Comments …

…on the Mission and Vision Statements

for the 2010 strategic plan

September 2009

offered in response to questions related to the following statements:
Public Forum Responses

One - The mission statement expresses FGCU’s ‘chief aim’... to fulfill the (academic, cultural, social, and career) expectations of [their] constituents.

The first participant to speak in forum one wanted to know how many people were involved in the survey - there were 62 respondents. His second question was whether FGCU had demographic data on these respondents. The response was given that - no data was collected on whether these respondents were students, staff, faculty or other, but that it was known that some responses came from ‘outside stakeholders’.

This statement was confusing to one participant in forum three. The person asked how the university would know if it fulfilled all of those expectations. How would FGCU know if it achieved this goal?

On the other hand another participant said that they were used to statements like that. Yes, this statement was broad, but ‘if you fine-tune it you were asking for trouble’, and yes, the statement was confusing because of the variety of expectations that were being addressed, but we shouldn't narrow the mission too much.

One suggestion was to fine tune this within the action plan that would be developed following this phase of the strategic planning process.

Another forum three participant asked to what degree the data being presented here from the responses to the questionnaire, would influence the strategic planning process. She was told that this was really up to the Planning and Budgeting Council (PBC) as they would meet, look at the data, and decide what to do with it. They would also determine what weight to give to the responses from the questionnaire when considering any change.

It was pointed out that all the questionnaire was intended to do was elicit input. It was not known how representative it was or what the demographic profile of the respondents was. Participants were assured however that comments were collected from those who did not agree with the statements, and that these would be shared with everyone.
Two - The mission statement says FGCU will achieve this ... by infusing the traditional strengths of a public university with innovative and learning-centered spirit.

One participant in forum one questioned why there was a shift in the profile of the data with the third part of each question in that there were more respondents ‘not agreeing’. They were told that although this was a departure, it still represented a very high level of agreement. This was a different type of question, and indicated some lack of agreement not with the statements as written, but with their fulfillment by the university.

Another participant suggested that maybe what the data was saying was that FGCU needed to try a little harder to fulfill what was written. A third suggested that maybe this was a more recent reflection of people’s thinking on the subject.

A participant also hypothesized that people were focusing on the word innovative, and since FGCU has drifted ‘back towards the mean’ in not being as innovative an institution as it was in the early periods of its existence, some people were expressing some disappointment at that in their responses.

In forum two a participant offered the view that innovation is less possible under the current circumstances, and that this was the reason an increasing percentage of the respondents to part 3 of the question fell into the category that agreed less. It was less possible for practices to be employed that were consistent with the strategy, because bigger classes, budget cuts, and less faculty, don't equal innovation. Being consistent with this part of the stated mission was more of a challenge as the university has grown.

Another participant noted that the university has shifted to a more traditional path from its earlier spirit of innovation. It is hard to be innovative now, the person felt. FGCU can manage do the traditional things a little better, but it has grown too fast to have time to be innovative.

A third participant felt the creative spirit in individuals needed to be encouraged if the university wanted innovation. Creative people in the FGCU environment, needed to be nurtured if this was to be possible.

A final point made in forum three, was that integration across departments, both horizontally and vertically, was necessary to facilitate innovation.
Participants in this third forum again voiced the view that with rapid enrollment growth, FGCU has moved away from innovation towards the more traditional approaches of the larger state university.

**Three - It describes the effort of the faculty and the University to ... transform students’ lives and the southwest Florida region.**

A similar view to that voiced in response to question two was heard in forum three. The ability to transform students’ lives lessened with the rapid growth of the university. Such transformation requires a certain level of interaction with the students over the 4 years they are here. Now, Gen Ed classes for example were getting larger and larger. With average class size approaching 45 there is little opportunity for the interaction needed.

The same participant however, felt that FGCU did a wonderful job of interacting with the region.

Other participants made the point that students’ lives have been transformed by other services and outreach programs offered at the university, and that their transformation does not only depend on faculty interaction. Still it was agreed that faculty effort was necessary and it was difficult for faculty to find a balance in this time of extra demands. FGCU has not provided for that balance.

Additionally it was pointed out that students engage with, and impact the community through civic engagement. Many nonprofits benefit greatly from the help of students at FGCU.

Previously participants in forum one had suggested that the comments attached to these questionnaire responses be used to help FGCU with fulfillment. The eventual concern, anyway, is with whether the University does fulfill what is written down in the mission and vision statements.

Another participant sought reconfirmation that we were really at the forum to discuss parts 1 and 2 of each question which dealt with how these statements were crafted, rather than part 3 which dealt with their fulfillment.
Four. It seeks to achieve this through the actions of “Outstanding faculty who uphold challenging standards and balance research, scholarly activities, and service expectations with their central responsibilities of teaching and mentoring.

In forum one the view was expressed that part of the dissatisfaction of individuals could be because ‘service expectations’ were not embedded in the curriculum but rather were an external feature.

Another participant however emphasized that we were really looking here at the performance of the faculty, and not critically examining the curriculum. The participant pointed out that while 34 percent, or roughly one-third, was a significant deviation and indicated that a sizable number of people were dissatisfied with the fulfillment, the data there could be a bit of a Rorshach test. We could, alternatively, say that the responses were ‘two-thirds favorable’.

