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Letter to the Faculty : 2010 : 11 : 02

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November 2, 2010

Dear Colleagues:

It’s hard to believe we are already past the Midterm point of the Fall 2010 term. I wanted to write and update you all on a few issue and make some announcements.

MIDTERM GRADES
I want to thank everyone for making a great effort to get midterm grades in for our freshmen. It is vitally important that we have this information so that Academic Advising can reach out to students who may be struggling and offer help. Because of your efforts, we also discovered that in some cases Banner has been erroneously counting students who dropped a course as “missing” a midterm grade. We have called this to the attention of the folks who operate Banner and have a pledge to fix it (with their apologies to you for the mistakes).

CAREER PATH FOR INSTRUCTORS
Several years ago the USF System and UFF negotiated a plan to create a career promotion path for instructors throughout the USF System. This past Fall, both USF System and UFF agreed that it was the time to move forward with a plan. With the assistance of the Deans, and review by the College Councils, last Spring we developed a policy and a procedure for implementing the Career Promotion Path for Instructors. The College schedules and common application can be found on the Academic Affairs website under “Faculty Resources/Tenure and Promotion.”

Eligibility for promotion is determined by date of hire, as prescribed by the terms of the USF-UFF agreement. This is a voluntary process for all eligible instructors. Please check with Pat White in the Division Office if you have questions.

DISTANCE LEARNING COURSE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
Earlier this Fall, the Office of Academic Affairs announced the initiation of the Distance Learning Course Development and Improvement Program. I won’t review the details here. The deadline for course development for Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 was October 15, 2010. We are pleased that a number of proposals have been received and are now under review. Please remember that if you are teaching a distance learning (DL) course (defined as one fully on-line and subject to the Distance Learning Fee), you may be eligible for Teaching Assistant Support. See the Academic Affairs website for more information. There is much campus activity surrounding distance learning. I have charged a new Committee, the Distance Learning Advisory Committee, to provide advice and counsel on the form, structure, and quality of USFSP’s DL strategies and programs. This new committee, chaired by Dean Carol Hixson, will work closely with a wide range of USFSP constituencies and with Blackboard Consulting which has been engaged to help us understand the regional and national context for our DL programs and to help us develop our distinctive USFSP DL environment. As many of you who wish to do so will have opportunities to help shape our future in what arguably is the most transformational set of pedagogical technologies ever introduced into higher education.

Both the College of Business and the College of Arts and Sciences are in the process of developing some exciting new degree programs that will explore the realm of distance learning in far more depth.
SACS UPDATE AND VISIT

Our SACS Compliance Certification was completed and submitted on time, September 10, 2010. We expect to receive word very soon about the results of the Off-Site Compliance Review (which is occurring now). At that point, we will address the recommendations from the Compliance Review in our Focused Report. I want to acknowledge with gratitude the work of Dr. J.E. (Ernie) Gonzalez, Mr. John Husfield, USFSP Webmaster, and all of the faculty, staff and administrators on the Leadership Team who contributed countless hours of writing, reviewing and re-writing. Ernie and John were instrumental in creating both the Reaffirmation website and DVDs (we needed two) that were sent to the Off-Site Reviewers. I encourage you strongly to familiarize yourself with the Compliance Certification which can be found at the USFSP Institutional Research website, http://www.stpete.usf.edu/sacsreaffirmation/index.htm. The average number of recommendations from an Off-Site Committee is 20-25. So don’t be surprised if we get that many or even more. Remember, this is our very first reaffirmation as an autonomous institution.

Dr. Jay Sokolovsky and his Committee are hard at work on the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) which will be the focus of the On-Site Committee visit next February. Through the year-long process last year, the Committee reviewed nearly two dozen ideas contributed by faculty, staff and students. Four proposals were chosen as finalists and the authors of those proposals were invited to make presentations to the Committee. From those, the Committee chose one focused on improving student performance in key “gateway” courses in Mathematics. Over the past several months, Dr. Sokolovsky and his committee have been developing the proposal with the assistance of the primary author, Dr. Erica Asano. The title has been chosen: “The Success Equation: A Model for Enhancing Student Learning in Gateway Mathematics and Statistics Courses.” The original proposal has been both expanded and refined to focus on enhanced learning in three important math courses, MAC 1105 (College Algebra), MGF 1106 (Finite Mathematics) and STA 2023 (Elementary Statistics). Look for more details as the QEP is finalized. It will be submitted with the Focused Report (see above) approximately 6 weeks before the On-Site Visit.

Mark your calendars now for that On-Site Visit from our SACS Review Committee. The dates will be February 15—17, 2011. This will be an “all hands on deck” event (this means plan to be on campus for those days) as the Committee may want to interview faculty individually or in groups and we will not know what the detailed schedule will be until nearly the time of the visit. Between now and then, this is the schedule of events:

- Offsite review of Compliance Certification: November 2010
- Quality Enhancement Plan due to SACS: December 2010
- Focused Report due to SACS (responds to issues raised in the Compliance Certification Review): early January 2011
- On-site Review Team: February 15-17, 2011
The Spring 2011 Faculty Meeting will focus exclusively on preparing for the SACS On-Site Team. That meeting will be held on Friday, January 21, 2010, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm in the CAC Core. Please plan to attend this most important meeting. Be there or be square.

