the Board of Governors calls market-rate tuition. That program is the transitional Doctor of Physical Therapy (tDPT) program for practicing physical therapists who want to earn a clinical doctorate. I am hopeful that
other market rate tuition programs will be identified and implemented now that we have successfully entered those waters. The past year also witnessed the approval by the FGCU Board of Trustees of our third Doctoral program, the Doctor of Nursing Practice, which we will bring to the Board of Governors and SACS for review and approval in the coming year, in preparation for a launch in fall 2015.

In other wonderful academic news, we received notice that our music programs, housed in the Bower School of Music and the Arts, earned NASM accreditation making it the first specially accredited program within the traditional liberal arts here at FGCU.

As you know, perhaps too well, we have also been working diligently on our SACS reaffirmation. This is our regional accreditation that requires an in depth review every ten years. We have been working on this for well over two years now. Our compliance certification is nearly completed and will be submitted in early September. Also, our Quality Enhancement Plan, better known as the QEP is nearly complete. The QEP is intended to improve student critical thinking, written communication, and information literacy. It will have a broad impact on our undergraduates by improving their success. This effort has been led by Jim Wohlpart, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and a group of hard-working faculty, staff, and students. Will Jim and any of the QEP Development Committee Members who are present please stand and be recognized? Thank you all.

This past year also was very productive in terms of work of the faculty senate. Working together, we were able to again increase the amount of funds available to faculty for competitive professional development grants. We also moved into our third year of chairs and dean evaluations through the cooperative work of the Faculty Senate, the Chairs Council, the Deans Council and the Office of Planning and Institutional Performance. These evaluations are providing useful feedback for chairs and deans to make them more effective in their work with you, and I assure you that I pay close personal attention to them.
Also, after we as a campus approved in 2012 a statement on shared governance that was developed with Faculty Senate, Staff Advisory Council, Student Government and administrative input, this statement was translated into a policy that President Bradshaw approved earlier this summer. The policy addresses many of the concerns that have been expressed in recent years about consultation and transparent communication. Implementation will move us forward in a cooperative way and we seek to improve the functionality of that new policy as informed by our collective experience and wisdom of the multiple governance groups represented by all of you here today.

To further that goal, recently, I met with the Staff Advisory Council to better understand their perspective on shared governance and pledged my support to work with them as I have routinely done with the Faculty Senate and our local chapter of the United Faculty of Florida, our faculty union.

Speaking of the union, our negotiations with our union partners in developing our most recent contract extension was undergirded with a notable and greatly appreciated spirit of cooperation which embraces the best of the practice of shared governance. Specifically, it reflects the activities of well-intentioned people working together to address challenges that will lead to further university success to the benefit of all members of our institutional community. I would like to thank Dr. Beth Elliott, President of FGCU’s chapter of the UFF and all the members of the collective bargaining team for their cordial and effective negotiations. Will you please rise and be recognized. Thank you.

Five years ago we launched the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Initiative (TLAI) an important effort aimed at strengthening the primacy of the teaching and learning mission here at FGCU. Last year within that initiative we launched our faculty academy course for our new faculty colleagues with less than two years of fulltime teaching experience at the collegiate level. By every measure this was a resounding success. This fall we will launch a second class of the new faculty academy course. Earlier this year, with a $2 million gift to endowment from the David Lucas family, TLAI became the Lucas Center for
Faculty Development that will enhance our efforts toward faculty professional development. Further, I am thrilled to announce that this spring we will provide specialized learning opportunities in the form of semester long courses to our faculty with 3-6 years of teaching experience and those with 7 or more. Also, we will this fall have a short duration specially designed mentoring opportunity for our adjunct faculty and our TA’s. The Lucas Center will also facilitate final implementation of the SPOI this year. This change represents a transition from an evaluative tool of teaching, to a formative one that empowers faculty to gain substantial feedback that can inform and enhance the efficacy of their teaching. The founding Director of the Lucas Center is our own Dr. Linda Serro. Linda, please rise and be recognized for your efforts to support faculty in their role as superlative teachers.

