General Education Town Hall - World Café Dialogues
November 13, 2012

After a brief presentation by Kris De Welde, Director of General Education, summarizing results from the general education campus surveys and previous two Town Hall meetings (November 6 & 7), attendees gathered in four small groups to discuss key questions. The key questions were derived from the results of the surveys and previous town hall meetings. These included:

• **What should be the intent or purpose of FGCU's General Education Program (GEP)?**

• **How could we facilitate greater connections between GEP areas and courses, and between the GEP and the majors?**

• **In order to develop a “signature” GEP, which themes (and sub-themes) are most important for us?**

• **How could FGCU’s GEP be linked to the mission, vision, and guiding principles of the university?**

After 10-15 minutes, participants were asked to move to another table/question with one “table host” remaining at each table. The host welcomed new members, summarized the preceding discussion at that table, and facilitated a discussion that built upon the previous one. All tables had large sheets of paper on which to document the conversations. The final 15 minutes were dedicated to each table reporting out to the larger group (this is in the spirit of “World Café” dialogues: [http://www.theworldcafe.com/pdfs/cafetogo.pdf](http://www.theworldcafe.com/pdfs/cafetogo.pdf)).

**Transcript**

**Table 1: What should be the intent or purpose of FGCU's General Education Program?**

*This table was provided with summarized results from the previous town hall meetings (bulleted list below) as well as the General Education mission statement (found on the General Education website: [http://www.fgcu.edu/General_Education/mission.html](http://www.fgcu.edu/General_Education/mission.html))*

Ideas to work with:

• Gen ed provides tools needed for everything else:
  - Functioning in upper level courses
  - After college
  - Work place
  - Service learning sites
  - Internships
  - Making decisions
  - Being a productive Citizen
Tools:
- Subject matter
- Critical thinking
- Life skills
- Communication

• Communicate to students that GEP is a foundation for the academic career
• Foundation for life skills
• Foundation for life of the mind

General Education Mission
The FGCU General Education Program helps students transition to the university experience, promotes mastery of the undergraduate student learning goals, encourages independent learning, and facilitates selection of a major. A comprehensive curriculum with a foundation in civic engagement challenges students to develop the knowledge, skills, and perspectives necessary for personal growth and success.


Discussion and points shared with the larger group:

• Connect students’ learning in GEP to the outside world/cultures (occurs in the upper-level courses too, not just lower level)
  o Makes it more reflective
  o Connects to the mission of FGCU
• Prepare them to be independent thinkers and problem solvers
• Life preparedness (not just job/career prep)
• Use of IDS 3920 (University Colloquium) & IDS 3300 (Foundations of Civic Engagement) in the College of Arts & Sciences as a shell/example
• Make it “anti-vocational” – [should be a] foundation for citizenship in democracy
• Make students more prepared for upper-level courses
• Will [the changes] effect the purpose of individual courses? [For example,] introduction to disciplines/majors... [we should] move away from introducing disciplines or majors.
• Give students a sense of authorship over their education
• Forcing [them] to think in ways that are new or uncomfortable
• Should be the first distinguishing step from high school to college
• Embed [GEP] throughout a students’ entire four years, not just the lower level/first 2 years
• Look at what is offered in Continuing Education. Does this show any demand areas?
• Expand a student’s global perspective to give students an opportunity to have intelligent conversations with others in social or professional settings
• Not always a means to an end – learning in these areas can be its own end
• Exposure to areas that make students contributors and decision makers that make the world a better place
• Give students the opportunity to gain information in order to make their own informed decisions
• To discover themselves and (re)affirm their values and beliefs
• Exposure to something completely new, open new doors
• Gain (transferable) skills to allow them to explore – Building a foundation to move forward
• Equalizing the playing field for everyone
• Gain disciplinary exposure outside of their comfort zone
• Take it beyond the gaining of skills, but getting them a new appreciation & excitement for the acquisition of knowledge & skills
• Removing the disconnect between lower-level/GEP and upper-level courses that need them (e.g., ENC 1101 & 1102 & scientific writing in ISC 3120). Move away from having to “re-teach” students.

Summary point shared with broader group: General Education should certainly be about gaining certain skills and knowledge and developing citizenship, but it should go beyond this to assist students in gaining a new appreciation for and excitement about the acquisition of knowledge.

Table 2: How could we facilitate greater connections between GEP areas and courses, and between the GEP and the majors?

This table was provided with a list of current General Education courses as well as summary results from previous town hall meetings (bulleted list below).

