

## **Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies Degree Completion Program**

### **Local Needs Assessment- Executive Summary**

#### *Introduction*

This is an evaluation of Florida Gulf Coast University's plan to offer a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies as a degree completion program for local students who have acquired some college, but have not completed a baccalaureate level degree. A review of program curriculum, scheduling options, planned locations, survey topics, similar local programs, and regional data commenced to substantiate the value of offering the Bachelor of Arts as a degree completion program. FGCU is positioned to serve a large regional student population, not currently enrolled, that previously began a college degree. This evaluation provides details to this effect, including quantitative and qualitative data for administrators to consider as formal decisions are made regarding future program offerings.

National and state attention continues to be placed upon graduation rates, retention and educational levels of the general population. Degree completion program efforts aim to address these issues by providing alternate methods for students who have begun the college experience to complete a degree. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010 U.S. Census data), there are over 7 million adults aged 25-34 with some college, but who have not earned a bachelor's degree. Nearly 50 percent of adults aged 25-64 (over 97 million) have a high school degree or equivalent, but no postsecondary degree.

#### *FGCU program and planned options*

The University will begin by offering the B.A. in Liberal Studies as a degree completion program allowing students to take a combination of online, evening and weekend courses. In addition to the main campus, three off-campus sites will host courses for the Liberal Studies Degree Completion Program. Classes are planned to be held at FGCU Office of Continuing Education and Off-Campus Programs facilities in Charlotte County at the Herald Court Center in Punta Gorda, Collier County at the FGCU Naples Center on 5<sup>th</sup>

Avenue, and Lee County at the Atrium Center on College Parkway near the bridge to Cape Coral. Initial community survey responses provide support for all of these intentions, with the strongest requests for online and on-campus course offerings (34.26% and 23.38% respectively). The Charlotte County off-campus site received the third highest rating (23.38%). As more results are obtained from the external community, the responses will help guide administrators in determining course locations and modalities.

Throughout the development process. University faculty and administrators considered multiple approaches to curriculum offerings and have settled upon a degree that provides students with flexibility to apply previous credit hours, but requires the completion of a solid foundation, exploration and capstone in critical thinking, humanities and communications.

#### *Program comparisons*

A comparison of similar programs at comparable state universities and local, private institutions, supports the model proposed by FGCU faculty and administration as marketable to the community. Locally, the average cost of tuition for current comparable programs of study is approximately \$575.00. FGCU is positioned to compete, financially, within this market with a state rate at less than half this cost. Additionally, the proposed FGCU program supports the philosophy of degree completion programs by providing accelerated mechanisms for learning, applying prior credits earned toward elective components and requirements of the degree, and addressing non-traditional schedule options with online, evening, and weekend course offerings. Minor recommendations have been included for consideration to further accommodate adult learners.

#### *Local Data Review*

According to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, there were 179,910 individuals within the FGCU service area who had completed some college, but had not earned a degree. As a comparison, 61,070 individuals within the FGCU service area are reported to have earned an associate level degree as the highest level of college attained. The U.S. Census

Bureau has also published 2011 estimates, broken down by age group, through the results of the American Community Survey. The three largest counties in the FGCU service area are included in this data. It is estimated that 52,394 individuals aged 18-24 are currently not enrolled in college within the FGCU region.

During the 2012-13 academic year, approximately 2,641 individuals earned an associate level degree within the FGCU service area. Additionally, fall 2012 enrollment estimates reflect that there are approximately 13,053 students currently enrolled in associate degree programs in the FGCU service area (estimates include enrollment data from Edison State College and Hodges University). Requests have been made to the Institutional Research Departments of Rasmussen College, Keiser University, Barry University and Nova Southeastern University in an effort to obtain additional service area enrollment data.

Enrollment data from the nearest Florida College System associate degree granting institution, Edison State College, reflects consistent popularity within the general studies Associate in Arts Degree program. During the Fall 2012 semester, 9,429 students (59% of the total enrollment) enrolled in the A.A. program. This trend continued into the Spring 2013 semester as 9,166 students (59% of the total enrollment) were reportedly enrolled in the general A.A. program. While the A.A. degree prepares students for transfer into one of many baccalaureate programs within the SUS, a great number of students remain undecided about a particular discipline or direction upon graduation from the A.A. program.

An FGCU survey of prospective students is currently underway in an effort to collect direct feedback from members of the community regarding the planned degree program, delivery method and scheduling options under consideration. At least 87% of respondents to date have expressed an interest in remaining employed while pursuing a degree, with an ability to maintain the current work schedule. When provided with an option to enroll in evening or weekend courses, 64% either strongly agree or agree that they prefer evening courses and

69% express an interest in Saturday morning courses. When asked about a preference for “weekend college” where courses would take place on Friday evenings and Saturdays, 69% showed strong or intermediate interest. Of the now approximate 254 responses, 104 (41%) declare a defined interest in a liberal studies degree program while an additional 64 (25.8%) are neutral regarding a field of study. The level of previous education attained has remained consistent with more than half of respondents possessing 60 or more college credits. Eighty-eight percent of respondents consistently express an interest in beginning a program within 1-1 ½ years.

