



New College of Florida Performance Improvement Plan 2014-15

New College of Florida has had a clear vision and mission since its founding in 1960. Though our vision and mission continue, the world around us has changed considerably. In the years since the Great Recession, the social and economic context in which we offer our academic program has shifted, and the place of liberal arts education has required new definition, even as it has acquired a new relevance. Our graduates will hold many jobs in the course of their careers, and a New College education will help them learn new skills, and contribute powerfully to any work or social environment.

It has become clear to us that we can do much more to help our students think about possible careers from the outset of their education. Indeed, there is no contradiction between studying the world deeply, developing strong intellectual foundations, and deciding on a career path. Most of our students will go on to graduate school over time, but they should do so intentionally, as part of a fully developed vision for their future.

Strengthening the link between liberal arts and work is an imperative for New College. So is ensuring the academic success of our students and improving our retention and graduation rates. New College attracts students who are motivated, academically gifted, and intellectually curious. The rigor of our academic program mandates that we provide more resources to support student learning. The close working relationship between faculty and students that lies at the core of a New College education requires additional support in advising and writing.

Our two focused areas for improvement are: ***Connecting Undergraduate Arts and Sciences to the World of Work*** and ***Student Success: Persistence to Second-Year and Graduation***. Although addressed in New College's Four-Year Plan, which calls for an expansion of services in career development, the strengthening of retention, and numerous steps designed to sustain the excellence of the New College academic program, the New College Performance Improvement Plan elaborates on these areas, prioritizes them, and underscores their urgency. We are certain that the initiatives outlined in this plan are necessary next steps that will produce desired outcomes in the future.

I. Connecting Undergraduate Arts and Sciences to the World of Work

Metric 1: Percent of bachelor's graduates employed in Florida and/or continuing their education further 1 year after graduation

Metric 2: Median average full-time wages of undergraduates employed in Florida 1 year after graduation

Metric 4: Six-year graduation rate full-time and part-time FTIC

As an honors liberal arts and sciences college, NCF has been very successful in preparing students to pursue advanced degrees, and many students enroll here with that goal in mind: 94% of our entering students report that they plan to go on to graduate or professional school and 70% attend within six years of graduation. Approximately 30% enroll within one year of graduation.

While preparation for graduate study will always be a key function of the New College academic program, we have an obligation to help students consider the widest range of professional options, and to gain the practical experience that will inform their ultimate choice of vocation. The initiatives described below are designed to integrate career planning into our academic program. Long-term, these initiatives will improve our students' performance as they begin their careers of full-time work with reasonable full-time salaries.

A. Transform Career Preparation Campus-Wide (Metrics 1 & 2)

- 1. By December 2014 (or earlier) hire a new Career Services Director, assess current operations and prepare written recommendations for deployment of specific immediate and longer term initiatives.**
- 2. By May 2015 launch immediate initiatives, monitor student satisfaction and use of the Career Education Center with a student survey, and compare results with that of previous years.**

Rationale: In recent years, our career education program has stagnated. We have made information available, but have not established a program that actively engages every student in career development. This has been a missed opportunity, both for our students and the college. According to a study of employersⁱ the top ten qualities that differentiate candidates are skills such as verbal communication, problem solving, and data analysis. These are among the chief outcomes of NCF's curriculum. With new leadership in Career Services, students will prepare for their future careers by blending experience with academics, focusing on identification and achievement of goals, and being able to articulate the value of their education and experience. NCF will redesign

our career education program and create an expanded experiential learning program that will increase opportunities for students to gain experience in internships, community services, and perspective-changing study-away programs.

In addition to launching technologies (employment databases and social media outreach) and monitoring student satisfaction, Career Services will identify faculty and employer liaisons, and develop peer and alumni mentors. We will contact every student in the first year of study, and follow-up with them to ensure maximum participation in this important program. Students will be introduced to career education and services at Orientation, and individually encouraged by Career Services staff to investigate possible internships and careers at least once each subsequent semester.

