Florida Gulf Coast University Board of Trustees
April 19, 2011

SUBJECT: New Degree Program: B.A. in Journalism

PROPOSED BOARD ACTION

Approve new Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Journalism program.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

FGCU is requesting permission to offer a B.A. in Journalism as described in the Executive Summary.

Supporting Documentation Included: Executive Summary

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Legal Review by: General Counsel Vee Leonard (March 30, 2011)

Submitted by: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Ron Toll
Florida Gulf Coast University

New Degree Program Proposal
Executive Summary
March 28, 2011

Degree: Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)
Major: Journalism
Concentrations: None
College: Arts and Sciences
Department/Division: Communication and Philosophy
Anticipated Implementation Date: Fall 2011
Suggested CIP: 09.0702

Program Description

The proposed B.A. Journalism degree program emphasizes clear writing, factual accuracy, critical thinking, ethical and legal principles, social consciousness, technological skill, and practical, hands-on reporting and editing experience. Students will develop an awareness of the role of journalism in a democratic society and think critically about emerging issues in journalism and mass media.

There are no concentrations, tracks or specializations within the program. The proposed curriculum consists of 120 hours. During the first 60 hours of study, students will complete general education and common prerequisite requirements in accordance with state and university guidelines. The last 60 hours consist of 9 hours of interdisciplinary courses, 30 hours of core coursework in the major, 6 hours of electives in the major, 3 hours of University Colloquium and sufficient electives to total 120 hours. Each student may choose to complete a three-credit-hour internship, which will entail on-the-job learning at selected and approved news organizations, such as newspapers, magazines, wire services, online news and magazine outlets, and radio and television stations.

This degree program educates students to be multimedia journalists, preparing them for careers in which they will be expected to report, edit and present high-quality journalism for a variety of platforms—including newspaper, magazine, audio, video and Internet-based technologies—and for a combination of these formats simultaneously. For examples of multimedia journalism, see the Washington Post’s site: http://projects.washingtonpost.com/top-secret-america/ and, closer to home, the multimedia section of the Naples Daily News Web site www.NaplesNews.com.

Graduates will have the knowledge and skills needed to create journalistic content for any news organization, whether that news is delivered via print, online, video, audio, mobile technology or otherwise. Furthermore, they will understand and be able to operate the technology of these platforms,
performing such tasks as editing audio and video. A capstone course will require a final project that uses multimedia storytelling techniques, including images, words, sound and video.

The proposed program will successfully fulfill the dual purposes of readying students for real-world jobs offered by existing employers and preparing students to adapt to new media products as they become available. Examples of employment opportunities for journalism graduates include the following: staff writer/reporter for broadcast, print and online organizations; copy editor; multimedia reporter; multimedia producer; and editorial assistant. In addition to being qualified to work for news outlets, graduates can readily use these skills for jobs in communications, marketing, advertising, book publishing and online publishing. This versatile degree also prepares students for graduate study in fields such as journalism, law or any area that demands intellectual curiosity and strong research, writing, editing, visual design and media production skills.

The curriculum has been approved by both the college curriculum team and the university-wide Undergraduate Curriculum Team. The proposed program is consistent with the criteria for new academic program authorization adopted by the Florida Board of Governors on March 29, 2007.

**Consistency with FGCU Mission and Strategic Plan**

The proposed program is focused on innovation in the field of journalism. It responds to emerging needs in a frequently changing work environment and industry. Students will graduate with practical skills ready for application in the job market, and they will also have the ability to adapt to new media products as they become available. The program supports the university’s strategic goal of offering high quality education through its focus on learning innovation. It will meet the demand of providing “state-of-the-art infrastructure” by offering students an education that is up to date and directly related to what is happening today in the field of media communication. This program will position the university as a leader in delivering an undergraduate program that is clearly forward thinking and responsive. The program will also augment the university’s position in the worlds of media and journalism.

**Need and Demand**

Southwest Florida is one of the most rapidly growing areas in the state—as evidenced by the surge in enrollment at FGCU and business growth in the area. Between 2000 and 2010, the population grew by 40.6 percent in Lee County and 27.9 percent in Collier County. By comparison, statewide population growth was much lower, at 17.6 percent. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data [Public Law 94-171] Summary File, Table PL1, and 2010 Census Redistricting Data [Public Law 94-171] Summary File, Table P1)

Local businesses are eager to hire journalism graduates from FGCU. News organizations have expressed a special desire to hire students with ties to the community. FGCU will be able to meet this need. FGCU
journalism graduates will have knowledge of and ties to the area, and will deepen this connection and knowledge through service learning, journalism internships and courses like Multimedia Storytelling.

Advisors in FGCU’s College of Arts and Sciences report that broadcast communication, graphic design and photography are frequently requested majors. These three areas, especially broadcast communication, are components of the proposed multimedia journalism major. The district director of counseling, advising and assessment at Edison State College also reports strong interest in a journalism major. A survey of students in and related classes supported the assumption that students will enroll in journalism major.

Furthermore, multimedia journalism programs across the nation have grown rapidly in recent years. Particularly relevant to the proposed program is the growth of the multimedia journalism program at Florida Atlantic University. The number of students majoring in Multimedia Studies at FAU has doubled in the past five years to 500. The University of North Florida has experienced a spike in the past year for its electronic media track. Other tracks in journalism held steady at UNF, but electronic media jumped to 100 majors from 70 the year before. The electronic media track is focused primarily on broadcast skills, as opposed to multimedia skills.

A final consideration is that a journalism program in southwest Florida would also meet the needs of students who prefer to stay in the area and those who cannot travel.

Enrollment

Forty students are expected to enroll in the B.A. Journalism program in the first year, yielding 14.80 full-time equivalents (FTE). Headcount (HC) and FTE projections for subsequent years are as follows: Year 2—80 HC and 35.25 FTE; Year 3—120 HC and 52.80 FTE; Year 4—160 HC and 67.25 FTE; and Year 5—200HC and 93.63 FTE. The FTE projections reflect credits taken in the major only. Projections are based on enrollment trends at other institutions, reported employer need for students prepared in this field, and reported student interest in multimedia journalism. The initial class of students is expected to come from lower division and community college transfer students requesting the major, as well as existing students who change majors, mostly from Communication. A surge in enrollment is expected beginning in the third year of the program, as students learn about the major.

Resources

The projected costs for years 1 and 5 are $155,258 and $462,541, respectively. All funds, including expense of existing faculty, will come from enrollment growth and other new recurring Education and General allocations. As new students enroll in the journalism program and existing students change their majors to journalism, enrollment growth funds that would otherwise support other programs in the College of Arts and Sciences can instead be allocated to journalism. This results in a reallocation of enrollment growth funds and mitigates the new resources required to start the program. All resources
needed to implement the proposed program for the first year are already in place in the College of Arts and Sciences, and no additional funding is necessary.