Ideas to work with:
• Let students choose a course based on a theme that professor has expertise in.
  o A first year seminar course on 1960’s films that is writing-intensive
• Collaboration
  o Environmental humanities professor with science professor, link 2 courses.
  o Faculty need to maintain ownership of course.
• Collaborative relationships between faculty, smaller units of 4-workshopping/idea units
• Trial runs of one-series of courses theme-based and pilot it first
• Common competencies & assessment tools to link
• Faculty buy-in important

Discussion and points shared with the larger group:

1. Identify themes; have GEP faculty collaborate with faculty in the majors to work on integrating discipline-specific or multidisciplinary experiences.
   a. Example #1 Chemistry GEP faculty work with discipline faculty to develop chemistry experiences/class assignments that relate to discipline’s workplace/real world practices.
   b. Example #2: English Comp/Written communication – identify themes related to writing across or throughout the curriculum.
2. Consider having liaison between GEP and programs
3. Forums with faculty in majors and GEP faculty to come up with a list of topics to weave throughout the curriculum, starting with GEP 1st semester freshmen
4. Linked courses. E.g., honors program at FGCU as an example (philosophy course linked with global studies course)
   a. Note: linking may be problematic – bars accessibility especially for non-traditional students who may not be able to take linked courses. [this is somewhat unclear for transcriptionist! –KD]
5. Themes across the curriculum – linked to upper-level courses, through senior-level

Summary point shared with broader group: Identify themes in the GEP; Have the GEP faculty integrate within the GEP and then with the upper level faculty; Develop assignments and activities that relate to real world examples.

Table 3: In order to develop a “signature” GEP, which themes (and sub-themes) are most important for us?

This table was provided with a list of the most popular “themes” generated from the campus surveys (see Addendum 1), as well as the bulleted list below that was generated in the previous town hall meetings.

Ideas to work with (using image of pitcher fountain on next page)

- One example of themes and sub-themes:
  Global Awareness
    o Human culture / society
    o Intercultural knowledge
    o Respect for human diversity
  Scientific & environmental literacy
    o Knowledge of physical / natural world
    o Environmental Sustainability
    o Scientific literacy
  Civic engagement
    o Team work
    o Cultural awareness, respect for human diversity
    o Leadership
  Communication
    o Written & oral
  Critical / Creative thinking / problem solving / quantitative reasoning
  Across the curriculum themes:
    o Foundations of lifelong learning
    o Ethical reasoning
    o Technological literacy
    o Information literacy

- Another example focuses on Critical Thinking as the key competency, with themes attached to it, and extending through the curriculum:
  Development of critical thinking skills
1. Preparation to enter society as responsible, ethical, and productive civically engaged citizens (Global; Be environmental stewards)
2. Becoming lifelong learners
3. Demonstrate effective written and oral communication
4. Appreciation of diversity
5. --
6. --

Web shows Gen Ed at all levels – spiraling across curriculum. Language spirals across curriculum too. Note: # are not ranked order; they are for ease of linking (interpreting) in the diagram (critical thinking at the center).
**Discussion and points shared with the larger group:**

- Communication – Oral & Written
  - Professional
  - Self-presentation [unsure of where this fits]
- Environmental (Sustainability) & Scientific Thinking
  - Group notes that “thinking” is preferable to “literacy” as the former is more of a process as opposed to the latter, which presents the attainment of knowledge as having an end point.
- Civic Responsibility
  - Community partnerships
  - Public service
- Critical & Creative Thinking / Problem Solving / Quantitative
- Sociological imagination
  - Lifelong learning
  - Global awareness
  - Diversity
  - Environmental sustainability

**Summary point shared with broader group:** Map the Gen Ed themes to the FGCU Mission; Communication (Written and Oral); Sociological Imagination (which would include such things as diversity, global citizenship, etc.)

**How could FGCU’s General Education Program be linked to the mission, vision, and guiding principles of the university?**

*This table was provided with FGCU’s mission, vision & guiding principles (see Addendum 2)*.

- Themes could be generated from the mission/guiding principles
  - Diversity
  - Environmental sustainability
  - Civic engagement/responsibility
  - Lifelong learning
  - Knowledge
  - Pursuit of truth
  - Technology (?)
  - Innovation
  - Student-centered learning
  - Learning-centered spirit
- Outside of GEP [there cold be] a 1st year seminar – university requirement and/or transfer seminar (covers mission).
• “critical thinking”
  - evaluation
  - creation
  - analysis
• “not possible” [transcriber is unsure where this comment fits – KD]
• There are at least two possible goals in a revised/reformed GEP: 1) aiming to design a gen-ed experience that equips students with the basic knowledge and skills that are associated with a college educated person who succeeds in the major (your proverbial "average" college educated person), versus 2) a gen ed experience that contributes to (and is in a kind of conversation with) the majors and produces The FGCU Student who not only possesses those basic skills and abilities and knowledge, but also reflects and embodies the values and commitments that we associate with FGCU as an academic institution.
• Also relevant to consider is the issue of transfer students: can they leave FGCU as the latter if they completed some or all of their general education elsewhere, if so, how, and how does that impact the revisions in the GEP?

Summary point shared with broader group: Be innovative in our Gen Ed Program! Make changes to the program that show our uniqueness. Themes: pull them directly from the Mission and Guiding Principles (long list given, includes: diversity, civic engagement, environmental sustainability, life-long learning, etc.)