In forum two one participant compared this to the faculty evaluation process and felt there was a ‘disconnect’ between what was stated in the mission and what was used for evaluation. They felt that much of the mission is based on the teaching and mentoring process whereas the emphasis in the evaluation process was different.

Another mentioned that there was simply not enough time for scholarly activities.

A participant in forum three chose to emphasize the point that the faculty members do uphold the standards. However, it was becoming increasingly difficult to do so with the growing class sizes and the fact that the university has not provided the conditions to enable faculty to achieve the balance needed.

Again it was pointed out that not just faculty, but all frontline officers are in a position to interact with students and influence their lives. Other participants felt that their contribution should be reflected in the mission statement. A lot of other staff ‘impact the lives of the students’, and the work of student affairs for example, complements that of the faculty.
Five - It goes on to detail specific methods for fulfillment of the university mission. ‘FGCU continuously pursues academic excellence, practices and promotes environmental sustainability, embraces diversity, nurtures … university’s purpose.’

A lot of what was said in response to the previous question (question four) was also relevant here in the view of some participants in forum three. They felt a lot of strain is coming from budget cutbacks, and these cutbacks have compromised academic excellence.

One participant wondered whether there was a need to define what was meant by the word diversity, but it was pointed out to him that none of the words in the mission statement were defined, and the Guiding Principles existed as a complement and expansion to the Mission and Vision statements.

In forum two reference was again made to the fact that in part three of the question - which asked whether the approaches were consistent with FGCU’s current practices – there were about a third of the respondents in the category that ‘agreed less’ with the statement. However, in this case, one participant felt that five years ago the numbers in that category might have been twice as large, and she felt that there had been great progress especially in the area of environmental sustainability, where initiatives such as car pooling and recycling programs have been introduced. Still it was felt that it was hard to get the word out about these and thus change perceptions. Many people who have joined FGCU recently might not even have realized that these things did not exist from the beginning.

It was also pointed out that the question was a bit of a catch-all, and many things were included which might be evaluated differently. It was therefore hard to say with any specificity what was being commented on, especially with regard to part 3 of the question. Some people might in fact feel that practices with regard to environmental sustainability are consistent, while they may not feel the same about whether the university embraces diversity.

It was pointed out that more detail on the specific concerns of the questionnaire respondents will be obtained from the open-ended responses that were sought from each one of the 33% of respondents in the category agreeing less.

In forum one the view was expressed that this was the values section of the mission statement. It was recommended however that at some time in the future each one of these named values be examined separately to see if one or two of them were the ones attracting attention.
Another participant wondered whether the new strategic plan in 2010 could lead FGCU to be more consistent in its practice. The suggestion was that maybe when the new plan comes out the University can again ask the people whether FGCU’s current practice was consistent with what was written.

A third person thought that this (data being presented) was very good stuff and wanted to be assured that there were plans to actively share this with other committees.

Six. Florida Gulf Coast University’s vision statement says that it … will achieve national prominence in undergraduate education with expanding recognition for selected graduate programs

More than one participant in forum three felt that although FGCU aspired to achieve national prominence, it ‘hadn’t moved far enough’. One participant inquired as to why there was not a similar part three of the question, which could ask for example, whether the University was moving in the direction of fulfilling this vision. He said that if he was asked this question, he would say ‘no’. In fact he would say that it had moved in the other direction, because of the reasons mentioned before - fast growth, lack of resources, and so on.

Participants also expressed concern that the statement was much too vague and ‘does not say very much’. They felt it was ‘narrow’, ‘flabby’, and ‘too generic’. They felt it should be changed to ‘mean something’ and ‘something should be done to distinguish it from the hundred or so other vision statements that are like that’.

One concern they had was how FGCU would know when it as a university ‘got there’. What were the benchmarks it could use for knowing whether it was ‘achieving this national prominence’.

One person asked whether ‘national prominence’ meant universal recognition? It was suggested that the statement be more specific, and define ‘national prominence’. Another participant however cautioned against this, saying that leaving it vague allows FGCU to define what was meant by ‘national prominence’.
Still others felt that the vision statement needed to encapsulate specific and recognizable targets. Everyone should look up to this vision statement and be able to say ‘that’s our goal and we’re not there yet’.

Furthermore these goals should be clear, concise and identifiable. Which graduate programs for example are the selected ones?

In *forum one* a participant took issue with this phrase - *selected graduate programs*, and thought the vision statement should be broad and that it should not single out any “particular programs”. Another person felt it said so little as to be not helpful / hopeful, and seemed very bland. They did not know of any schools that did not look for national prominence in something, and saw the statement as very boring.

The view was also expressed that as a higher education institution FGCU does more than just have undergraduate and graduate programs. It has continuing education, for example, and does research and service.

An overall view was that this statement should inspire staff while they’re here at the University, and something would be needed for the next five years that would inspire everyone.

A criticism offered in *forum two*, was that the statement was too narrow. No mention was made for example of FGCU completing the students’ experience as a whole.
Questionnaire Comments

Respondents to the on-line survey endorsed the existing mission statement and the consistency of FGCU’s implementation of it, by greater than a two to one margin. The comments listed below are from the one third that did not agree with that assessment.

