

May 15, 2006

Dr. R.E. LeMon
Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs
Board of Governors
Florida Education Center, Suite 1548
325 W. Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1950

Dear R.E.:

I am writing on behalf of Florida Gulf Coast University to seek the approval of the Board of Governors when it meets on June 22, 2006 to offer lower division courses beginning with the Fall 2006 academic term at off-site locations in Naples (Collier County), Cape Coral (Lee), and Punta Gorda (Charlotte County) pursuant to Rule 6C-8.009.

OFFICE OF THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
STATE UNIVERSITY
SYSTEM OF FLORIDA
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University Mission

Florida Gulf Coast University was established as the tenth state university in 1991 to serve S.W Florida. Its mission statement in part states, "FGCU infuses the strengths of the traditional public university with innovation and learning-centered spirit, its chief aim being to fulfill the academic, cultural, and social expectations of its constituents." In April 2006, the university board of trustees adopted a vision statement calling upon the university to meet the educational, economic, and socio-cultural needs of the Southwest Florida region by expanding access to its high quality undergraduate and graduate courses and programs; its professional development opportunities; and its lifelong learning experiences to the broadest range of local residents possible.

Student Demand

FGCU is facing unprecedented demand for higher education among residents of S.W. Florida and this demand is expected to continue to grow for the next 25 years. Indeed, the region's population is expected to grow by 70% between now and 2030 from 1.1 million to nearly 2 million people. This growth rate will be matched both within the 18-24 age bracket and the 25-44 age bracket.

At the same time, we find that space on campus is becoming more constrained with ever rising classroom utilization rates and limited ability to absorb additional enrollment capacity. Seventy-five percent of our student body this coming fall will be comprised of commuting students. The rapid growth of the region has not been matched with similar growth in the region's transportation infrastructure while the price of fuel is skyrocketing. The combination of road congestion and cost of commuting means additional hardship to our students in terms of productivity and cost.

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Our strategy to address these problems includes bringing FGCU courses to major population centers in our service area beyond the main campus. Local government has consistently encouraged FGCU to meet the needs of their residents to limit the necessity of frequent travel to the main campus and to stimulate local economic development through our presence. The vast majority of these students to be served by these lower division courses will be students who have applied and been admitted as undergraduates to FGCU. They are not community college students nor do they wish to be. They are students who will continue to come to the main campus for certain courses, activities and support, but the number of trips they will need to make will be greatly reduced.

Currently about 25% (1800) of the total FGCU enrollment commutes from Cape Coral, Charlotte or Collier Counties. This number will continue to grow dramatically in the coming years as new on-campus housing (currently capped at 2000) will not be available for several years. Already a growing number of these FGCU commuting students have availed themselves of the limited off-campus courses FGCU has provided at these off-campus locations. Last year alone, over 400 students (both undergraduate and graduate) enrolled in one or more credit-bearing courses at these locations generating 59 fundable FTE. However, not more than 27 FTE were generated in any single location. FGCU expects these numbers to grow incrementally with time as new facilities or additional space is acquired to provide greater access.

While FGCU has offered limited upper division and graduate courses in Naples (Collier County), Cape Coral (Lee County), and Punta Gorda (Charlotte County) increasingly we find these students need lower division courses to lay the foundation for more advanced study. The offering of lower division courses to these students will facilitate their progression and prepare them for academic success. Moreover, while we can and do offer some lower division courses through distance learning to accommodate these students, not all such courses are suitable for delivery in this format. We seek your approval to accommodate the needs of these students just as we would if they were on our main campus and not to disadvantage them in terms of choice or opportunity.

Facilities/Equipment/Faculty

A range of facilities are being employed to offer FGCU courses off-campus. FGCU shares space on the Edison College Campus in Punta Gorda (Charlotte County). Edison provides classroom and office space and FGCU has an on-site staff of three to assist students. FGCU has furnished its Charlotte courses with a classroom podium system equipped with an LCD projector, laptop, overhead projector, and VCR/DVD players. Students have access to the Edison Library and can access all FGCU Library and other student services online. Interactive synchronous course delivery over IP is available to complement on-site instruction. Cape Coral's (Lee County) two leased classrooms are similarly equipped with a classroom podium as in Charlotte County. Additionally, there

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is interactive synchronous course delivery with the main campus through Video over IP Codec, and connectivity to the FGCU computing network. In Naples (Collier County), FGCU leases space downtown with four classrooms. The Naples classrooms are furnished with a podium system such as those in Punta Gorda and Cape Coral. Interactive synchronous course delivery is also available in Naples as is connectivity to FGCU online services including library. Alternatively students can come to the main campus library which is a 25-30 minute drive. A staff of three people administers the courses offered in Naples and Cape Coral. Faculty who teach at these locations are a mix of FGCU full-time faculty or long-standing FGCU adjunct faculty who happen to live in the community and find the opportunity to teach a class or two near home convenient.

FGCU has acquired land in downtown Naples with the intention of raising \$15 million in donations towards the construction of a \$30 million, 50,000 sq ft permanent facility for future expansion. In addition, the building would house the university's very successful Renaissance Academy that annually has 7,000 registrations for its non-credit continuing education offerings, and an auditorium for chamber music. In Cape Coral, the university is actively exploring participation in the City's planned 175 acre academic village in partnership with the City and Nova Southeastern University. In Charlotte County, FGCU is exploring expanded articulation with Edison College as well as potential new facilities in Murdock Village and/or in southern Charlotte County.

Impact on existing institutions

FGCU anticipates little or no impact on other institutions through its offering of lower division coursework. As noted before, these courses primarily serve students who have been admitted to FGCU's main campus as undergraduates, who will be taking some classes close to home as a convenience to minimize (not completely eliminate) the number of commuting trips they need to make to the main campus. Furthermore the current number of enrollments is small and will take time to grow into something more significant like a formally defined center. Additionally, FGCU has held discussions with Nova Southeastern University concerning articulation (in Cape Coral) as well as with Edison. Nova regional director Joe Pepe met with FGCU Provost Yegidis and Associate Provost Snyder on May 5, 2006. Joe Pepe acknowledged FGCU's potential role as the primary institution in Cape Coral to offer lower division coursework, as requested by the City of Cape Coral, subject to BOG approval. The two institutions agreed to work on a range of articulation opportunities for students in Cape Coral and more broadly between the two institutions. FGCU intends to offer lower division coursework on the Edison Campus in Charlotte only in the event Edison cannot provide the lower division course when needed by FGCU students to facilitate student progression. This arrangement was worked out in a meeting that occurred on April 11, 2006 involving Presidents Merwin and Walker and senior administrators, including the C.E.O. of the Edison-Charlotte campus. Additional meetings are planned with both Nova and Edison.

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Conclusion

What we are proposing is a beginning to more comprehensively address the higher education needs of the region. In short to increase access and enhance degree productivity in Southwest Florida, FGCU needs to offer lower division coursework at locations other than the main campus. None of our existing off-campus locations can be defined as anything more than an instructional site according to Rule 6C-8.009 (1)(g). As enrollment grows in the coming years and these sites evolve into something more than instructional sites, you can be sure that we will seek approval and support from the Board of Governors before implementing plans.

Sincerely,



Bonnie Yegidis
Provost and Vice President
for Academic Affairs

c: President William C. Merwin
Chancellor Mark B. Rosenberg
Ms. Lynda Page