Florida Gulf Coast University has secured ideal off-campus locations to serve the southwest Florida community. Additionally, FGCU remains in an optimal position to expand online student learning and main campus offerings, particularly on Fridays and Saturdays. Although there are increasing higher education opportunities for citizens of this region, FGCU is uniquely positioned as a reputable state university with academic quality, integrity and innovation.

# ***Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies Degree Completion Program***

## ***Local Needs Assessment***

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Kristen Zimmerman

### Characteristics of Degree Completion Programs

A number of informal definitions exist for degree completion programs. Simply stated, a degree completion program is an educational program providing a way for learners who have begun an academic program to complete a college degree. In such programs, students are often provided with opportunities for earning credit toward completion of the degree through accelerated mechanisms such as courses with condensed formats, combined online and on-campus learning, and credit through CLEP testing or other assessment of prior learning or work experiences.

National and state attention continues to be placed upon graduation rates, retention and educational levels of the general population. Degree completion program efforts aim to address these issues by providing alternate methods for students who have begun the college experience to complete a degree. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010 U.S. Census data), there are over 7 million adults aged 25-34 with some college, but who have not earned a bachelor's degree. Nearly 50 percent of adults aged 25-64 (over 97 million) have a high school degree or equivalent, but no postsecondary degree.

### Description of the Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies at Florida Gulf Coast University

The Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies degree program at FGCU was developed in collaboration with the school's College of Arts and Sciences. It is geared toward non-traditional working adults and place-bound, traditional-aged students who possess an associate's degree or approximately two years of previous college. The intent is to offer coursework online, at night and on weekends.

Administrators expect the degree completion program to:

1. Facilitate FGCU growth by targeting a market that has largely been ignored. While FGCU currently enrolls a number of nontraditional-aged learners in its undergraduate programs, it is virtually impossible to earn an undergraduate degree exclusively at night/online; and,
2. Enable the Colleges to enhance programs and build their brand by expanding the current reach beyond traditional, residential students.

The program is consistent with the FGCU Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles, particularly with respect to service and access: “The University...strives to make available its knowledge resources, services, and educational offerings at times, places, in forms and by methods that will meet the needs of all its constituents.”

#### Degree Completion Program Scope (as defined by the FGCU Task Force)

The degree completion program is composed of upper-level courses which are requirements of existing or previously approved FGCU degree programs. Students matriculating into the program needing certain FGCU general education requirements can satisfy them via taking FGCU courses online, face-to-face on campus, or via pre-approved transfer from other institutions.

Key points:

- 1) The program will ideally have the same full-time/adjunct faculty ratio as other current FGCU programs.
- 2) The degree completion program is primarily limited to students who have not matriculated into existing FGCU 4-year degree programs; FGCU traditional students may take classes by exception with departmental approval (provides full-time students an additional option; can benefit student time-to-completion and retention).
- 3) Similarly, degree completion program students may take traditional FGCU classes by exception with program approval.

- 4) Courses are intended to be offered in a mix of online, nights and weekends on the main campus of FGCU, and off-campus (Atrium Executive Center-Ft Myers, Naples Center, Herald Court Center-Punta Gorda)..
- 5) Longer term, degree-completion programs can be offered exclusively online.
- 6) The primary model will be face-to-face courses offered in a condensed format, i.e., 8-week terms versus a 16-week semester (same number of contact hours but condensed timing.) Benefits include marketing appeal to working adults (typically older, focused on accelerated time-to-completion), and FGCU cash flow.
- 7) The academic unit can choose to offer degree completion programs in one of two ways:
  - a. conventional FGCU format where courses are scheduled and students choose to take them at their discretion, or
  - b.in a cohort format where students start together, progress lock-step through a predetermined schedule with standard course days/times, and complete the program at the same time. (Cohort format has marketing appeal to nontraditional students as they know they can plan their life around class meeting times over the course of the program, and they know precisely when they will complete the program. On the other hand, it limits flexibility.)
- 8) Degree completion program students would be handled the same as a traditional resident student in Banner and in virtually all other respects.

## **FGCU Program Curriculum**

### *Initial Proposal Presented for Review*

The initial proposal from the College of Arts and Sciences at FGCU identified a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies with three concentration areas: humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. The initial proposed curriculum consisted of the 36 hour general education core with specified courses in the natural sciences, mathematics and humanities disciplines. The initial proposal reflected the development of capstone courses within each concentration area as well as encouragement for students to select from multiple

disciplines to round out the liberal studies focus. No Common Course Prerequisites were identified, which reflected alignment with the existing Liberal Arts and Sciences program CIP 24.0101 (Appendix A) and the existing General Studies program CIP 24.0106 (Appendix B).