Some of these comments echo those heard at the Forums. Respondents again lamented the drift away from learning centeredness and blamed it on the strains created by rapid growth coupled with budget constraints. Others pointed to the difficulty of verifying compliance with a statement that lacked specificity.¹

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¹ Question 1:
The meaning of their constituents is unclear to me. Are we trying to fulfill these expectations for the board, staff, students, etc? all of these are constituents.

"Expectations" is the problem word for me. Exactly what could be those expectations, how could they be measured, etc. I imagine they are often conflicting and certainly amorphous, letting alone trying to divine what they may be. I would suggest the following revision: "to provide the opportunities for their constituents." That's a more honest, simple, measurable statement.

How are we monitoring the "constituents expectations"? In other words, do we really know what the expectations are and where/when are these expectations published? Because these expectations will be constantly changing, are we prepared to measure ourselves against a moving target?

Our rapid growth model over the last nine years has led to a decline in the quality of the educational experience that we are able to deliver. Our ability to be innovative, to move towards national prominence, to balance teaching, research, and service—all have been compromised by the rapid growth that we have experienced. Because we have been able to "balance the books" it seems that the administration thinks that everything is going smoothly. Unfortunately, we have had to compromise our ideals and provide a learning experience that is mediocre at best. Some colleges have been hit harder than others in this, but there doesn’t seem to be any attempt to redress this imbalance. Simply providing more faculty does not mean that everything has been taken care of.

Question 2:
I think we might have fallen behind a bit on the "innovation" part of that statement. Just because something is new or innovative does not mean it is effective.

The school is rapidly moving away from teaching and academics and is rapidly becoming a typical comprehensive master's university that favors research over teaching. The school is growing with large class sizes, limited technology, and an increasing disconnect between students and faculty. I am just commenting on a disturbing trend.

Question 3:
Students need to recognize their role in learning at FGCU. While we can help students to transform _themselves_. A lot like therapy: until they see the problem, we can provide great avenues that are never used. I do think we have done a better job in transforming SW Florida.

Transforming students' lives is what we should be all about, but this is a process that takes several years to be meaningful, deep, and rich. With enormous classes at the General Education level, we do not reach our students for their first two years of their educational experience. Without a coherent first year program, we do not provide a rich foundation for their learning. Only in the last two years, when they are in the upper level and taking decent sized classes, do we have the opportunity to have an effect on their lives.

Question 4:
With our massive growth and the subsequent teaching load, we have very little time for research and scholarship. We have also been deliberately hiring teachers rather than scholars. Without remaining active in scholarship, many of our faculty may not keep pace with their fields. This may be catastrophic for areas like the sciences.
People are confused about what the university wants. If this is it, then fine, but it seems like a lot still.

I feel the research that happens at FGCU is down played in the media. We have many excellent professors here but there are some that don’t come to class prepared or have appropriate syllabus', mentoring between students and faculty is becoming more limited as the number of students increase and will continue to increase with little or no additional funding.

As teaching loads increase for those of us who teach undergraduates (and some graduates, as well) and comment son promotion documents from administration focus on more scholarship without much focus on demonstrating effective teaching, we move further away from transforming students’ lives and closer to grinding out diplomas...

Teaching and mentoring are NOT considered central responsibilities. This is more about culture than anything. Excellent teachers are not even acknowledged here.

I wouldn't revise the statement. I'd stop admitting so many students or I'd hire enough faculty to responsibly manage the workload created by this rapid growth so that faculty could meaningfully work toward the goal expressed in this language.

There is a disconnect between what is valued and what is rewarded. Although we profess to value teaching as central to the mission, when it comes to promotion, it is not valued on the same level as scholarship.

I would not revise the statement. I just do not believe each college has challenging academic standards for promotion. I think that we are understaffed compared to other public state universities our size and that impacts the ability of faculty to attend to the business of research, scholarship and service.

Faculty are not always able to balance research, scholarly activities, and service expectations. Some college require (by way of the PDP) more service of their faculty than others, and do not allow for faculty to create the balance needed. Little time is left for research in my college due to the service (committees for everything) and my main responsibility as an instructor.

Again, we are not doing a fabulous job of balancing teaching with scholarship. This may come back to haunt us.

I think that this statement is true for the faculty, but not the administration. With increased class size (e.g. large-format scale-up classrooms & senior-level classes with 35 - 50 students), we lose the ability to teach and mentor. In addition, the balance is moving away from teaching to research.

Given the very large class sizes, at least in one college, faculty do not have the opportunity to have balanced lives. We spend more time on teaching and service, and have little time for research.

I would not revise the statement, I would work to change some of our practices to advance this part of our mission better. Faculty do not currently have sufficient resources to dedicate themselves fully to all three of these areas. If the central responsibility is teaching and mentoring, then this needs to be reflected better in our evaluation documents and process.

**Question 5:**
No revisions - we should aspire to this, but academic excellence is increasingly threatened by growth and budget

With the lack of resources provided to the university, we are not able to meet these ideals. We need a better approach to education than we have taken over the last ten years, which has been all about growth, growth, growth. How about if we begin to talk about quality?

