

## **Academic Affairs**

**2015 – 2016**

### **Major Initiatives**

#### **Retention/ Graduation Rates/ Student Debt**

Academic Affairs recognizes the interrelated nature of retention/graduation rates, diversity issues, and student debt. Academic Affairs is also working to improve advising infrastructure that includes accuracy of MyDegree as well as launching the new online catalog. Further efforts include curricular oversight training for chairs, directors, and program coordinators. Entrance into academic degree programs, especially BS/BA degree programs and AAS programs that lead seamlessly into bachelor degree programs, and a well-developed academic infrastructure support retention and timely degree completion, an important factor in student debt reduction. All are, in fact, components of a strong student debt reduction strategy.

#### **Centers for Academic Literacies**

Student academic deficits are often treated in isolation using standard, traditional methods that are based principally on academic performance. An alternative, one that aligns with the historical mission of the University, is to view academic deficits holistically. We have all the necessary tools on this campus for meaningful change - an optometric clinic, a writing center, faculty who are knowledgeable, and faculty who are experts in reading, writing, and mathematics. An expectation for the year would be that we begin to approach assessing student academic problems and deficits holistically. Its impact on retention and, specifically, its impact on transforming lives and creating real opportunity could be significant.

#### **Innovation for Programming and Pedagogy**

A systematic and Supportive approach to innovative and meaningful programmatic and pedagogical experimentation and practice is essential to quality and distinctiveness within individual classrooms, academic departments, and individual colleges. The nimble nature of Ferris' programs and the quality of their delivery can only be enhanced by the creative experimentation by its faculty. Faculty willing to experiment and consider innovative scheduling, team-teaching, interdisciplinary experimentation and implementation, inter- and intra-disciplinary collaboration within and across colleges should be encouraged and supported.

#### **Academic Leadership: Hiring, Diversity, Professional Development and Mentoring**

Meaningful professional development and mentoring is essential to academic leadership and its new hires. Not only does the University have a number of relative newcomers to its academic leadership team, but a number of academic leadership positions have become vacant in 2014-15. Filling these positions with the most qualified and diverse candidates we can is important.

Retaining and developing them as well as our extant leadership team is also important and will require commitment to sound practical and theoretical professional development delivered by both external and internal expertise as well as quality mentoring. Continuation of present initiatives and implementation of new ones will be a major expectation for 2015-16.