THE BUDGET
Today (November 2) will tell the tale. The Gubernatorial election, along with elections for State House and Senate members will have a potentially large effect on state budgets, including that of the SUS. There is no way to predict what this effect will be. However, the economy is still weak (both in Florida and nationally), housing is still very depressed, and unemployment is at record levels. All of these indicators point to potentially more trouble ahead. In addition, USFSP will lose about $1.8 million in Federal ARRA (State Stabilization Fund) money. The good news is that if the Legislature, SUS Board of Governors, and the USF Board of Trustees agree to another tuition increase of 15 percent, this will mean about $1.5 million more for USFSP (of which a portion has to be committed to student financial aid). Even with this increase and the ones before that, Florida’s public universities are still a tremendous value – a great education at a bargain price.

Multipurpose Campus Center
Many of you know that our students have been working very hard to get approval for a Multipurpose Campus Center that will add both residential and student support spaces. They voted for a fee increase on themselves to help finance it, they “worked the halls” at the State Capitol on multiple occasions to convince legislators to enact a waiver of the fee cap (to allow the fees to go up substantially), they spoke to the Governor, and generally worked their hearts out for this project. Of course they had assistance from Dr. Helen Levine, Dr. Kent Kelso, Dr. Sullivan and the unwavering and strong advocacy of System President Judy Genshaft (without whom this project would surely have stalled). I’m pleased to report that the USF System Board of Trustees recently approved the financing for the project. The last step is for the Board of Governors to approve it, which we hope will happen before December 31. This new building and the concomitant major renovation of the CAC will not only increase residential housing for students, but will add a dining facility (with meal plans), new space for student organizations, and other much needed student support space. The new facility will be across Harborwalk from the Science and Technology Building, fronting 6th Ave.

Kudos To:
• The Department of Journalism and Media Studies for again being asked to host a delegation of foreign journalists from Africa as part of the Edward R. Murrow Program of the US State Department. USFSP is one of only a handful of universities nationally to host a delegation – it’s quite a feather in their cap.
• The College of Arts and Sciences for garnering Board of Trustees’ approval of its new B.S. in Health Sciences. This degree is the number one program desired by prospective students.
• The College of Business for garnering UBOT approval of its new B.S. in Entrepreneurship. This degree comes at an auspicious time for our region and is the only one of its kind within USF System.
- The College of Business for hosting a well-attended and really interesting Executive Forum. This is the first of what will, I know, be many such important community events. It brought high-powered executives from many sectors to the table for open discussions and our students asked pointed and probing questions.

- The College of Education for developing USFSP’s first-ever Graduate Certificate program. Arising out of its successful collaboration with SRI International, the College has introduced a Graduate Certificate in Digital Mathematics for the middle grades. This Certificate will enable middle school teachers to become proficient in both the theory and practice of a new pedagogy for algebra and geometry that has already yielded performance gains among students.

- The Nelson Poynter Memorial Library for hosting a talk and book signing by the author Gail Sheehy, a genuine celebrity! Ms. Sheehy will be at the Steidinger Auditorium on November 17, 2010, at 7 pm. She will speak on her newest book, “Passages in Caregiving.” If you are a caregiver for a loved one or know a caregiver, this is a “must see” event.

**SEMI-ANNUAL FINALS WEEK COOKIE BAKE EXTRAVAGANZA**

The Office of Academic Affairs is again sponsoring a cookie baking frenzy for the nutritional and emotional benefit of our students during Finals Week, December 4-10, 2010. All faculty and staff are encouraged to bake as many cookies as they are able to (or buy them if you are challenged by the thought of using an oven or measuring spoon) and deliver them to the Office of Academic Affairs starting on December 4, 2010. These goodies are set out on large platters in the DAVIS Hall Lounge and supply needed carbohydrates to students getting those final minutes of studying in or who need a sugar bounce. You bake (buy) ‘em, we’ll take ‘em (and we promise not to nibble on our way downstairs). We need a lot of cookies to make this work throughout the week, so start now and stock up (cookies freeze well for up to three months). Thanks.

**COMMENCEMENT**

Our Fall Commencement will be on December 11, 2010 at the Mehaffey Theater at 6 pm. I encourage ALL FACULTY to attend this wonderful event. Many of your students with whom you have worked closely will be graduating and this is your time to celebrate with them. Please let Yoli Lanuza in my office know if you plan to attend so we can be sure to have seating for you. It’s our responsibility and our joy(☺) to attend this ceremony. Please be there.

Every day I never fail to be impressed by what my faculty colleagues are accomplishing and the progress that USFSP is making. I thank you all for your dedication and your commitment to USFSP and to our students. I hope to see you at Commencement and I wish you all a happy holiday season. Go forth and do good things, and…

Thanks for listening,

Norine Noonan