

Florida College System Task Force
Workgroup: Baccalaureate Degree Approval Process
Conference Call Meeting: September 24, 2008; 3-5 p.m.

Members: Dr. Judy Genshaft (Chair), Dr. Art Keiser, Dr. Steve Wallace, Dr. Charles Dassance.

CHAIR'S REPORT

The Workgroup's first meeting primarily focused on two tasks. First, the group received a full summary of: 1) the baccalaureate degree approval process for private universities; 2) both current community college baccalaureate degree approval processes; and 3) the state university system degree approval process.

Following this summary, the Workgroup discussed possible "Underlying Principles" for baccalaureate degree approval within the Florida College System. The following "Underlying Principles" were proposed and discussed:

- 1) ***New baccalaureate degree proposals should meet critical workforce needs.***
Based upon the input of business leaders at the first meeting of the Task Force, and the language in SB 1716, the Workgroup suggests that baccalaureate degrees proposed by member institutions of the Florida College System should focus on meeting critical workforce needs. There was consensus among the group that addressing critical workforce needs should be the major focus of all new degree programs. The question was also posed as to whether other program development considerations should be permissible, specifically programs designed to address local and regional access and capacity issues which impact student needs and their ability to prepare for graduate study. There is not yet consensus on any other permissible types of programs.

- 2) ***New baccalaureate degree proposals should serve geographic needs.***
The Workgroup agreed to bring this principle to the Task Force without recommendation for full vetting. While this is a critical issue related to degree approval, it was felt that it is a larger issue than the scope of this Workgroup, which affects many areas being examined by the Task Force as a whole. The issue under consideration is whether state colleges and other institutions within the Florida College System must primarily serve their local workforce/employment needs, regional workforce/employment needs, and/or statewide workforce/employment needs – and how these geographic areas are defined. Scope of marketing should be considered, as well as how distance learning factors in. Some additional questions posed that need answering were: Will geographic boundaries be formally defined? Will they be articulated at the state or local level or will they be informally established and respected?

An alternative underlying principle proposed was: *Proposals should serve identified workforce, academic and geographic needs to meet the employment demands of the state.*

3) ***New baccalaureate degree proposals should avoid undesirable duplication of effort and expense.***

Based upon the input of business leaders at the first meeting of the Task Force, the Workgroup agreed that new baccalaureate programs should avoid duplication and expense which create inefficiencies. Regional dialogue among postsecondary institutions should be an expectation and provide an avenue for strategic statewide planning on educational opportunities foundational to economic growth.

4) ***The new baccalaureate degree approval process should be consistent for all programs and institutions within the Florida College System.***

The Workgroup agreed that there should be one consistent policy for baccalaureate approval and program expansion for all Florida College System institutions.

There was consensus that all institutions proposing a new baccalaureate program should adhere to the same statewide set of criteria for program approval and that local BOTs should adopt rigorous and substantive internal approval processes for all degree programs. Each degree proposed must undergo the same rigorous internal process. The state would provide oversight on the criteria and adherence to the internal approval processes. Some important proposal criteria suggested and discussed—though not yet agreed upon—included:

- Analysis of workforce needs/demands;
- Development of academic content and curriculum which meets all conventions in Florida statute for baccalaureate degrees;
- Assessment of current and anticipated resources to deliver the program(s);
- Proposed enrollment, performance and budget plans;
- Accreditation Plan (regional and special);
- Plan of action in case of program termination.

Other items discussed by the group or individual members included:

- That proposals for an initial baccalaureate program should be approved by the State Board of Education prior to implementation. There appeared to be consensus on this issue.
- That institutions within the Florida College System must gain SACS Level II accreditation prior to implementation/delivery of an initial baccalaureate degree program. There appeared to be consensus on this issue.
- That any subsequent degree proposals must undergo the same rigorous internal institutional approval process and adhere to the statewide established criteria. There appeared to be consensus on this issue.
- That approval by the State Board of Education must be received prior to implementation/delivery of subsequent baccalaureate degree programs. There was NOT consensus on this issue.