B. Formalize and Strengthen Internships (Metrics 1, 2, & 4)

- 1. By December 2014 (or earlier) hire an Internship Coordinator, assess current operations, and prepare written recommendations for deployment of specific immediate and longer-term initiatives.**
- 2. By May 2015 launch immediate initiatives, and implement a system for tracking and assessment of internships, with attention to student, provider and faculty satisfaction.**

Rationale: The value of internships to undergraduate student success has been well established.ⁱⁱ Internships help to clarify career goals and frequently lead to employment opportunities. While many NCF students participate in internships, this participation has often been ad hoc, depending upon the connections of individual faculty members. Internship opportunities have not been publicized or tracked effectively. The new Internship Coordinator will develop an inclusive and robust internship program that will help students articulate the relationship between their academic work and the professional world. The Coordinator will work to improve information sharing, develop uniform expectations for faculty, students, and providers, and foster a 30% increase in internship opportunities in the local community. These efforts will lead to a higher rate of employment of students in Florida within 12 months after graduation.

II. Student Success: Persistence to Second Year and Graduation

Metric 4: Six year graduation rate full-time and part-time FTIC

Metric 5: Academic progress rate 2nd year retention with GPA above 2.0

New College takes pride in the rigor of its academic program. We expect our students to engage in research in their first year of study, to complete three Independent Study Projects,

and ultimately to write and defend a Senior Thesis/Project. The freedom afforded by the academic program places a great deal of responsibility on students and elicits outstanding results. However, some students leave because they find the system unclear, confusing, or overly intimidating. We need to change that.

Because we expect so much from our students, they should expect our full support as they pursue their New College degree. This means stronger academic advising and expanded academic support services. The initiatives described below will improve our performance in two key metrics over the next three years.

A. Strengthen Academic Advising (Metrics 4 & 5)

- 1. By December 2014 (or earlier), launch “Navigating New College,” a program that will improve faculty and staff communication with students across the campus about essential academic planning and evaluation practices and deadlines.**
- 2. By May 2015, conduct a workshop during the January interterm to introduce possible areas of study to first-year students. The effectiveness of the workshop and “Navigating New College” will be assessed by the percentage of faculty and students meeting deadlines for completing required academic planning and evaluation documents.**

Rationale: Responsibility for academic advising rests with the New College faculty. Faculty work individually with students (including first-year students), helping them set goals, select courses, and develop their academic direction. While students rely on their faculty advisor for information on the academic program, they sometimes receive conflicting messages from other faculty and campus offices, creating needless confusion. To correct this problem, we will create a new program, “Navigating New College,” which will become the touchstone for first-year advising at New College. The “Navigating New College” program will contribute to multiple orientation week activities, including: the introduction to the academic program by the Office of the Provost; small group and individual faculty-student advising sessions; and, the new guide for first-year students currently under development by The Office of Communications and Marketing. During the semester, “Navigating New College” will provide prompts and reminders for academic deadlines, access to academic guidelines, and links to academic support resources.

As a program that will be publicized to all members of the campus community, “Navigating New College” will ensure that all members of the campus community are on the same page. This will allow for follow-up actions by administrators, such as sending checklists to faculty and students three times each semester as deadlines approach. “Navigating New College” is part of a larger initiative in the coming year designed to reinforce the crucial student-advisor relationship. This program will include an open-

dialogue on best practices early in the fall semester, and a study of advising effectiveness to be conducted by the Director of Institutional Research & Assessment. Stronger advising will increase student retention and six-year graduation rates

A. Enhance New College's Writing Program (Metrics 4 & 5)

- 1. By December 2014 (or earlier), hire a Writing Director, implement first-year writing courses, and expand faculty involvement with Writing Enriched Courses.**
- 2. By May 2015, assess the effectiveness of the first-year, first-semester writing courses, offer Writing Enriched Courses in at least five disciplines, and implement a required training course for students who wish to serve as peer writing tutors in subsequent semesters.**

Rationale: Although NCF attracts successful high school students, many have difficulty adjusting to the standards, conventions, and expectations of college-level writing. Given that every NCF student must complete a Senior Thesis/Project, all students need to develop strong writing skills early in their New College careers. We know that some students leave the college because they do not feel adequately prepared to take on their capstone project.