B.A. program students would select one concentration as the primary focus. Within the concentration, students would select 21 credit hours (approximately 7 courses) from a list of courses within that concentration. Students would then select a secondary focus from the other two liberal arts concentrations and complete 9 credit hours (approximately 3 courses) and a tertiary focus to round out the program with 6 credit hours (approximately 2 courses). The 36 hours represented upper division curriculum within the arts and sciences disciplines. Additionally, students would take 6 hours of gateway and capstone courses, a civic engagement course for 3 credit hours and the university colloquium experience for 3 credit hours. This provided a defined upper division curriculum of 48 credit hours. The total number of credit hours required for the degree would be 120, consistent with statewide expectations for a baccalaureate degree. The itemized list of courses from humanities included courses from American Literature, English Literature, World Literature, English, Communications, Music History and Interdisciplinary Studies. A notation to add art courses was included. Minimal prerequisites existed in these areas and typically they are met with general education completion (i.e. composition, speech, general humanities).

The itemized list of courses from natural sciences included courses from astronomy, biochemistry, chemistry, geology, mathematics, microbiology, oceanography, plant and cell biology, physics and zoology. Understandably, there are a number of science and mathematics prerequisites within these disciplines.

The itemized list of courses from social/behavioral sciences was not provided for review.



### *Revised Program Curriculum*

Throughout July and August of 2013, the faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences, along with the Degree Completion Program Task Force members, reviewed and revised the program plan. Feedback was provided by the consultant via email and by FGCU academic advisors and staff.

The deliberations resulted in a decision to pursue a B.A. in Liberal Studies with a multidisciplinary program/interdisciplinary program approach to the elective component of the degree, in alignment with CIP code 30.0000 (Appendix C). The initial planned concentration within the degree program is Humanities which includes the disciplines of American literature, English literature, world literature, speech, communications, interdisciplinary studies, humanities exploration, philosophy, music history and theater. Within the B.A. program, students will complete a minimum of 120 credit hours to include 36 hours in general education and 33 credit hours of upper division courses: 24 within the humanities concentration and 9 credit hours in defined coursework (university colloquium experiences, civic engagement and the humanities capstone course). Students will round out the program of study with elective courses at the lower or upper division level from any additional discipline.

It was noted by the consultant that the proposed “upper division requirements” on the curriculum documents included two lower division courses in the speech discipline. Questions were also posed regarding the inclusion of art, art history and/or religion discipline courses.

Within the State University System (SUS), The University of Central Florida is identified as having a degree program in this area in the 2013-14 common course prerequisite manual.

### *SUS Program Comparisons*

The University of Central Florida program is offered as either a B.S. or B.A. of

Interdisciplinary Studies. By academic year, the university identifies a list of acceptable prefixes within each discipline area that can be applied toward the program area requirements. The degree consists of 120 total credit hours and students select two areas of concentration. The students must complete 15 credit hours within each concentration area selected as well as an approved minor. There are allowances for both upper and lower division courses within each concentration area. Limitations on transfer credit and lower division courses permitted in each concentration apply. Appendix D provides more information about the UCF program in addition to resources online at: [http://www.is.ucf.edu/undergraduate/is\\_major.php](http://www.is.ucf.edu/undergraduate/is_major.php).

Many resources related to program comparisons are available to the Division of Florida Colleges and State University System institutions, staff and students through the Florida Virtual College at [www.flvc.org](http://www.flvc.org). This site is widely used by prospective students and high school counselors while assisting students with the college search process. It is also widely used within the Florida College System to assess transfer options for students in pursuit of associate level degrees. The site identifies distance learning options throughout the state and provides access to all online course enrollment data. Currently, two State University System (SUS) institutions are marketed via this venue as having online degree completion programs similar to the proposed FGCU program: Florida International University and the University of South Florida.

Florida International University offers a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies with four tracks: Health and Human Concerns; Humanities and Cultural Traditions; Law, Business and Society; and Local and Global Environments, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (Appendix E). The IDS program is promoted as a self-designed program in which students complete nine courses from five areas: Human Aspirations around the World, Defining Social Spheres, Science and its Applications, Expertise Focus and Writing and Communication in and across the Disciplines. Additionally, students complete two capstone courses within the program. In total, students complete 48 upper

division credit hours. Rather than focusing upon a defined concentration, the students complete an interdisciplinary program that is self-designed in collaboration with a university official. Courses are offered in multiple locations, online, and through a weekend program.

The University of South Florida offers a Bachelor of General Studies through the University College Division (similar to the Off-Campus initiatives at FGCU). The degree is offered with 13 concentrations and provides for 57 credit hours of general electives (Appendix F). The majority of concentrations identify 24 hours of prescriptive coursework. Students must complete 48 hours of upper division credit hours, with the residency requirement of 30 credit hours at USF. The degree totals 120 credit hours and students are required to have completed 60 credit hours prior to admission into the program. Courses are available online and at off-campus locations in the USF service area.

