Dear Faculty Colleagues,

I hope this finds you well and enjoying a successful semester.

This email describes the formation by Faculty Senate Executive Leadership of a Faculty Select Panel on Growth and Quality to collect and focus faculty perspectives on a key set of issues that will dominate planning and budgeting discussions and decisions this year at FGCU. In what follows, I provide some contexts for the formation of this group, its charge, membership, and a timeline for its work.

**Contexts and Background**

In the context of reductions to state appropriations for higher education and the growing disinclination among legislative appropriators, the governor, and higher education officials to support tuition increases, Florida Gulf Coast University faces a set of complicated and difficult decisions related to budget and growth, and these decisions in turn have direct impacts on educational quality. Over the past year or more, and most recently in the Senate’s strategic planning conversations, faculty have repeatedly expressed a desire for greater faculty engagement up-to-date information and constructive, meaningful participation in the budget and planning processes that affect them most directly.

Faculty Senate has worked to establish and improve stable lines of communication between the Faculty Senate governance system and the planning and budgeting decision-making processes for the university that occur within the Planning and Budget Council. Most notably, the creation last year of the Senate Planning and Budget Advisory Committee (SPBAC) formally provides for a two-way flow of information between Faculty Senate and the PBC.

But for the faculty representatives participating in these processes to effectively represent and advocate for faculty interests and perspectives (and for the Senate to deliver to the faculty what it promised when it created the SPBAC), the faculty as a whole must engage in a thoughtful and timely articulation of their views and values about, and the development of their ideas for helping to meet, the challenges and opportunities we face as an institution.

Having listened to and registered the particular emphasis faculty consistently place on questions of enrollment growth and academic quality, and mindful of the Faculty Senate’s recent reaffirmation in its strategic planning processes that faculty leadership must be guided by a commitment to clear communication and meaningful advocacy, I am with this message convening a Faculty Select Panel on Growth and Quality to engage the faculty in a focused exploration of the dominant issues related to enrollment growth and academic excellence within the budgetary, political, and economic realities of the foreseeable horizon.
Charge
Distinct from a decision-making or policy-recommending body, this group will focus on researching and framing faculty perspectives on growth and quality within the relevant economic, political, and institutional contexts associated with public higher education in Florida. The panel¹s charge is twofold:

1. To conceptualize and facilitate the collection of relevant faculty perspectives on university growth and academic quality. Reduced to its purist form, this charge if stated in the form of a question is: what should FGCU be growing into as an institution, and how?
2. To synthesize those perspectives into a focused report reflecting the dominant majority and minority perspectives and contexts.

Though this report will be shared widely across campus, its primary audience is other faculty, particularly those faculty representatives in Senate and the PBC and its committees who are on the front lines of planning and budget processes in which faculty are involved.

By focusing on growth and quality, the Faculty Select Panel has the latitude to foreground questions not only about the comparative merits and impacts of varying rates of student enrollment growth and growth targets related to academic quality from a faculty perspective, but also underlying questions about what standards of quality or excellence we aspire to, what academic quality looks like at an institutional level, and what resources, conditions, and capacities are necessary for lasting educational excellence.

In other words, ³growth² is imagined in this conversation as a concept that encompasses both the quantitative (headcounts and enrollment targets) as well as the qualitative (ideas about improvement of educational quality and academic excellence).

Timeline
As with any matter related to budget and planning, the need to take the time to get things right exists alongside the need to get things done in time to have an impact on the decision-making processes. Right now during the next two to three months and into the new calendar year the institution will be in many ways living at the intersection of a conversation about budget, growth, and quality, in advance of decisions that will be made in Spring 2013 setting enrollment targets for 2014 and 2015. In order for the Panel¹s input to be most effective to the faculty representatives whose efforts will be guided by the Panel¹s work, the Pane will submit a report to the Senate President for consideration by the full Senate no later than December 7, 2012.
**Membership**

In keeping with both the time-sensitive nature of this group’s work and the fact that its charge is one of engagement (rather than the determination of specific curriculum or policy proposals), the select nature of the membership emphasizes a mix of institutional memory, content knowledge in both budget/planning and process facilitation, and the members’ professional recognition among their peers. Members are:

Margaret Banyan  
Cecil Carter  
Stephen Drew  
Amanda Evans  
Win Everham  
Sim Komisar

In addition to engaging the faculty directly, this group will work closely with the Senate President and other officers as well as relevant Senate Teams, Councils, or Committees particularly the SPBAC to access relevant data and developments as needed. On behalf of the Senate, I thank the members of the Panel for their willingness to provide leadership on this crucial issue that affects all of us and what we do to further the success of our students and the University.

Please watch for additional information and outreach from the Panel in the coming weeks. In the meantime, I will follow up this email with a recap later this week about the complete slate of Senate Leadership Initiatives for the year.

Sincerely,  
Douglas Harrison