

**Joint Services and Programs: Florida State University Panama City and
Gulf Coast Community College Working Together to Accomplish
Common Goals**

**Dan Nix, Director of Finance and Administration
Florida State University Panama City
4750 Collegiate Drive
Panama City, Florida 32405-1099**

**Becki Boortz, Office Manager
Florida State University Panama City
4750 Collegiate Drive
Panama City, Florida 32405-1099**

**Dr. Ken Shaw, Associate Dean
Florida State University Panama City
4750 Collegiate Drive
Panama City, Florida 32405-1099**

**Lucy Lewis, Coordinator of Business & Finance
Florida State University Panama City
4750 Collegiate Drive
Panama City, Florida 32405-1099**

**Barbara Whitaker, Associate Director of Finance and Administration
Florida State University Panama City
4750 Collegiate Drive
Panama City, Florida 32405-1099**

**Randy Russell, Director of Technical Services
Florida State University Panama City
4750 Collegiate Drive
Panama City, Florida 32405-1099**

Abstract

Florida State University Panama City (FSU PC) is home to approximately 1,000 upper-division and graduate level students. As a branch campus, we have been faced with many challenges due to limited financial resources. The administration has had to seek creative ways to offer desired programs and services. One creative and very successful approach is our partnership with Gulf Coast Community College (GCCC). Through this partnership, we are able to provide enhanced programs and services in: law enforcement, library facilities, physical fitness facilities, employee scholarships and Technology. Together we have implemented an articulation agreement in which GCCC offers courses for an associate's degree and FSU PC offers upper-division and graduate level courses required for the bachelor's, master's and specialist degrees with students matriculating easy between the institutions. As a result of this partnership, students, faculty, and staff have benefited.

Introduction of the Organizations

Florida State University Panama City (FSU PC) held its first class 25 years ago in 1982 in barracks located at the shipyard and in apartment buildings built in 1968. Construction dollars were secured through the legislature and in 1987, five main buildings for FSU PC were opened on a 28-acre site which is situated on beautiful North Bay. The campus is dotted with old oak trees and boasts a shoreline of close to one-half mile. Located on the shoreline is a large outside tiered deck where students can attend class, study, have lunch, or just relax. There are approximately 1,000 students enrolled at FSU PC; students predominantly come from the panhandle of Florida and some from south Alabama where they are offered in-state tuition plus a small fee. FSU PC's mission is to provide opportunity and access to a quality higher education for those living in northwest Florida and south Alabama. Through their 25 years of existence, FSU PC has had over 4,300 students receive undergraduate and graduate degrees; most of these alumni remain and work in this region. FSU PC is a place where students' dreams are realized and their goals are achieved.

Today, FSU PC continues to grow. A 14,000 square foot Administrative Services Center has just been completed; this Center houses the Facilities Operations & Maintenance Department, Police Department, and Receiving and Postal Services. By August 2008, the Alfred P. and Mamie V. Holley Academic Center will be completed. The Academic Center will contain 105,000 square feet of faculty and administrative offices, classrooms, labs, an information commons, and a lecture hall. These new buildings will help meet the needs of a growing student body and will meet the needs of our new academic program offerings.

Gulf Coast Community College (GCCC) was established in 1957 as the first Institution under Florida's new Junior College System. Since its inception, the college has grown and currently has a student headcount of over 7,000 and a continuing education count of 22,000. GCCC is located adjacent to FSU PC and is situated on 80+ acres. Due to the proximity of FSU PC to GCCC and due to the common needs and services, an educational partnership has been developed and expanded between the institutions over the years. This partnership has been mutually beneficial to both schools.

The continuing challenge of a branch campus is to provide desired services and programs to their students to ensure the highest quality education possible as required by the Florida State University President and the FSU Board of Trustees. During the past twenty-five years FSU PC has worked closely with the administration of GCCC to identify ways to enhance their services and programs.

When a mutual concern or problem was identified, FSU PC and GCCC have a relationship that allows both administrations to discuss and develop an educational partnership which in turn provides more services for both campuses.