The SUS programs selected for comparison in this analysis have diverse characteristics and provide points of consideration for FGCU faculty and administrators as curriculum and program options are finalized. The degree completion program stands to enroll a high volume of students with varied college histories who have a desire to earn a baccalaureate degree from FGCU. The decision to pursue a broader interdisciplinary curriculum within the B.A. in Liberal Studies degree may attract students from various backgrounds and provides students with an opportunity to apply knowledge in a variety of disciplines, regardless of the students' goals and aspirations. The shift to a broader application of elective credits, rather than requiring students to select secondary and tertiary foci, places FGCU in a good position to attract students locally and supports the philosophies inherent in a degree completion program.

In keeping with the philosophies of a degree completion program, institutions are encouraged to seek ways to allow fulfillment of general education and general elective requirements with previously earned credit hours. Institutions must define the core requirements for a degree program and require students to demonstrate general education

competencies and outcomes as a condition of graduation from any program. However, recognition that general education courses from other regionally accredited institutions may fulfill general education requirements within the degree program is imperative.

### **Regional Comparison**

#### *Factors Transfer Students Consider*

The top factors transfer students consider when selecting a postsecondary institution include cost, time to completion/transferability of courses, location, schedule/times of courses, and program coursework.

Within the FGCU service area, costs of tuition vary by institution. Table 1 below provides a 2012-13 breakdown of the cost, per credit hour, for upper division tuition of eight of the institutions in the service area.

*Table 1- Comparison of 2013-2014 Credit Hour Tuition in FGCU Service Area*

Institution	Upper Division Tuition
Ave Maria University	\$766.00*
Barry University	\$445.00
Edison State College	\$121.71
Florida Gulf Coast University	\$203.94
Hodges University	\$490.00
Keiser University	\$600.00*
Nova Southeastern University	\$535.00
Rasmussen College	\$260.00 (variable by program and location)

\*estimate based on full time semester costs. Break-down not provided by credit hour.

Each of the regional institutions promote financial assistance, scholarship opportunities

and acceptance of Florida merit scholars. However, the cost differential between the private and public institutions is notable.

Within the FGCU service area, four private institutions offer similar degree completion programs/accelerated learning options for adult learners (Appendix G). Table 2 below provides a brief comparison of the characteristics of these programs.

*Table 2- Brief Comparison of Similar Regional Degree Programs*

Institution	Degree Program/Credit Hours	Enrollment Options	Transfer Admission Practices
Barry University	Bachelor of Liberal Studies	Courses offered in 8 week intervals. Program is designed for adult learners and provides for assessment of prior experience. Multiple specializations available (psychology in FGCU region).	24 of 30 required major credit hours must be completed through BU.
Hodges University	Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies/122 credit hours	Three diverse formats: traditional, online, “wheel” (three courses in 15 weeks)	Require students to have 60 credit hours for admission and 2.5 GPA. Students must complete a minimum of 38 credit hours at HU.
Keiser University	Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies/120 credit hours	Combines two program areas as a coherent plan of study; independently designed with required approval from acad. dean.	

Ave Maria University	Bachelor of Arts in Humanities and Liberal Studies	Traditional university program; intended for residential students.	Core curriculum enforced. Not a strong focus on transfer student admissions.
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Additional degree completion and accelerated programs are available regionally in unrelated disciplines. As an example, Rasmussen College (with the closest tuition to the SUS rates) advertises courses offered in 6 week intervals, in multiple business disciplines, suggesting a completion time as early as 18 months from matriculation. An example of their online site for prospective students is available at (also included in Appendix G): <http://www.rasmussen.edu/degrees/accelerated/>.

*Recommendations Related to Proposed Curriculum*

- 1) Provide as much flexibility and open selection in the general education and elective components of the degree as possible. The shift from the initial proposal to the current plan supports more flexibility in this area.
  
- 2) Within the course selections at the upper division level, provide the option for related courses from other institutions to fulfill the requirements. For example, a student may complete an appropriate upper division course in humanities western thought and culture, but it may not transfer as an exact equivalent to FGCU. Discussions should take place prior to program implementation regarding the acceptance of such courses toward degree program requirements and proper notation within the catalog.
  
- 3) Establish a list of lower division prerequisites that are recommended and/or can be used to fulfill the general education requirements within each track respectively (rather than attempt to create one common general education core). For example, students in pursuit of the social sciences track would likely benefit from taking

introductory courses in sociology, psychology, history, economics and government. Oftentimes students who have earned a general associate in arts degree have taken many additional courses in these general education categories to round out the degree requirements and fulfill elective credit hours. Demonstrating the application of these credits into the Liberal Studies degree program as a seamless transition, as well as applying previously earned credit hours to the degree program, will attract students and reduce timeliness to degree completion.

4) Continue to move forward to develop opportunities in other arts and sciences disciplines. The interdisciplinary focus of the program will be an attracting feature.