As you can see, we have been very busy and our work together has resulted in many positive outcomes. I would be remiss if I didn’t also recognize the central role that the Planning and Budget Council and its constituent committees has played in our continuing success. The Council brings together talented faculty and staff from all divisions of the university and has been instrumental in balancing our resources with our capacity for growth. I would like to thank all of you who serve on the PBC or one of its committees for all the hard work you have contributed over the past year.

That work will be especially important as we undertake yet another major but necessary task this year: the updating of our five-year university strategic plan. Our current strategic plan comes to a conclusion this year. The new strategic plan will present an opportunity for the FGCU community to provide a collective and effective response to the challenges that lie ahead. You will be hearing more about this in the coming weeks, but I want you to know that the Planning and Budget Council will be playing a major role in this so that the voices of faculty, staff and students are all heard.

This past year, the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs made changes to the equation that we use to redistribute indirect cost return funds, those monies received as part of grants from various granting agencies. These changes directly benefit faculty by doubling the percentage of these funds
returned to the principal investigators that can be used to support other forms of your research and professional development including travel, supplies, and other related activities. Also, the course buy-out formula was standardized across all academic units and tweaked to better advantage newer faculty with less grant procurement experience.

Over the past six years, we added a series of faculty and staff recognition events including an annual reception for all recent grant recipients, and a similar event to celebrate faculty promoted during the prior academic year. Speaking of promotions, will all faculty who were promoted for the start of this new academic year please stand and receive our recognition for your professional accomplishments. This past year, we added another important recognition event. At halftime during a basketball game in a sold out Alico arena, we recognized our faculty excellence award winners for that year. I look forward to this celebration of our award-winning faculty as a new tradition here at FGCU. And of course the informal Provost meet and greets will continue again this year for both staff and faculty.

Even with our success in seeing substantial increases to our base funding as a result of PBF, in order to achieve our larger goals, we will need to seek substantial funding through our growing network of friends and benefactors. Recently, Mr. Chris Simoneau, Vice President for Development and Executive Director of the FGCU Foundation announced that we have begun a capital campaign with a goal of raising the ambitious goal of $100 million. While these types of endeavors are typically done in a single campaign once again this institution will demonstrate its creativity and ingenuity. Our campaign is actually a compendium of five mini campaigns, each with its own focus and fiscal targets. They are: Academic excellence, student success; scholarships; athletics; and community and regional impact. By the very name of these campaign components you immediately see what is important to us at FGCU.

This past year we were able to dedicate a small but important space to support a group of our students, faculty and staff, who have supported us, our FGCU veterans. Our new veteran’s room is located in the library. Will all of our faculty and staff veterans please rise. We thank you for your service to
this country and now we are honored to have you serve with us here at FGCU. Your sacrifices during your time in the military were many. We hope this special room provides to you a special place of refuge, collegiality and continued success in your civilian lives.

I hope that this morning I have provided to you a better understanding of where we have been and more importantly where we are headed and how we will get there. As a have described, this will be a year marked by fundamental change in how we do business. But I do not believe this is change to fear. Rather it will be change we can embrace and order in such a manner as to improve what we do and to further support student success. The groundwork has been laid over the history of this great university. Our course was clear from the start and we have never wavered. I look forward to working with all of you to advance our agenda for success and progress.

In closing I note in yet another way that this university is truly a special place. We have celebrated important events and milestones, both personally and professionally, stepped up to assist a colleague by carrying a portion of their load during difficult times, and grieved with each other on difficult losses that we were made to endure that were untimely, unfair, and unforeseen. That is the nature of this place, a community of people in the very best sense.

The new academic year officially begins shortly, with new faces, new hopes, new paradigms, but with the same zest, energy, dedication, and determination that set the foundation for this place we call FGCU and has carried her forward year by year. We are no longer that poorly known school located somewhere in Southwest Florida, in a bucolic setting sometimes referred to as Es-ter-ö. Now entering our eighteenth year, we have come of age.

My sincere best wishes to all of you for your first, or another in a series of new academic years as proud Eagles.

Thank you.