**Question 6:**
National prominence is a ridiculous, empty statement for a new University. Take out the word "national."

The vision is rather weak and lacks clarity regarding FGCU's grad programs.

National prominence is too vague a term, need to have specific measures of success
Some respondents on the online survey were critical of the existing mission statement. They complained about the crafting of the statement, the clarity of the writing and its ambiguity or meaninglessness. Several complained that the statement was ‘vague’ or ‘empty’, while others thought the attempt to include too much caused it to lack both focus and distinctiveness.

**Question 1:**

It's vague boilerplate that makes us look like Macy's. Our constituents expect us to provide credentials for a career. We can do better than that. Take out “expectations of [their] constituents”

Both statements should be re-written; they both suffer from numerous problems in style, syntax, parallel sentence structure, etc., in addition to using far too much jargon. Seriously, the statements, as presently written, are embarrassing, and desperately need revision. The sentiments are fine, if somewhat banal, but the style is horrendous.

WHO does FGCU see as our "constituents"? The students? The community? Donors? The entire mission statement is too long and wordy. A mission statement should simply define "Why are we here?" Clean, clear, and to the point. Then EVERYTHING builds from and back to that statement.

It is unclear who "constituents" are. Residents of Southwest Florida? Students? If in the broader context of fulfilling the expectations of the region, reference to research should be explicitly stated. (To be correct grammatically, FGCU’s chief aim is to fulfill expectations of its, not their constituents.)

**Question 2:**

The term “traditional strengths” has no clear meaning to me, so I cannot comment if it is appropriate.

N/A, not clearly written

I wouldn't include it - vague & PC

I would be more specific regarding the "traditional strengths of a public university."

The statement as it is stated currently is vague, plus every university centers around learning so the part that says "a learning-centered spirit" is unnecessary.

I do not understand what it is we do, or can do, that is uniquely innovative or learning-centered spirit compared to other SUS institutions.

"Spirit" is a vague term, and the phrasing is not parallel. My problem with the mission statement is that it relies heavily on this kind of language. "with learning-centered innovation." Again, more precise.

The phrase quoted above leaves the erroneous impression that the traditional strengths of a public university somehow don't include innovation and a learning-centered spirit (whatever that means).

Definitions of "traditional strengths of a public university" and "learning-centered spirit" are vague and self defined. What are they? How are they acknowledged and rewarded?

The innovated teaching methods should come with proper assessment techniques and a willingness by the administration to make appropriate changes when the faculty recognize problems with the methods. This is currently not done at FGCU. I think the “innovation and learning-centered spirit” is misleading without the above procedure.

I wouldn't revise the statement. I would revise how FGCU fulfills it.

**Question 3:**

leave of transforming the southwest Florida region. That is impossible (unless we get a Democratic governor)
Need to include more really measurable outcomes

Need to have specific targets so that you can determine if they are achieved

You can’t merely restate a phrase - this is part of an entire mission statement that should be revamped from the ground up. This statement is vague, as is a lot of the current mission. Transform HOW?

…Are we each to decide how we want to "transform students Lives" and then do so in our own way? Or is there a true vision of what we mean by this? Obviously, we are having a positive impact, but the vision should present a clear picture of what we intend to do.

We are a change agent but "transform" seems a bit over the top - see above.

Again, students have a transactional relationship with FGCU. They attend classes and leave. This does not transform student lives.

**Question 4:**
Outstanding faculty who uphold challenging academic standards and balance TEACHING, scholarly activities, and service expectations with their central responsibilities of teaching and mentoring. There is no teaching in the above statement. Scholarly and research are one in the same.

research is a scholarly activity; no need for both

Because there is no measure of how we do this, there is no consistency. We each do our own thing and we may or may not be right. Additionally, the way I achieve this may be totally contrary to someone in another part of the organization. The message is too vague.

I think it would be more appropriate to word it with [hate] teaching and mentoring FIRST and lessen the role of scholarly activities unless more release time is provided for such activities.

**Question 5:**
I have been here for about 20 months and can tell you how I do things related to these methods, but this is only based on our departmental attempts to achieve these ideals. I have seen no chart that shows how the university is doing. Are we doing better or worse than last year. If we are not tracking progress or failure, how do we know if they are adequate?

Yuck. Too much going on here. Really icky. Hardly even sounds good and will not translate to the outside community. Sounds like an academic laundry list.

It's too wordy

N/A, very vague language. Would break apart.

Can't tweak this mission statement - should rewrite from ground up. This sentence basically says FGCU wants to be all things to all people.

Again, consistency cannot be achieved through the use of these vague statements.

We are lagging in several of these areas.

Stared that way...now it's just a job to most of [it].

**Question 6:**
strikes me as vague and unreasonable. Let's try for state prominence first.

I don't feel that this statement is 'visionary' in any way, it is descriptive to a degree but not inspiring or challenging in any way.

We need to achieve local and state prominence first...we are still young ..this is aspirational at best.
Even amongst this sub-group that gave lower ratings, some had good things to say about the mission statement. They did though, have problems with the meanings of terms used, and individuals made the case for a greater focus on teaching for example, or a stronger emphasis on environmental sustainability. Many others outlined a contrasting vision or approach, or suggested a change in FGCU policy. Some even chose to rewrite phrases or sentences of the mission statement. ³

³ Question 1:  
This is a fine mission statement, except that the details are not described and the constituents’ expectations may change faster than the university can.