5) Begin by offering a flexible schedule to students, rather than a lock-step cohort model. While research will support the student engagement and retention components of cohort models, the nontraditional adult population may not be able to commit to a stringent schedule. Within most cohort programs, students find themselves stopping out and retention becomes an issue when they cannot pursue another avenue for completion of the degree. Regionally, Edison State College implemented cohort models in both its RN to BSN program and B.S. in Education programs when initially implemented in 2008 and 2009. Student retention rates, feedback from students, scheduling conflicts and an increase in online offerings led the institution to eliminate specific cohorts of enrollment and allow students the flexibility to select from all sections offered in 2010. Similarly, Edison State College saw an increase in local transfer students from Hodges University in the business area. A number of students reported cost and the “wheel” cohort model to be deterrents, preferring flexible schedule options.

Due to the nature of some programs, a cohort naturally emerges when limited sections are offered on a particular site. Offering multiple options may provide faculty or graduate students with a research opportunity to compare retention and

success rates of adult learners in cohort versus open enrollment formats.

6) Move forward with the intent to offer 8-week courses. This allows students to consider full time enrollment, but focus on 2 or 3 courses at a time which seems less daunting and appeals to the adult learner.

### *Recommendations Related to Academic Policy*

1) Consider the development of a policy to review prior learning as an accelerated mechanism for awarding credit. The *Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)* provides faculty and administrative resources. A portfolio review model whereby credentialed faculty lead the review process (with agreed upon compensation rates) provides students with an opportunity to present validation of completion of learning outcomes. Through robust, faculty led review processes, course and learning outcomes can be measured and assessed to determine if students have fulfilled the competencies of a course sufficiently. The consideration of this process will provide prospective students with additional mechanisms for accelerating degree completion time, particularly in elective or introductory course areas. This mechanism for accelerating degree completion is in place at local competing institutions.

2) Provide a comprehensive list of challenge exams available through the academic departments (in addition to the already available list of CLEP, AP, IB, Dantes, etc. resources). Providing a list of courses available through the Credit By Exam process and advertising other accelerated mechanisms for award of credit will mirror efforts of regional competitors and provide clarity up front.

3) Consider a transfer credit policy that will allow for appropriate upper division courses in the liberal studies disciplines to meet degree requirements. Questions to consider: Will any upper division humanities courses be considered to meet the



requirements, or only those available through the FGCU curriculum?

### **Data Review**

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the total fall enrollment in degree granting higher education institutions in the State of Florida in 2010 was 1,125,469. This figure represented a 6.9% increase in enrollment as compared to 2009. Table 3 below identifies the breakdown of enrollment, by type of institution, in Florida. Although this data is not specific to the FGCU service area, it provides comparison information statewide.

*Table 3- Breakdown of Enrollment, by Type, in Florida*

Institution Type	2010 Total Enrollment	% Increase from 2009
Public Degree-Granting	790,027	21.7
Private, Not-for-profit	26,573	-0.6
Private, For-profit	38,009	32.7

Private institutions in the FGCU service area have marketed efforts at non-traditional students with a desire for completing a degree in an accelerated format. Despite the tuition costs, the flexibility, application of previous credit hours earned, tuition “lock” guarantees, and other innovative incentives have resulted in increased enrollment.

The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, serves as the data warehouse for higher education. In 2007-08 (the most recent data available) the liberal studies area of curriculum represented the third largest area of enrollment in addition to the health professions and business disciplines (Appendix H). 1.9 million students throughout the United States were enrolled in liberal arts, sciences and humanities programs. However, only 400,000 of those enrolled were at four-year

institutions. This could suggest that the great majority of students were completing the liberal arts component of the baccalaureate degree at a two-year institution prior to moving forward into advanced study.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, there were 179,910 individuals within the FGCU service area who had completed some college, but had not earned a degree. The total population (18 years and older) was reported at 926,302. Table 4 below identifies, by service area county, the number and percentage of individuals aged 18 and older who completed some college, but have not reported earning a college level degree.

*Table 4- Number of Individuals in the FGCU Service Area with Some College, No Degree Earned*

Service Area County	Number of Individuals with some college, but no degree reported	Percentage of Total Population (18 years and older) in this category
Charlotte County	30,678	22.4%
Collier County	45,915	17.8%
Glades County	2,073	20.1%
Hendry County	3,427	12.1%
Lee County	97,817	19.8%

As a comparison, 61,070 individuals within the FGCU service area are reported to have earned an associate level degree, while 134,775 are reported to have previously earned a baccalaureate degree. Individuals who have earned a previous associate level degree can and should be considered prospective students for the degree completion program

under development. Table 5 below specifies, by county, the number and percentage of individuals who have earned previous degrees at the undergraduate level.

*Table 5- Number of Individuals in the FGCU Service Area with a Previous Undergraduate Degree*

Service Area County	Number of Individuals with an associate level degree	Percentage of Total Population (18 years and older) in this category	Number of Individuals with a baccalaureate degree	Percentage of Total Population (18 years and older) in this category
Charlotte County	10,322	7.5%	16,976	12.4%
Collier County	15,462	6%	45,743	17.8%
Glades County	570	5.5%	591	5.7%
Hendry County	1,059	3.7%	1,476	5.2%
Lee County	33,657	6.8%	69,989	14.2%

The 2010 U.S. Census data also identifies the population currently enrolled in different facets of education. A breakdown of degree level and type of institution is not provided, but an overall enrollment figure in undergraduate and graduate study is provided. Table 6 below provides this breakdown for the FGCU service area, by county.

