Assessment Report on Student Engagement Workshop

July 31, 2012

Assessment Report

All Campus Student Engagement:
Developing Effective Educational Practices at FGCU

Workshop held on March 23, 2012

At Florida Gulf Coast University

Prepared for the Planning and Budget Council

On Behalf of the Enrollment Management Retention Committee (ERMC)
By the following Subcommittee:

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Executive Summary

In support of the continuous planning and evaluation cycle of the University, the Enrollment and Retention Management Committee (ERMC) began discussing various efforts, which would enhance our understanding of student persistence. The ensuing action plan included a proposal for an all campus workshop to discuss Student Engagement. Knowing that high impact student engagement practices at the University can have a positive effect on student persistence, the ERMC, determined the following outcomes for a one day workshop:

*Through a campus-wide discussion of effective student engagement practices at Florida Gulf Coast University, we will:*

- document and gain a better understanding of our current effective educational practices,
- better understand what our challenges are in implementing high impact practices,
- report the findings and frame plan for recommendations for the future,
- review and better understand NSSE scores from FGCU in comparison to other institutions, and
- review and better understand undergraduate student retention and withdrawal data.

First of its kind in our brief history, the workshop (see agenda in Appendix A) began with a morning plenary session featuring Dr. Kuh (Appendix B). Professor emeritus at Indiana University and an eminent scholar in research on assessment, student development, and campus environments, Dr. Kuh also worked with individuals of the ERMC to design an effective workshop schedule to meet our needs. Utilizing Dr. Kuh’s experience in the development and implementation of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), FGCU NSSE data was used to launch and inform our discussion at FGCU.

In preparation for the workshop a number of reports, both routine and special, were acquired and provided to conference discussion leaders including Dr. Kuh. Reports were made available online and at the conference. The list of these reports is included at Appendix G.

After a morning plenary session with Dr. Kuh, the day progressed to commentary from key FGCU faculty and staff in a panel format divided out by engagement practices described and assessed by the 5 NSSE benchmarks (Appendix C): Level of Academic Challenge; Active and Collaborative Learning; Student-Faculty Interaction; Enriching Educational Experiences; and Supportive Campus Environment.

These discussions proved to be effective in generating lively and beneficial discussions between mixed groups of FGCU colleagues who later focused on documenting the high impact practices we are currently utilizing. In the second mixed group session, small groups documented the challenges we have to implementing more high impact practices at FGCU. (see Appendix D). In the concluding session of the workshop, groups shared their findings and recommendations for the future.

The implementation of this workshop was integral to advancing our campus discussion of student engagement using high impact practices which we believe supports many of the stated goals and values of the University which are embodied in our mission and vision statements.
Recommendations

The following recommendations comprise a synopsis of feedback from the workshop which constitutes our suggested actions on where we go from here. It has to be pointed out that there is no one single action that will dramatically improve student engagement and success but rather a deliberate and comprehensive series of steps to lead us in the right direction. This recommendation list is but the start.

1. ERMC will organize cross campus, once a semester roundtable discussions to focus on best practices, methods to improve and to keep the focus on student engagement and retention.
   a. Before the next conference, consider surveying or conducting small group (recorded) discussion of their perceptions of what they need to be engaged.
   b. Continue to offer some sort of workshop or conference on a yearly basis that allows for a regular exchange of ideas, teaching methods, programs, and information between faculty, staff, and students…and across divisions:
      • Minnesota’s “Focusing on the First Year” is an excellent model for a regular conference - http://www.ofyp.umn.edu/focusing-on-the-first-year.html
      • Themes or topics could change from year to year, but always geared toward engagement and student success

2. Faculty and Staff Workshops to focus on Student Success
   a. Develop ways to educate faculty and staff across campus about the resources that exist to support student success.
   b. Overhaul faculty/staff orientation processes
   c. Provide in-service brown bags with colleges/departments/offices

3. Develop a post-orientation, pre-semester program to build on topics introduced at EVO while acculturating students to FGCU.

4. Work with the new Dean for Graduate studies to further assess issues dealing with the engagement and retention of Graduate students.

5. Create better retention and enrollment reports and distribute to entire campus.

6. Continue using NSSE data and distribute results- inform entire campus of results. Center faculty and staff development around use of NSSE results.

7. Provide resources to develop and enhance a true First Year Experience on our campus that is intentionally organized, outcomes-oriented, and properly assessed:
   a. Develop a college transition course program to provide much needed mentoring to FTIC students in their first semester

Begin a First Year Seminar program – courses taught by faculty in their areas of expertise, interest, research, etc.