Remove cultural and social as it is not the responsibility of a learning institution, nor should it be. I would include research as that does seem to be an integral component for the CAS and engineering schools.

more proactive language vs. reactive (what is our intent rather than their expectations ?)

Question 2:  
I would like to see FGCU strive to become a pioneer in green building for a college campus. I would like for some of that innovation to be put into figuring out how we can use less energy instead of only focusing on generating a portion of our own.

I would delete innovation and keep learning-centered spirit.

I’m pretty sure that traditional universities include innovation and learning in their strengths. What are we doing differently from other universities? We should be specific.

by building on traditional strengths, striving for excellence as a public university through a focus on innovation, integrity and learning.

Adequately describing our mission...not 'of a public institution...state more clearly what we do...i.e., infusing innovation and a learning centered environment and spirit in the classroom.

If this is truly the chief aim of the University, how does the university measure the success of these three areas? where are the measures of success and how are they reported? How are staff aligned to these chief aims, and how do we as staff know if we are contributing or not?

I would not revise the statement, only increase the funding towards innovation so FGCU can catch up to other institutions.

by infusing the traditional strengths of a environmental focused public university with innovation and a learning-centered spirit'

How will we measure this to know if we have succeeded?

Please define what is meant by "a learning-centered spirit". Anything can qualify as being done in the "spirit". Why is learning-centered not a traditional strength of a public university? Did you perhaps mean student-centered?

I do not think we should use the term spirit. Instead use the term "learning-centered focus".

Question 3:  
Transforming students lives is not for the university to decide, it is the students to decide and it's not appropriate. Providing accredited programs, and learning resources to facilitate a qualified workforce for regional and national career fields, or something to that effect.
to educate students and instill in their lives the value of informed citizenry and lifelong learning. PERIOD Faculty cannot be responsible for all of the Southwest Florida region given stringent budgets and the strong push for scholarship and research on top of excellent teaching and public service!

Nauseating. Some may "transform lives" but it should not be a statement that sounds like we are doing a home makeover or something Oprah would do. Our aims and achievements are more modest, more solid: education for the 21st century, one sure investment even in times of change and challenge.

Transformation can take many forms. Thus, the term comes across as vague and somewhat lofty. Something along the lines of "meaningful (or purposeful) learning experiences" is clearer and imparts a similar desired outcome of faculty efforts.

Just take this out. Students transform their own lives.

to transform student lives by the conduct of scholarly research, to promote professional performance, and to address the educationally-related economic, health, environmental, social, cultural, and recreational needs of the southwest Florida region.

I don't think we clearly 'transform southwest Florida...we prepare future responsible citizens of southwest Fl...who will ultimately transform the community

Transforming the region seems a bit dramatic. Enriching the educational and cultural landscape of the region is much more do-able.

I do not agree that 'transforming' students should be part of our strategic plan. Giving a personalized educational experience should be but this may or may not transform a student.

**Question 4:**
I believe that this statement is part of HOW we implement the vision, not the vision itself. The words "through the actions" show that this is how we will transform the lives of students, so I believe that this should not be in the vision itself.

really tough to balance all of these thing, but at least perhaps eliminate redundancy of "research" *and* "scholarly activities."

**Question 5:**
‘Florida Gulf Coast University continuously pursues academic excellence, practices and promotes environmental sustainability, embraces diversity, nurtures community partnerships, values public service, encourages civic responsibility, promotes awareness of cultural accomplishments, cultivates habits of lifelong learning, and keeps the advancement of knowledge and pursuit of truth as noble ideals at the heart of the university’s purpose

The list is inelegant and suggests a footnote of extra items, when really these are the most important things in the mission statement, far more so than information on when & how the university was founded. You could group these goals by theme and create 3 or 4 sentences that highlight the centrality of these goals

**Question 6:**
We need to have a stronger, more elevated vision than this, e.g. it might be better to say that FGCU will achieve Nat’l prominence in undergrad and grad education, instead of waffling on the "selected graduate programs."

It is totally uninspiring. I’d scratch this and start over focusing on ecological literacy and real actions to suit that vision and how it plays out in the ways outlined in the mission statement

‘will achieve prominence in undergraduate education and graduate programs.’

will strive to dedicate resources sufficient to achieve national prominence in undergraduate education with expanding recognition for selected graduate programs,

We should first seek regional prominence then go for national prominence. I think the vision statement should reflect both but with the priority regional prominence.

‘will achieve prominence in undergraduate education and graduate programs.’
There were several additional comments from questionnaire respondents with more general concerns, such as the suitability of FGCU’s aims, and the nature of their obligations. These comments were not restricted to a particular question. They are listed at the end of this document, after a discussion of those general concerns that were raised by participants at the public forums.

General concerns raised by Public Forum Participants

One forum one participant felt that ‘environmental sustainability’ and the role that it plays, should be elevated. He felt that if there existed a way to achieve national and international prominence this was it. FGCU had achieved and can achieve a lot in this area and this is definitely a way that it should follow. It is one of the only, or the only U.S. university that has environmental sustainability as a part of its founding mission.