**General Discussion**
Integrate Gen Ed and Service Learning
Include High Impact Practices
Create a unique FGCU First Year Experience (or FGCU Experience)
Challenge students to analyze their preconceived notions, ideas, knowledge (form of Critical Thinking).
Addendum 1

List of key themes/topics identified by the campus surveys and first 2 Town Hall meetings.

List of themes and topics selected by survey respondents as “especially important to emphasize in the general education program” (task was to choose up to seven)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty/Staff/Admin.</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written communication</td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>Written communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral communication</td>
<td>Oral communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical reasoning</td>
<td>Creative thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative thinking</td>
<td>Global awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative reasoning</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic knowledge/engagement</td>
<td>Knowledge of the physical &amp; natural world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global awareness</td>
<td>Respect for human diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of human cultures &amp; societies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty/Staff/Admin. (received &gt;20%)</th>
<th>Students (received &gt;30%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information literacy</td>
<td>Technological literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for human diversity</td>
<td>Ethical reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific literacy</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental literacy</td>
<td>Scientific literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundations for lifelong learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Addendum 2

FGCU Vision, Mission & Guiding Principles

Vision
Florida Gulf Coast University will achieve national prominence in undergraduate education with expanding recognition for graduate programs.
*Approved by the FGCU Board of Trustees January 19, 2010.*

Mission
Established on the verge of the 21st century, Florida Gulf Coast University infuses the strengths of the traditional public university with innovation and learning-centered spirit, its chief aim being to fulfill the academic, cultural, social, and career expectations of its constituents.

Outstanding faculty uphold challenging academic standards and balance research, scholarly activities, and service expectations with their central responsibilities of teaching and mentoring. Working together, faculty and staff of the University transform students’ lives and the southwest Florida region.

*Florida Gulf Coast University continuously pursues academic excellence, practices and promotes environmental sustainability, embraces diversity, nurtures community partnerships, values public service, encourages civic responsibility, 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.*
*Approved by the FGCU Board of Trustees January 19, 2010.*

Guiding Principles
The founding of Florida Gulf Coast University at the advent of a new century is a signal event. It comes at a moment in history when the conditions that formed and sustained American higher education are fundamentally changing, and at a time when rapid shifts wrought by technology and social complexities are altering the very nature of work, knowledge, and human relationships. As a public institution, Florida Gulf Coast University eagerly accepts the leadership opportunity and obligation to adapt to these changes and to meet the educational needs of Southwest Florida. To do so, it will collaborate with its various constituencies, listen to the calls for change, build on the intellectual heritage of the past, plan its evolution systematically for the twenty-first century, and be guided by the following principles:

Student success is at the center of all University endeavors. The University is dedicated to the highest quality education that develops the whole person for success in life and work. Learner needs, rather than institutional preferences, determine priorities for academic planning, policies, and programs. Acceleration methods and assessment of prior and current learning are used to reduce time to degree. Quality teaching is demanded, recognized, and rewarded.
Academic freedom is the foundation for the transmission and advancement of knowledge. The University vigorously protects freedom of inquiry and expression and categorically expects civility and mutual respect to be practiced in all deliberations. **Diversity** is a source of renewal and vitality. The University is committed to developing capacities for living together in a democracy whose hallmark is individual, social, cultural, and intellectual diversity. It fosters a climate and models a condition of openness in which students, faculty, and staff engage multiplicity and difference with tolerance and equity.

**Informed and engaged citizens** are essential to the creation of a civil and sustainable society. The University values the development of the responsible self grounded in honesty, courage, and compassion, and committed to advancing democratic ideals. Through service learning requirements, the University engages students in community involvement with time for formal reflection on their experiences. Integral to the University’s philosophy is instilling in students an **environmental consciousness** that balances their economic and social aspirations with the imperative for ecological sustainability.

**Service to Southwest Florida**, including access to the University, is a public trust. The University is committed to forging partnerships and being responsive to its region. It strives to make available its knowledge resources, services, and educational offerings at times, places, in forms and by methods that will meet the needs of all its constituents. Access means not only admittance to buildings and programs, but also entrance into the spirit of intellectual and cultural community that the University creates and nourishes.

**Technology** is a fundamental tool in achieving educational quality, efficiency, and distribution. The University employs information technology in creative, experimental, and practical ways for delivery of instruction, for administrative and information management, and for student access and support. It promotes and provides distance and time free learning. It requires and cultivates technological literacy in its students and employees.

**Connected knowing and collaborative learning** are basic to being well educated. The University structures **interdisciplinary learning experiences** throughout the curriculum to endow students with the ability to think in whole systems and to understand the interrelatedness of knowledge across disciplines. Emphasis is placed on the development of teamwork skills through collaborative opportunities. Overall, the University practices the art of collective learning and collaboration in governance, operations, and planning.

**Assessment** of all functions is necessary for improvement and continual renewal. The University is committed to accounting for its effectiveness through the use of comprehensive and systematic assessment. Tradition is challenged; the status-quo is questioned; change is implemented.