*Table 6- FGCU Service Area Enrollment in Higher Education, by County*

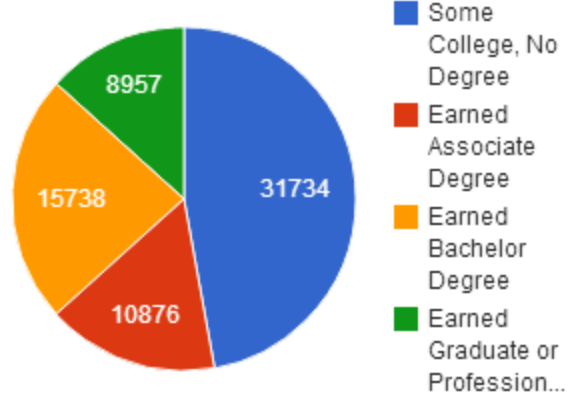
Service Area County	Number of Individuals enrolled in college or graduate school	Total population aged 18 and older
Charlotte County	6,130	136,743
Collier County	12,283	257,071
Glades County	244	10,290
Hendry County	1,233	28,223
Lee County	29,588	493,975
TOTAL	49,478	926,302

The U.S. Census Bureau has also published 2011 estimates, broken down by age group, through the results of the American Community Survey. The three largest counties in the FGCU service area are included in this data and the percentage of individuals, by age range, with some college and no bachelor’s degree earned are provided in the graphs and Table 7 below. Raw data is included as Appendix I.

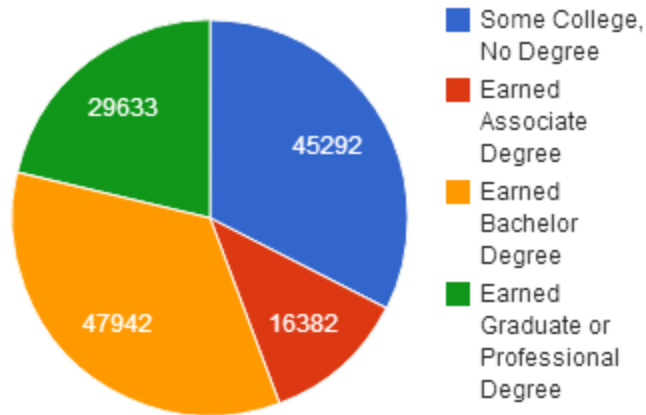
*Table 7- FGCU Service Area 2011 Estimated Levels of Educational Attainment*

County	Estimated population aged 18-24	% of 18-24 with some college or an associate degree	Estimated population aged 25 and older	% of 25 and older with some college, no degree	% of 25 and older with an associate degree
Charlotte	10,351	41.1%	127,958	24.8%	8.5%
Collier	24,372	31.6%	240,915	18.8%	6.8%
Lee	48,803	45%	460,240	20.4%	7.5%

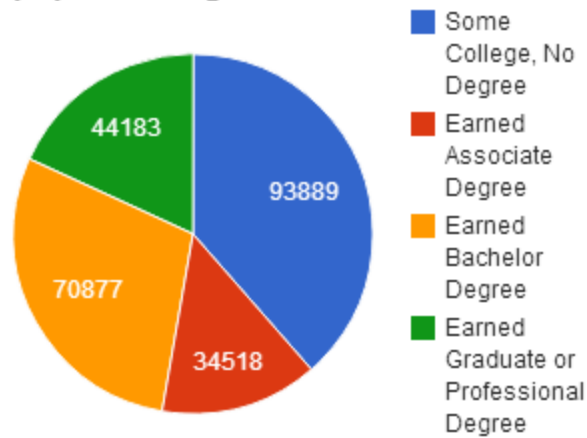
**Charlotte County- post-secondary education level of attainment of population aged 25 and older**