During the implementation of a new program or service, both administrative groups are represented and open dialog is encouraged to make sure all details are covered within each proposal. Each year contracts and agreements are discussed as needed and any modifications are implemented to ensure continued success. The President of GCCC and the Dean of FSU PC are dedicated to the mutual benefit of their students, faculties, and staffs. The primary benefit of each joint service and program is to improve efficiency of both of the campuses with an end result of offering more services and programs while saving money.

What follows are 6 distinct problem areas that FSU PC and GCCC have had over the years. Both schools came together to find ways to solve each of them in a collaborative and professional manner. Each problem is followed by the design process, implementation process and the mutual benefits to both campuses.

Statement of the Problem/Initiative – Law Enforcement

Safety and security has always been a top priority for both campuses, however, neither campus had sufficient coverage to ensure the adequate safety of students, faculty and staff. Both campuses found it difficult to find qualified law enforcement officers and adequate funding to cover both campuses 24 hours a day. At the time, FSU PC Police Department staff only had two FSU police officers and one security guard. GCCC had contracted with security companies with little success and continuity of staff.

Design

At the request of former GCCC President Dr. Bob McSpadden, GCCC and FSU PC conducted planning sessions in order to arrive at a joint law enforcement agreement conducive to both campuses. Administration from FSU PC and GCCC discussed our current operation and ways to improve campus security. Both groups wanted to involve the City Police to cover the campuses between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. daily. Extensive discussions with FSU Police Department from the main campus and executives within FSU's Finance and Administration Office had to occur to bring all the stakeholders input to the table. The design phase was not simple, nor was it quick. After 3 years, both schools were able to agree on a comprehensive law enforcement plan.

Implementation

The plan was to provide police coverage 24/7 for both campuses, and to minimize the use of part-time security officers. The contract consisted of GCCC paying for salary and benefits for two FSU PC officers and providing related equipment such as a patrol car. FSU PC agreed to hire one additional officer to have a total staff of five officers and one security guard. In addition, a mutual aid agreement with the Panama City Police

Department was established in which the City patrols the campuses from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. daily.

Benefits

By offering joint police service it was possible to lower operational costs per hour and provide a better service. With the increased police force, our officers made an effort to become familiar with the students, faculty and staff of both campuses and to become more visible on campus. This effort has allowed the constituencies of both campuses to get to know the FSU Police Officers on a first name basis. This presents our campuses the opportunity to provide a more personalized service to faculty, staff and students and in the event of emergencies, the Police Officers will be better informed to make appropriate decisions. The FSU Police Department works daily to ensure a safe campus environment. With this agreement, both FSU PC and GCCC are covered 24/7. Each school continues to purchase items not required in the joint agreement that will assist our police department cover both campuses. Though not part of the agreement, in 2006, GCCC purchased a Segway to allow our officers more flexibility to be visible in and between buildings, and to react quicker to incidents. This illustrates the close partnership of FSU PC and GCCC and is indicative of our professional relationship.

Statement of the Problem/Initiative – Library Facility Use

FSU PC was initially designed as an extension center and thus appropriate space for a library was not planned. However, through the years the enrollment at FSU PC continued to grow and in order to provide a quality education, not only access to a library was needed, but access to a library that had the necessary holdings was crucial. Funding to build, staff and purchase library books was not available.

Design

The FSU PC administration asked GCCC to jointly work out a library contract that would allow FSU PC access to their library as well as house books and research journals. FSU PC and GCCC administration held several meetings to discuss the details of the joint contract and the annual fee paid by FSU PC. An agreement was reached which benefited both campuses. This fee would allow GCCC to hire an additional librarian that would be dedicated to FSU PC students, faculty, and to work with FSU PC on ordering books and journals. During this design process, FSU PC worked with the main campus librarian to determine a recurring budget that would be adequate to support the FSU PC academic programs. Once this was done, FSU central administration allotted us a recurring budget to purchase the necessary journals and books.