He felt that it should not only be in the mission but it should be prominent, as it was in an earlier version of the mission statement. It should not just be in a list of things but be highlighted. Other participants piggybacked on that to say that sustainability should refer to other efforts as well.

A common and repeated sentiment throughout, and very prominent in forum three, was that the mission statement should include everyone. Participants felt that although the university’s main mission is teaching, and that necessitates a focus on faculty, maybe the term used should be ‘faculty and services’ or something like that. This way everyone in the university community would feel included.

Many of the following ‘additional comments’ on the questionnaire echoed these forum participants’ views on the mission statement in general. The comments also reflected the view that rather than simply meeting the expectations of their ‘constituents’ – whoever they may be – the university’s ‘role’ should be to set higher standards that would challenge and uplift.4

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4 Question 1:
It is not our job to fulfill their expectations, as if we were strictly a business offering a service. We are equally charged with challenging their expectations, usually showing them that they can and should expect more “of themselves” than they realized.
I don't know if their expectations are appropriate. Students need a good education, but are frequently frustrated when faculty challenge students' preconceived notions. So more concepts of "critical pedagogy" might be infused within the mission statement.

In these challenging economic times and world changing events, it is no longer enough for a university to "fulfill" or just meet expectations of the constituents. We need a university on the cutting edge of research that will engage our students and citizens to explore new, daring solutions to unprecedented social, economic and environmental crisis. FGCU has the advantage of being new enough to not be mired down with tradition. We need the university to lead and drive new industry, medical research, alternative energy, and new economic paradigms. We need the university to set the stage for SWFL culture and innovation, rather than just reflect what is already here. Engage our community in the possibilities; not the status quo.

This assumes that our primary task should be to fulfill the expectations of our students. But I think we ought to be expanding their expectations, offering them a more comprehensive and broader vision of what is possible, and give them tools for reaching above and beyond their initial expectations, so that they can envision more for themselves than what their prior experience and background might otherwise indicate. Our students suffer from limited experience and outlook and relatively unambitious expectations, which comes in part from geographic and social isolation, and in part from demographic factors. Many of them think of the university as no more than a vocational school, and courses as no more than technical training. I am not sure that this fact of life (which is very largely true of FGCU) is in keeping with the larger mission of a university, or in keeping with other, more idealistic parts of our vision statement.

"fulfill the expectations of its constituents" connotes a "customer is always right" business mentality, or else a politician pandering to his constituents. Neither one is appropriate to describe what a university does. We need something that expresses the fact that our primary responsibility is to intellectual pursuits, academic standards, and the professional aspirations of our students; not to their expectations.

The aim of public higher education ought to be transformative experiences, which often means defying, going beyond, and sometimes even initially contradicting the "expectations" of the university's "constituents." The premise of liberal arts higher education is that students don't always bring expectations that match with what a successful outcome would or will look like for them in the end. Emphasizing that our job is to fulfill their expectations positions us as a service provider to a customer, when in fact we're here to help make transformative learning experiences possible.

career is an out of place term in this endeavor, it is more a matter of "acquiring skills necessary to compete in the 21st century".........the skills can be expanded to include analytical thinking, etc. There is no mention of their most important goal........to develop as social beings.

I put "not at all" so that I could provide written commentary. There are many things that FGCU does well, but there are disturbing trends. I am increasingly concerned that the school is moving away from academics and education in favor of research. This is evidenced by the increasing class size; for example, scale up rooms in CAS with 81. In addition, the hiring of faculty for specific research goals (e.g. the environmental microbiologists hired last year), instead of their teaching role, is a disturbing trend. I am concerned about the direction of the school, which unfortunately, does not match up with the mission statement.

**Question 2:**
the university does is not making an effort to attract nor support innovative faculty, therefore "infusing" students with this quality may be problematic.

The learning centered spirit is why I rated this a 2. In reality, teaching seems to be valued equally with research and service takes a last place. At least from the faculty side, WHAT do we define as strengths of a public university? Do we really encourage innovation from a learning perspective or have we slip into the old-fashioned traditional paradigm of academia?

See above for suggestions about revisions. There's nothing wrong with the sentiment embodied in this language. The problem is that no matter what we claim we believe we're doing, the pace of our growth means what we're really about is access first and last, at pretty much any and all cost. This may or may not be the best approach (we could and should have a very public and honest conversation about this), but it's NOT one that so far has been carried out in a way that has allowed us to uphold the traditional strengths of the public university (chief among them, liberal arts education), as we claim here, much less support innovation and "a learning-centered spirit." Rather, we've had by necessity to focus on accommodating the overwhelming number of students without sufficient people to teach them and support that instruction. That may have inadvertently resulted in a learning-centered spirit or innovation (people do interesting things under sustained and enormous pressure) but one can hardly say these are the result of current practices being conducive to those aims.
Not sure we are very innovative. Our use of technology is fairly normal and we are playing catch up with wireless and use of computers in classrooms. We don't fund the tech replacement plan on an annual basis and do not have an agile platform for web design and use. No portal is in place to coordinate electronic services. The ERP is cumbersome to update and there is an inadequate reporting structure out of it for data that is easily used by faculty, staff and administration without substantial technical knowledge.

