Dear Colleagues,

One of the major issues of curriculum and assessment facing the faculty and our partners in the shared governance of the institution this year is to examine the status of University-wide student learning outcomes at FGCU. This examination will require evaluating the effectiveness of the current goals and outcomes, making any necessary revisions, and developing a comprehensive plan to assess and improve student learning accordingly.

In 2008-09, the Student Learning Outcomes and Goals Task Force laid out, as per its charge, a framework to guide a collaborative process for reconsidering undergraduate and graduate student learning outcomes and goals. (Full report here; see pages 13-16.) Time constraints prevented the task force from undertaking a full-scale review of the University's existing outcomes and goals.

In April 2011, a group was appointed by Faculty Senate leadership to undertake such a review. However, it is vital to the health of shared governance that Faculty Senate processes model the representative democratic values we seek to encourage in the broader decision-making processes at FGCU.

For this reason, I have dissolved the group appointed in April 2011, with thanks to its members for their willingness to serve, and with this message, I am now calling for each academic unit/college to elect one in-unit faculty representative to form the core of the Outcomes and Assessment Task Force. These faculty members will be joined by ex-officio representatives from Academic Affairs. Because the job of each faculty member elected to the task force will be to represent her/his colleagues in the process, a senior in-unit faculty member will join the group as its chair. The chair will be announced and a charge delivered in the near future.

I want to stress the gravity and importance of this task force. Student learning outcomes are not only central to the fulfillment of the University's mission and vision. The meaningful assessment of University-wide outcomes is also vital to the University's accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The Outcomes and Assessment Task Force and its work will be best served by those faculty with experience in accreditation (ideally involving SACS and/or a professional accreditation agency); a record of service commitments that have required college-level representation; an interest in and awareness of institutional values as they have been established and have evolved at FGCU; and a willingness to commit the time necessary to complete this critical task. Those interested in participating should expect the group's work to last through the end of this academic year and to require meaningful interaction with unit colleagues and Faculty Senators.

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Subject: Call for Elected Faculty Representatives to Outcomes and Assessment Task Force
Given SACS accreditation cycles, it is paramount that the task force begin its work as soon as possible. Accordingly, academic units should complete elections to the Outcomes and Assessment Task Force no later than September 9, 2011. You are receiving this message now so that most academic units have the option to conduct task-force elections as part of their fall faculty meetings taking place in the coming days and weeks.

I will be visiting each of those meetings, and at that time, I will speak to this issue in more detail and welcome your feedback. In the meantime, please call, write, or come see me with any comments or concerns you may have about this or any other business related to Faculty Senate.

Sincerely,
Douglas Harrison

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