MINUTES
Quality of Life Committee
September 8, 2008; 2 p.m.
7th Floor Conference Room of Crawford

Attendance: Monica Baloga, Rodd Newcombe, Annie Becker, Donn Miller-Kermani, Tom Stewart, Joanne Green, Frank Leslie, and Dr. Anthony Catanese

The meeting was brought to order with opening statements by Dr. Monica Baloga, chair. Introductions were performed for the benefit of our newest member, Mr. Rodd Newcombe, Director of the Academic Support Center.

The conversation then launched into feedback surrounding the Campus Safety and Security Forum held on Sept. 3rd. Most comments were positive, but there was some disappointment that more faculty members were not in attendance. Rodd Newcombe mentioned that Kevin Graham, who presented at the forum, counted at least 100 people in attendance. Monica Baloga reported questions raised afterward by audience members about whether this would become an annual event and whether we should consider mandatory attendance by faculty and staff. While no one agreed with mandatory attendance, Rodd Newcombe suggested a proposal that faculty/staff who attend 1 to 2 forums in a 5 year period might get some kind of bonus or incentive. Dr. Catanese expressed openness to that kind of plan. There was also discussion about posting forum information on the Quality of Life website, which now has a direct link from the Office of the President’s webpage.

Dr. Catanese asked the committee to investigate the cost benefit of increasing campus activities and student programs (leading to an increase in student engagement) vs. hiring of additional CAPS personnel. This request is a direct reflection of points mentioned by Dr. Jim Oelschlager during his presentation, which follow:

- Provide positive interactions between students “who poses a risk” and faculty, staff, and other students.
- Each school should assess the “Emotional Climate,” and modify or enrich the climate to be consistent with a socially and emotionally engaging learning community.
- Several years of data collected from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) suggests that our (Florida Tech) students feel less emotionally and socially engaged than students at comparable institutions. (Samples consist of randomly selected freshman and seniors at Florida Tech)
- Bottom Line: If we create more programs to address these areas, it will benefit us in reducing violence risk AND increasing retention, which has been on a downward trend the past two years.

Joanne Green, Student Life Financial Coordinator, commented that the budget for Student Life activities has not increased since flat-rate tuition was implemented. There are not enough funds to sponsor necessary student events or programs. Rodd Newcombe added that various committees are revisiting the idea of increased freshmen and undergraduate mentorship using upperclassmen and/or psychology graduate students.
These programs had been implemented to some degree in the past and showed measurable success, but were dropped due to lack of funding. Dr. Catanese asked that a proposal from our committee be drafted on these topics.

The next item of discussion was on QOL issues that may arise for Distance Learning students and adjunct faculty. President Catanese requested that we invite Dr. Mary Bonhomme to educate us about this rapidly expanding part of our campus community. In addition, he suggested that Dr. Ted Richardson be invited to talk about our University College alumni. Dr. Catanese found that some of Florida Tech’s most ardent supporters are the UC alumni, and he wants to know what is “going right” with that group.

Lastly, textbook costs at the university bookstore were mentioned with concerns about over-pricing. In particular, Monica Baloga mentioned that a textbook representative had contacted her, commenting that our bookstore prices were $15 - $20 higher than the publishers recommended price for some books. Ensuing conversation centered on the competitive nature of textbook pricing with online sources beating the bookstore chains. While this is a national phenomenon, it was stated that we should investigate pricing within our bookstore to ensure that it is fair and comparable. It was suggested that Ellie Turner, the bookstore manager, be invited to educate the committee on this matter.

The next meeting will be during the week of October 20th, with intentions of inviting Drs. Mary Bonhomme and Ted Richardson. Dr. Annie Becker also suggested Dr. Tim Muth be invited because of his role in online learning in the College of Business.