Implementation

The agreement between FSU PC and GCCC for library services was implemented early on in our history. It began with GCCC providing various types of services relating to the library for FSU PC. Over the past 25 years the contract has been modified and updated as FSU PC brought on new programs. In 2003 FSU PC hired its own librarian. The FSU PC librarian is now able to complement the services provided by the GCCC

library by making frequent visits into FSU PC classes and providing FSU PC faculty one-on-one sessions on how to access the electronic databases, etc.

Benefits

The library contract is beneficial to our students and faculty in providing access to, and use of, a state-of-the art library facility. Access to the library is very important for FSU PC to ensure accreditation standards in many of our academic programs. Being able to use GCCC library has certainly been financially beneficial for both campuses. GCCC benefits in that FSU PC holdings are available to GCCC students and faculty. FSU PC benefits in that they do not have to build and run a comprehensive library. The contract between both institutions and the partnership between both schools' librarians has provided students and faculty alike better quality access to the needed information they require (e.g., reference material, interlibrary loan, e-databases) to complete a sound education.

Statement of the Problem/Initiative – Articulation Agreement

The primary goal of FSU PC is to provide quality higher education to the citizens of Northwest Florida. To be able to meet this goal, we needed the best articulation agreement between GCCC and FSU PC. Anything less would jeopardize our mission of opportunity and access to higher education as well as meeting the education needs of the community. Fortunately, GCCC already had a quality academic program and was well-respected in the community. The problem was to ensure that there was an easy way for students who completed an associate of arts degree to be admissible to FSU PC.

Design

FSU PC and GCCC worked together to write a Memorandum of Agreement that contains Articulation Arrangements for both campuses. This agreement allowed GCCC students many academic opportunities and extra-curricular activities at FSU PC. The most important element of this articulation agreement was ensuring that students completing associate of arts degrees from GCCC were admissible to FSU PC. Both institution's Admissions and Records Offices developed a plan to ensure that information was transferred in a timely and appropriate way. The other academic opportunities include three scholarships annually to GCCC students who have earned an AA degree and who have an overall grade point average of 3.75. In addition, GCCC students may participate in Florida State University's Study Abroad Program in Florence, Italy; London, England; and San Jose, Costa Rica. GCCC students are also invited to participate in some of Florida State University's clubs and organizations.

Implementation

Implementing the plan was fairly simple in that near the end of each semester, FSU PC Admissions and Records Office works closely with their counterparts at GCCC to identify what students will be graduating with an AA degree. Those students applying to FSU PC will have their transcripts sent directly to FSU PC office for processing. If there are any issues or questions related to GCCC students, open dialogue occurs to answer the questions and to resolve the issues. In addition to this agreement, administrators and faculty representing the academic programs from FSU PC meet annually with their counterparts from GCCC to have lunch and review current programs, address issues and concerns, and to determine future direction.

Benefits

The Articulation Arrangements are beneficial to both campuses as it provides students who earn an Associates of Arts degree at GCCC with easy matriculation to FSU PC. At FSU PC, students are then able to take upper-division course work required to complete a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degrees. Some choose to continue their education by taking graduate course work leading to a master's or specialist degree. GCCC and FSU PC students are able to continue their education without relocating to another city. This is beneficial to Bay County and surrounding counties as many students who receive their degrees continue to live and work in Bay County.

Students from GCCC have benefited from clubs and activities that are offered at FSU PC. This benefits both institutions as it provides students with added opportunities and assists GCCC students to see the value of continuing their education at FSU PC.

Statement of the Problem/Initiative –Fitness Facility

When FSU PC began 25 years ago, only evening courses occurred with this practice continuing for nearly 18 years. It has only been in the past seven years that FSU PC has transitioned to more of a traditional schedule of offering many daytime classes. This transition has allowed us to offer more academic programs and subsequently more students are enrolling. Due to the limited facilities on our campus, we have not able to offer students, faculty, and staff access to physical fitness facilities.