Learning-centered and student-centered go hand in hand. We need enough seats in Gen Ed and other required classes to fulfill this promise. We state that our reputation will be primarily based on our undergraduates, but more and more we are falling into the pattern of major research institutions, offering graduate programs on the backs of the undergraduate students by increasing their class sizes, and using more adjuncts to teach those required classes. I don't think we should revise the statement; I think we should live up to it.

It is not the statement I would revise, It is FGCU's current adherence to this section of the mission. FGCU is run like a business-- not like a traditional public university, or with an innovative learning spirit. It is not "student centered" enough, and this can stifle learning. Let's get to place where we actually comply with our own philosophy.

I wouldn't revise the statement; I just see a disconnect with the word innovation and what we're actually doing. I am concerned that we tout ourselves as having cutting-edge technology when we do not. Our campus computer labs are small and not open much. There should be campus technology support for students and there isn't. That's a huge gap. I'm also surprised that we don't have an online communication system like Illuminate for faculty to use. I think we may be the only SUS without it (or something akin to it). And if we were truly focused on learning, we'd have a strong human resources development department and a department dedicated to teaching excellence.

ON personal educational experience here as well as that of my children, I think less focus should be given on the required service learning hours (volunteering which is similar to being an indentured servant) and more focus should be given on students obtaining hands on experience in the community working on real job/career situations. This would give all students 'experience' in their career fields and help students make career choices. This would be innovation. What is a learning-centered spirit? Students either learn and aspire or don't, there is no try. I'd replace traditional strengths with some stellar details of what FGCU offers-

We need to have professors and instructors who create learning experiences for their students in order to make it "Learning-centered". I do not think we are currently doing that, which is why I responded with a "2". Asking me to revise is in appropriate because I cannot revise other instructors' actions through a survey questionnaire.

The university does not look at all diversity issues...disability as diversity!

**Question 3:**
There are many staff who transform lives far greater than faculty. It is a biased statement.

"Transform" is a problematically vague word and promise. For instance, you could argue instances of sexual harassment of students as being "transformative." It also suggests indoctrination. On top of that, how do you "transform" a region? I realize ... professors [name redacted] endorse this kind of language, but I think a little more scrutiny and critical thinking should be applied here. I think the mission statement is fine without this kind of language, and I would suggest eliminating this statement altogether.

I do not know how to revise the statement. My rating of 3 is due to the known practices of faculty (witnessed not only as a staff member but also a current parent) of having a lackadaisical attitude with regard to students, their behaviors in class (surfing the net while in class, texting, talking amongst themselves and ignoring the professors), and their general attitude. I believe, coming "from the old school", that the students should have their feet held to the fire to fulfill the requirements of the syllabi and the requirements of the classes. NO FREE PASSES.

Too much turn over...Look at student affairs?

**Question 4:**
What about the highly qualified staff?

This is simply false. This is not how the place actually works and we should stop pretending otherwise. The reality is that faculty are under great pressure to publish. Teaching and especially service are low priorities. No one has ever been denied promotion for inadequate service. Also, we're not social engineers. We don't transform the lives of students. We can provide the tools, but students transform their own lives.
If the vision is clear, then action plans such as this are appropriate and each action will provide clarity in the approach to implementing the vision.

Few faculty at FGCU can be designated as "outstanding" in research. Few faculty publish articles in peer reviewed journals or receive research grants. Furthermore, the FGCU website link for "research" is directed at ORSP and appears as if no legitimate research is being conducted at FGCU. I would either remove "research" from the statement or make an effort to make research a more visible aspect of education at this university.

I wouldn’t revise it. I’d recommend strong measures to institutionalize support for faculty so they CAN "uphold challenging academic standards", because currently there are disincentives to do so: overemphasis, i.e. almost complete emphasis on SAI’s, lack of support for faculty when students complain, grade changes above the faculty member's level, encouragement of grade inflation, etc. etc.

It is my observation that academic standards at FGCU are far too low. I am also unsure that all faculty are "outstanding" - some have little professional and personal respect for. I am deeply put off by the sexual escapades and real and conjured law suits that seem to infuse this place. Central responsibilities ought to include professional activity and contributions in the field of specialization. FGCU needs to better align its reward systems with its goals and mission.

Again, I do not think the statement should be revised. I believe that "faculty who uphold challenging academic standards" should, itself, be challenged. There is too much "extra credit" or "we’ll drop the lowest score(s)", or whatever accommodating action is taken towards students who consistently fail to rise to their challenge and perform academically should be supported and enforced. The students these days want the easy way out and are inconvenienced if they actually have to do some work; the faculty should hold them to the requirements and, if they don’t meet them, fail them. Don’t "just pass them" to let them move through the system.

Too much emphasis given to student's perception of the quality of teaching. The regularly scheduled student survey leads to mediocrity when the results are depended on as the "only quantifiable evidence" of quality teaching.