**Collier County- post-secondary education level of attainment population aged 25 and older**



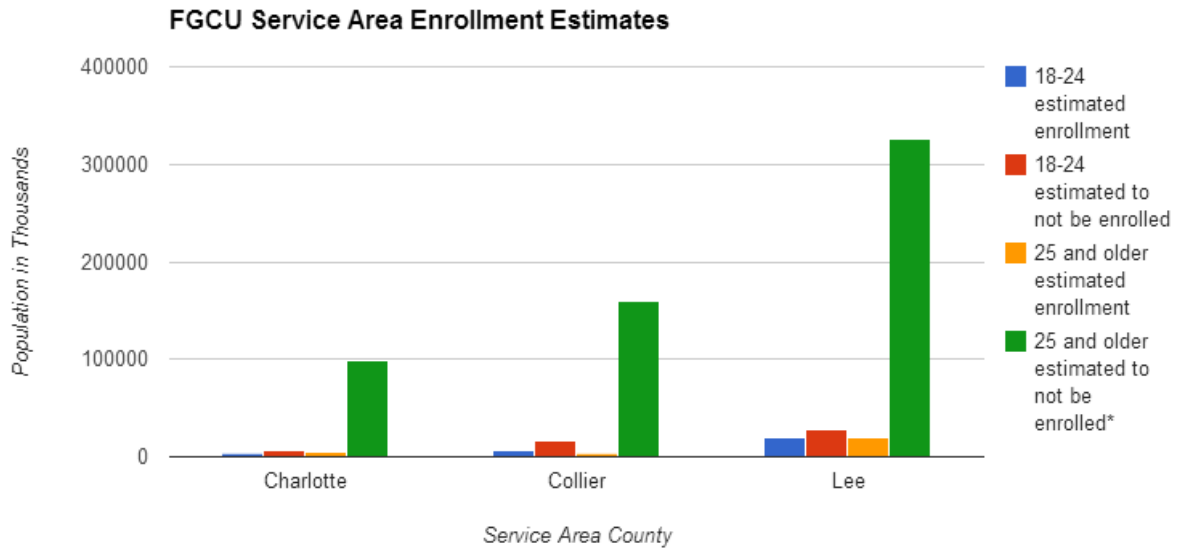
**Lee County- post-secondary education level of attainment population aged 25 and over**



The 2011 American Community Survey also provides sound estimates of enrollment, by age range. The following table (Table 8) and graph portray, within the three largest counties, the estimated enrollment (and non-enrollment) of the population in undergraduate education. Raw data is presented as Appendix J.

*Table 8- 2011 Estimated Enrollment Status Within FGCU Service Area*

County	18-24 estimated enrollment	18-24 estimated to not be enrolled	25 and older estimated enrollment	25 and older estimated to not be enrolled*
Charlotte	3,737	6,614	4,148	99,117
Collier	7,287	17,084	3,855	159,485
Lee	20,107	28,696	19,089	326,091



**\*25 and older not currently pursuing a degree are rough estimates excluding individuals who possess a prior baccalaureate degree, graduate degree or professional degree. Includes individuals who possess some college or an associate level degree, but may be currently enrolled in pursuit of a degree.**

FGCU stands to benefit tens of thousands of southwest Florida residents through baccalaureate degree granting efforts, particularly those targeted toward adult learners.

During the 2012-13 academic year, approximately 2,641 individuals earned an associate level degree within the FGCU service area. IPEDS data, provided by the National Center for Education Statistics, provides the breakdown in Table 9 below (and is included as Appendix K):

*Table 9-FGCU Service Area Associate Degrees Awarded in 2012-13*

Institution	2012-13 associate degrees awarded	Number of Liberal Studies degrees awarded
Edison State College	2,399	1,752 (associate)
Hodges University	242	20 (associate) 57 (baccalaureate)

Additionally, the following fall 2012 enrollment estimates reflect that there are approximately 13,053 students currently enrolled in associate degree programs in the FGCU service area. Requests have been made to the Institutional Research Departments of Rasmussen College, Keiser University, Barry University and Nova Southeastern University in an effort to obtain additional service area enrollment data. This information is not currently broken down by region for these institutions.

*Table 10- Estimated Fall 2012 FGCU Service Area Associate Degree Enrollment*

Institution	Estimated Fall 2012 associate degree enrollment	Total estimated Fall 2012 institutional undergraduate enrollment
Edison State College	12,851*	16,113
Hodges University	202**	2,045

\* ESC estimates that less than 3% of total enrollment represents baccalaureate level programming and less than 5% of total enrollment represents certificate programs.

\*\*estimate based on first time in college enrollment; 50% of 2012-13 graduates were associate level

*Interest in a Liberal Studies Degree*

The FGCU survey of prospective students is currently underway in an effort to collect direct feedback from members of the community regarding the planned degree program, delivery method and scheduling options under consideration. Initial reviews during the week of September 10, 2013 included approximately 148 responses and preliminary data supported general interest in the degree completion program initiative. More than half of the respondents have completed 60 or more college credits and 88% of respondents are interested in enrollment within 1-½ years. Of the initial 148 respondents, 28 (19.58%) declared a very strong interest in a liberal studies degree program while an additional 41 (28.67%) expressed interest.



Between September 10th and 17th, the survey respondents increased as additional community contacts dispersed the survey to employees for feedback. A number of respondents represent members of the health and public safety community per anecdotal feedback provided on the survey. Of the now approximate 254 responses (Appendix L), 104 (41%) declare a defined interest in a liberal studies degree program while an additional 64 (25.8%) are neutral regarding a field of study. The level of previous education attained has remained consistent with more than half of respondents possessing 60 or more college credits. Eighty-eight percent of respondents consistently express an interest in beginning a program within 1-1 ½ years.

Enrollment data from the nearest Florida College System associate degree granting institution, Edison State College, reflects consistent popularity within the general studies Associate in Arts Degree program. During the Fall 2012 semester, 9,429 students (59% of the total enrollment) enrolled in the A.A. program. This trend continued into the Spring 2013 semester as 9,166 students (59% of the total enrollment) were reportedly enrolled in the general A.A. program. While the A.A. degree prepares students for transfer into one of many baccalaureate programs within the SUS, a great number of students remain undecided about a particular discipline or direction upon graduation from the A.A. program.