Design

When the need for a personal fitness facility became necessary, FSU PC staff researched several different options. We called local gyms for costs, researched the expense of investing in fitness equipment and converting a room to a fitness area. We also discussed our needs with GCCC. After all the data were collected, FSU PC found that a joint contract with GCCC would be the most convenient and cost effective for our students. A fee per student was negotiated with FSU PC and GCCC administration and GCCC Athletic Department. To meet the staff and faculty needs, FSU PC was able to add a workout room to the newly constructed Administrative Services Building.

Implementation

The Fitness Facility Agreement allows FSU PC students to use the pool and fitness facility for which FSU PC pays a fee per student per semester. The fee is equal to the cost of one class credit.

Benefits

Access to the fitness facilities at GCCC provide our students with an opportunity to exercise in a location close in proximity to FSU PC. In addition, our students are now

able to work out before or after their classes. FSU PC students are grateful to have this partnership with GCCC and to be able to use their resources to maintain and improve their health.

Statement of the Problem/Initiative – Employee Scholarship Program

Employees at FSU main campus are given the opportunity to earn a Bachelor's or Master's Degree at no cost. This opportunity was extended to FSU PC but our campus did not offer freshman and sophomore level courses. This presented a problem since our employees would need to commute to the main campus which is approximately 100 miles from FSU PC to obtain freshman and sophomore level courses.

Design

To arrange for an Employee Scholarship Program, FSU PC administration worked with FSU main campus administration to design a method to allow FSU PC employees to take classes at GCCC without cost. FSU President assisted the group and requested estimated costs to allow our employees to attend GCCC.

Implementation

After the data were reviewed and a funding source was identified, FSU PC employees were allowed to take courses at GCCC. The course fees were paid from a foundation established by the FSU President. Employees can take up to six semester hours at no cost to them.

Benefits

The Employee Scholarship Program is mutually beneficial because GCCC receives payment from FSU for the courses taken by FSU PC employees. This program is very popular with our staff and enables them to improve themselves by earning Associates of Arts degrees, Bachelor's Degrees, or Master's Degree.

Statement of the Problem/Initiative – Technology

As computers and the Internet became a standard part of all business practices, FSU PC needed to enhance its Internet data connection to provide appropriate Internet access. Funding prevented FSU PC from acquiring the adequate bandwidth to allow FSU PC to operate efficiently.

Design

FSU PC researched different options to acquire adequate Internet data connections. Each option was cost prohibitive until we turned to GCCC to find a solution. The best solution was to form an Internet partnership with GCCC to share Internet data connection equipment.

Implementation

FSU PC and GCCC Technical Services Departments entered into a partnership in late 2003 to share an Internet data connection. FSU PC purchased the additional hardware necessary to share the connection and paid for the installation of the fiber to connect the two campuses. The current agreement remains in place and upgrades are addressed as needed.

Benefits

With the implementation of the shared data connection, the bandwidth was increased from 12 MB to 21 MB to more than adequately accommodate both campuses. This increased bandwidth has helped increase the quality of data transfer, especially video-conferencing.

Overall Benefits

It would be very easy for both FSU PC and GCCC to work independently as we each are funded separately, have different administrations and report to different entities in the state. However, we share something very important, our students. With this commonality, we have formed a partnership that has served both institutions well. We now have a much safer environment for our students, faculty and staff as the quality and quantity of law enforcement has increased. We have richer academic resources provided to a library that is used by both campuses. Students are now able to transfer to FSU PC with little to no bureaucratic hassles due to a well-conceived articulation agreement. FSU PC students can now exercise and improve their health by utilizing GCCC's pool and fitness facilities. FSU PC staff can now obtain an education similar to their peers on the main campus by attending classes at GCCC. With the ever burgeoning area of technology and the ever increasing need for more bandwidth, FSU PC and GCCC worked out an agreement to increase the bandwidth for both campuses which had a cost savings for both campuses. Overall, these partnerships provide a better service for both campuses and in doing so provides a savings to the citizens of northwest Florida.