Experience 1: Cognos Retention Report

Cognos is a very frustrating and time consuming program. I consider myself pretty technologically savvy, but this program is for those who studied information systems and have devoted their life career to it. Cognos is not something someone trains with for a few days and they are all set. There are complicated problems that arise and someone needs to know how to fix them. However, Jennifer and I have been trying our best to get through this report with the help of Cynthia Cutler. It has truly been a team project. We have much of the report finished, but need to figure out how to do the GPAs and the second part of the report. The second part is similar to the first, but looks at those students newly admitted and enrolled during a particular semester. We have had some issues with the data not matching up, so once we figure that out, the rest will be time consuming, but not too difficult.

Standards:  
Standard 8: Learning, Accountability & Assessment & Standard & 7: Technology

Standard 8 is reflected in this activity because we are being accountable to our retainment efforts. We are trying to get data to be proactive to retain our graduate students.

Standard 7 is reflected in this activity because we are using a software database system to monitor our retainment numbers.

Experience 2: Newsletter

I have started working on a new project for Graduate Studies: a newsletter. The newsletter will be two pages and will feature stories about professors, upcoming events, and graduate studies articles. The purpose of the newsletter is to let our graduate students know we are here for them and for the graduate students to feel connected to the university and important in our community. According to Gibbs (1995), “Learners need to feel a sense of connectedness, to feel a part of and be included in the group” (as cited by Rovai, 2002, p.4). Tinto (1993) added, “Those students who possess strong feelings of community are more likely to persist than those students who feel alienated and alone” (as cited in Rovai, 2002, p.12). Giving students helpful information and tips about graduate school will help them on their path to succeed in their program and feel a part of our university. The newsletter will also serve as a useful recruitment tool to show prospective students we care about our graduate students and their success.

This past week I have started to research newsletters at other universities as well as within FGCU. I found the Career Development Services two page newsletter very well laid out and professional looking. So, I organized my findings and made notes as to what I like on each newsletter, so we can combine our favorite aspects to make our own. Next week we are having a meeting about the newsletter, then I will set up a meeting with Bob Klein to help me create the newsletter.
Standards: Standard 1: Vision & Standard

Standard 1 is reflected in this activity because we want to make sure we are relaying the appropriate messages through our publications. We want graduate students to feel connected to FGCU and a part of our campus community. As a graduate studies department, we want to portray professionalism in every aspect of our work. The newsletter is the perfect place to show what we value and what we represent.

Experience 3: Website Redesign

I have spent a lot of time on this website redesign in the past two weeks. I met with James Greco again to get the Photoshop templates from him and he showed me a few more quick workflow techniques. So, the next few days I spent on our graphics and home splash page. Jennifer wanted to see more picture and longer columns, so I took the liberty to change it myself without asking for help to see if I could do it, and I did! I was so proud of myself that I could figure out how to change around the template page. I created all of the graphics, got the home splash page ready, and created a template for a rotating picture area. Next week I will take all of these graphics and bring it to Dave and he will show me how he splices it and puts it into Red Dot. I also found out some valuable information while meeting with the technology staff. FGCU has a Flickr account where the photographer’s post pictures from events or around campus that we can use in our publications. Jennifer and I went through them to choose some for the website. I also spent some time around campus taking a few of my own. Working on the photos in Photoshop is a fun part of this job. James even lent me some Photoshop magazines to pick up some new tricks.

I spent most of my time this past week taking the new page content that I created in Word and transferring it over to Red Dot. I also added a few static images to the pages and added in the Apply Now and Request Info. buttons. Red Dot’s content editor is extremely picky and difficult to use. Formatting the text is not easy if you don’t know how to use it. There was one page where it took me close to 2 hours to format because it had bullets, spacing, bold headings, etc. But, I was able to finish the pages and had Jennifer go over it one last time to make final edits. It is neat to see this all coming together. The fact that I am leading this process is very rewarding.

Standards: Standard 1: Vision & Standard, 7: Technology

Standard 1 is reflected in this activity because we want to make sure we are relaying the appropriate messages through our website to our target audiences. Everything needs to work together to present Graduate Studies as a professional department ready to assist prospective and current graduate students.

Standard 7 is reflected in this activity because I am working with Photoshop & Red Dot to create the graphics and upload the information to the web template.

References
Rovai, A. (2002). Building sense of community at a distance. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, 3*(1), 1-16.