Enhancing New College's writing program is therefore an investment in student success. The new Fall 2014 writing courses, taught by the Director of Writing and the Assistant Director of the Writing Center, will enable first-year students to a) reflect on the knowledge of writing that they bring from high school, b) apply, adapt, or repurpose that knowledge for New College courses, and c) connect with college writing resources. Writing Enriched courses, intended for a wider range of students, will be offered by permanent faculty after receiving special training in workshops led by the Director of Writing. The Office of the Provost will offer funds to up to 8 faculty members to support the development of Writing Enriched courses. The effectiveness of the courses will be assessed during the spring semester, and any necessary adjustments or improvements implemented in subsequent semesters. Finally, we will enhance the quality of peer writing support by implementing a required training course for all peer tutors. These steps will help our students make the transition from high school, familiarize them with campus support for writing, and improve the quality of that support.

III. Conclusion

This is a pivotal moment for New College of Florida. We have long been recognized for our academic excellence and our willingness to explore new approaches to learning. While our historic mission and values continue, we have the opportunity this year to develop new

programs that will serve the needs of today’s students. Our students need appropriate support services to succeed in our academically demanding environment. They need to think early about life after New College, developing plans for careers, even as they pursue an arts and sciences education in all its breadth. We have developed specific initiatives to address these needs, and the New College of Florida Performance Improvement Plan will keep us focused on bringing these plans to fruition. These efforts will result in a stronger, more competitive New College, and guarantee that our best days as an institution are still to come.

ⁱ Humphreys, Debra and Kelly, Patrick J. “How Liberal Arts and Sciences Majors Fare in Employment: A Report on Earnings and Long-Term Career Paths.” National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEM), 2014. http://www.aacu.org/press_room/press_releases/2014/liberalartsreport.cfm

ⁱⁱ Rivard, Ry. “Gauging Graduates’ Well-Being.” Inside Higher Ed, May, 6, 2014. <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/05/06/gallup-surveys-graduates-gauge-whether-and-why-college-good-well-being#sthash.VDwzaz2E.dpbs> . Full Report: <http://products.gallup.com/168857/gallup-purdue-index-inaugural-national-report.aspx>

**New College of Florida
Performance Improvement Plan 2014-15
June 2014**

Specific Initiative	Target Verified by 12-31-14	Target Verified by 5-31-15	Metric 1	Metric 2	Metric 4	Metric 5
I. Connecting Undergraduate Arts and Sciences to the World of Work						
A Transform Career Preparation Campus-Wide	Hire a Director of Career Services, assess current operations, and prepare written recommendations for deployment of specific immediate and longer term initiatives.	Launch immediate initiatives, monitor student satisfaction and use of the Career Education Center with a student survey, and compare results with that of previous years.	x	x		
B Formalize and Strengthen Internships	Hire Internship Coordinator, assess current operations and prepare written recommendations for deployment of specific immediate and longer-term initiatives.	Launch immediate initiatives and implement a system for tracking and assessment of internships, with attention to student, provider and faculty satisfaction.	x	x	x	
II. Student Success: Persistence to Second Year and Graduation						
A Strengthen Academic Advising	Launch "Navigating New College," a program that will improve faculty and staff communication with students across the campus about essential academic planning and evaluation practices and deadlines.	Conduct a workshop during the January interterm to introduce possible areas of study to first-year students. The effectiveness of the workshop and "Navigating New College " will be assessed by the percentage of faculty and students meeting deadlines for completing required academic planning and evaluation documents.			x	x
B Enhance New College's Writing Program	Hire Writing Director, implement first-year writing courses, and expand faculty involvement with Writing Enriched Courses.	Assess the effectiveness of the first-year, first-semester writing courses, offer Writing Enriched Courses in at least 5 disciplines, and implement a required training course for students who wish to serve as peer writing tutors in subsequent semesters.			x	x

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Metric 5: Academic progress rate 2nd year retention with GPA above 2.0.