#### *Delivery Method and Locations*

FGCU intends to offer courses at off-site locations in the Charlotte, Collier and Lee Counties in addition to the main campus of FGCU and online. Initial survey responses provide support for all of these intentions, with the strongest requests for online and on-campus course offerings (34.26% and 23.38% respectively). The Charlotte County off-campus site received the third highest rating (23.38%). As more results are obtained from the external community, the responses will help guide administrators in determining course locations and modalities. Additional requests are likely to be received and through marketing initiatives, the inclusion of maps to the sites, distance from main points of

interest, etc. will be helpful for prospective student recruitment.

### *Scheduling Options and Preferences*

At least 87% of respondents to date have expressed an interest in remaining employed while pursuing a degree, with an ability to maintain the current work schedule. When provided with an option to enroll in evening or weekend courses, 64% either strongly agree or agree that they prefer evening courses and 69% express an interest in Saturday morning courses. When asked about a preference for “weekend college” where courses would take place on Friday evenings and Saturdays, 69% showed strong or intermediate interest.

### ***FGCU Market Position***

Florida Gulf Coast University has secured ideal off-campus locations to serve the southwest Florida community. The off-campus locations in Punta Gorda, Fort Myers and Naples offer citizens of these counties with access to courses they do not otherwise have. Furthermore, these sites are located in remote areas (particularly in Charlotte and Collier counties) where universities are currently not offering baccalaureate degree program courses. The Lee County location is optimal for citizens of Cape Coral who express difficulty in traveling to the eastern area of the county to attend courses. FGCU remains in an optimal position to expand online student learning and main campus offerings, particularly on Fridays and Saturdays. Although there are increasing higher education opportunities for citizens of this region, FGCU is uniquely positioned as a reputable State University with academic quality, integrity and innovation.

As administrators and faculty refine the program curriculum and course offerings, it will be important to continue to remain aware of the regional efforts of private and public institutions. Cost will continue to remain as a mitigating factor for students when considering degree completion options and FGCU is positioned to be competitive in this

arena as a public institution. Students, despite this fact, are selecting institutions that charge between \$300-\$500 per credit hour and are doing so because of the other incentives provided to them in the forms of scholarships, credit for prior learning experience, and flexible learning structures. Capitalizing on state university tuition rates, in addition to implementing innovative applications of credit toward program requirements and electives, will place FGCU in a competitive placement.

Additional recommendations are provided for consideration in the areas of student services and marketing/recruitment of the degree completion program.

#### *Recommendations in the Area of Student Services*

- 1) Identify a single point of contact to serve as a student advocate who will guide students through the admissions, transfer credit and enrollment process.
  
- 2) Identify career services and job preparation/placement efforts for graduates of this program. How will it differ from traditional services provided by the University? Will it need to?
  
- 3) Clearly identify financial aid eligibility and a single point of contact for this population.
  
- 4) Consider the development of online student advising, if it is not a robust system already in place at the University. Students will need access to the services provided to traditional students in regards to advisement, enrollment and financial aid.
  
- 4) Consider elimination of typical on-campus student fees (i.e. athletic fees, parking fees) even if the students will take courses on the main campus. Will these students be required to provide health immunizations if courses are off-campus? Is there a

way to serve these students without requiring trips to the main campus to complete the enrollment process?

*Recommendations in the Area of Marketing Efforts*

- 1) Target marketing efforts at employers who offer tuition benefits to employees.
  
- 2) Market to Florida College System graduates (statewide graduates) with home zip codes within the FGCU service area.
  
- 3) Continue to request the Statewide list of Florida College System associate degree graduates annually for degree and continuing education programs. Encourage dialog with colleagues at the BOG level to include email addresses of students moving forward.
  
- 4) Promote the program through the Florida Virtual College resources, particularly the off-campus, flexible and online components.
  
- 5) Complete a data request from the Division of Florida Colleges/Board of Governors to include:
  - a) regional associate degree holders who have not matriculated into baccalaureate degree programs
  - b) number of A.A. graduates from Edison State College, South Florida State College and State College of Florida Manatee-Sarasota that matriculate into liberal arts degrees within the SUS. Market to graduates of these institutions in addition to ESC students.
  
- 6) Market the Humanities concentration by focusing on the individual disciplines. Communications and speech, for example, may not automatically be included in an individual's repertoire of the humanities discipline. Within the A.A. degree, students

are taught that humanities includes art, music, philosophy, religion, western culture and thought, etc. Communications, literature/writing and speech are often identified separately and are disciplines that may attract additional students to the program.

7) Educate the regional high school counselors about the alternative enrollment options for non-traditional students who may consider the degree completion program as a 2+2 option.

8) Promote the program as a 2+2 enrollment option through southwest Florida College System institutions.