As a mission this language is correct. As a reality I'm not sure that all faculty truly challenge their students

If there is a faculty member that is not outstanding but mediocre or below is the university willing to dismiss them, so far it seems not. Also many highly effective instructors seem to be excluded since they do not do research, scholarly activities, or community service.

Hey the faculty is good at getting students pregnant?

Outstanding faculty are overburdened with outside committee, accreditation, and other responsibilities to have a balance. IF our central core is teaching and mentoring..we have too many other expectations to achieve this. We have very little support for research and scholarly activities and service has become an overwhelming way of putting anything else that can be done..just label it service.

**Question 5:**
The current culture values teaching load over advancement of knowledge. In fact, in some areas (environmental sustainability) dogma and conformity is promoted over new ideas.

I just think the sentence is cumbersome and could perhaps be revised by separating out a few related elements into discreet sentences.

A noble statement, but not true in fact. Public service is NOT valued. Diversity and responsibility are not valued as can be seen with all the faculty who have inappropriate relationships with students and keep their jobs. It's never been about truth here. Just the number of articles in your vita.

I think the destruction acres of the preserve area that had the endangered snakes is a blatant hypocrisy of this statement.

There is no pursuit of academic excellence; it's all about research and scholarship here, to the detriment of teaching. Also, the student as consumer mindset has gotten out of control. FGCU "keeps the ...pursuit of truth as a noble ideal". This does reflect the fact the FGCU appears to believe that truth is a noble but unattainable and irrelevant goal, born out by many administrative actions. There is no support for truth nor teaching excellence.

Clarity would be improved if the vision and values are clear, and if senior leaders communicate to employees how they will show commitment to those values. The leaders should show how they will involve the entire workforce in achieving these
and monitor performance. The key short and long term objectives should be included here, but should be followed by action plans which deploy the objectives.

We continue to struggle with diversity despite our best efforts and are uneven in developing civic responsibility and strength of the curriculum. Our first year experience programs are not coordinated well and there is a drifting by the faculty away from the ideals we were established with when our size made it easier to gain consensus.

… As far as diversity embracing is concerned, I do not fully believe we “walk the talk”. Yes, lots of things are said and written, but I do not believe them to be sincere.

The environmental sustainability is a complete joke at this school and should be taken off the plan. Many smaller schools do more for environmental sustainability and they do not rub it into the public's face. The reality is that the University tries to promote this ‘green’ image in the face of the public, but the reality is that FGCU is far from that. Fortunately a solid number of faculty are realizing this and a growing number of students are recognizing it.

I wouldn’t revise this statement either. Instead, I’d bring the university's practices closer in line with its aspirational statements. Of the items listed about, it is at best arguably true that the institution is currently configured in such a way that it “continuously pursue academic excellenc” (see previous answer) or “practices and promotes environmental sustainability” (as opposed to window dressing).

**Question 6:**
It should not be so focused on under graduate education. There is a disconnect between the vision and mission. the vision should be something like: FGCU presents the opportunity for educational experiences which positively transform lives.

Our University needs to decide if we are going to build quality graduate programs or if we are going to place our efforts in undergraduate education. We are somewhere in between right now and I feel that both programs are suffering from that. The graduate programs are not well supported with regard to funding and are very disorganized in terms of policies and procedures required of the students. This is because there isn’t enough money or faculty time handed over for such needs. On the other hand, we have faculty in several departments that simply refuse to teach a course unless it is a graduate level course. They do not offer any research opportunities for undergraduates but place all of their time and efforts into the graduate students. FGCU needs to decide which direction the school wants to go.

I meant to give this a “1.” not that I'm rereading this statement. Our vision statement is essentially a lie, and I view it now as a statement that allowed the university to run away from its nascent vision and to grow unfettered, and the costs of that has been a complete degradation of our undergraduate programs: larger classes, greater reliance on unranked faculty, etc. I would point to the development of HUM 2520 as a primary example of how this vision statement has enabled destructive curriculum decisions. I would also point to the Nursing Program's well-publicized issues, in which I believe our culture of growth, which this statement endorses, is essentially to blame. This statement is a sham. I also find the word "recognition" very problematic as well. It's not about creating robust undergraduate programs (which require hard work), but only creating the perception of them, which requires only clever marketing and manipulation of assessment practices and conclusions. Our vision should simply be about providing viable, relevant, and challenging education programs. I would not distinguish between undergraduate and graduate programs. I would say nothing about attaining “recognition.”

[T]he university is doing ok, but why do we have to complete w/ “Edison College”? I do not agree that national prominence is the most important mission for an “environmental” university to aspire to achieve. The search for prominence was perhaps a leading factor in placing the ground-level solar panel field in the clear-cut upland pine area, allowing clear visibility from the high traffic levels on Ben Hill Griffin Parkway. Perhaps a more admirable mission is seeking to become a leader in environmentally sustainable higher education. It would be a unique, admirable aspiration rather than seeking the prominence for which nearly every other university strives.

What does “national prominence” actually mean. FGCU is a regional teaching institution and we should focus on doing this well. “National prominence” is more of a feel good fundraising term and hints at FGCU becoming a research institution (which would require money we don’t have). Forget the mission creep. We are a teaching institution and should be good at teaching. Which politically programs will be selected? Will it be based on the needs of our constituents or administrative fiat?