



Item: AS:A-3

Tuesday, November 18, 2014

**SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF A NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM – BACHELORS OF GENERAL STUDIES**

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**PROPOSED BOARD ACTION**

Approve a new academic program:

**CIP 24.0106 (B.G.S.) Bachelors of General Studies**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Bachelors of General Studies (B.G.S) degree allows students to devise a plan of study designed to meet their personal interests and career goals. The plan of study is more flexible than that required in traditional degree programs. In consultation with an advisor, students map out a plan of study that includes 15 credit hours of upper division coursework in one discipline. All other requirements for the FAU degree apply.

The B.G.S. degree is designed to provide opportunities for those currently in careers or those more in need of a degree than in need of a degree in a particular major.

The Pre-Proposal was unanimously approved by BOG Committee of Vice Presidents, Fall 2013 and FAU University Faculty Senate on October 3, 2014.

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

The final five year E&G cost will be \$51,400.

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**Supporting Documentation: Executive Summary and PowerPoint Presentation**

**Presented by: Dr. Edward Pratt, Dean of Undergraduate Studies**

**Phone: 561-297-4365**

## PROPOSAL FOR BACHELORS OF GENERAL STUDIES (B.G.S.)

**Overview:** The Bachelors of General Studies (B.G.S.) degree allows students to design a plan of study to meet their personal interests and career goals. The plan of study is more flexible than that required in traditional degree programs. The degree is intended for those members of the local community already in careers but who need a degree to advance professionally or personally, as well as for current FAU students who meet the 120-hour requirement but, because of personal or employment imperatives, need to hasten their time to degree.

**Requirements:** In consultation with an advisor, students map out a plan of study that includes 15 credit hours of upper-division coursework in one discipline. All other requirements for the FAU degree apply:

1. A minimum of 120 credit hours overall;
2. All general education requirements (36 credit hours);
3. Writing Across the Curriculum (Gordon Rule Writing) requirement;
4. At least 45 credit hours at the upper-division level;
5. The last 30 upper-division credits in residence at FAU;
6. A minimum 2.0 GPA overall and in the concentration.

The “15 credit hours of upper-division coursework in one discipline” is considered the student’s concentration, though no concentration designation will appear on the student’s transcript.

Students may not pursue the Bachelors of General Studies as a second major, second degree, or second baccalaureate. Students may pursue a minor with the B.G.S. degree, but there can be no overlap of courses between the B.G.S. concentration and the minor.

**Rationale for the Degree:** The Bachelors of General Studies degree will open doors for working professionals and other students that would not have been available otherwise. Research indicates that college graduates, regardless of their degree, earn anywhere from several hundred thousand dollars to over a million dollars more than non-college graduates over the course of a lifetime. According to the College Board report, “Education Pays 2013: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society,” males between 25 and 34 years of age with bachelor's degrees earned 69 percent more and females 70 percent more in median earnings than high-school graduates in the same age range. In Florida, the Systems Summary of Post-Graduation Employment Outcomes for 2011-12, the most recent report, list graduates with General Studies degrees as the fourth highest with full time employment. The General Studies degree affords working professionals greater opportunities for new positions and promotions. It also allows the graduate far greater flexibility with employment during economic downturns – during the recent economic downturn, the unemployment rate for college graduates was 2 percentage points below the national average.

The need for a Bachelors of General Studies degree at Florida Atlantic University is based on the following considerations:

- I. The demographic composition of the Florida Atlantic University student body.

Approximately 13 percent of the unduplicated undergraduate headcount at FAU in spring 2014 was over the age of 30 (27 percent over the age of 25). The overwhelming majority of those over 30 years of age are part-time students (77 percent) and are working professionals. For many of these students, the need for a degree is greater than the need for a degree in a particular major.

- II. In 2013-2014, Florida Atlantic University graduated 97 students in the two Interdisciplinary Studies majors in the College of Arts and Letters. These Interdisciplinary Studies majors are similar in terms of requirements to the General Studies degree but confined to departments in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. For the first time, the General Studies degree will offer a more flexible plan of study to students outside these fields, so demand for the new degree will be high.
- III. In spring 2014, a survey was sent to all active FAU students with 100 or more earned credit hours. Of the 270 respondents, 49 percent expressed an interest in this new degree program.
- IV. A large number of FAU students will be subject to excess hours fees in the coming years, thus blocking or postponing their path to graduation. Looking at earned credit hours alone, 1,461 current active FAU undergraduate students have more than 150 credit hours, 444 have more than 175, and 159 students have more than 200. Many of these students could easily graduate now if given the option of obtaining a General Studies degree.

With the exception of New College and the University of Florida, all other SUS institutions offer similar degrees.

**Relation to FAU's Strategic Plan:** According to its Strategic Plan, Florida Atlantic University has a particular mission to provide a high quality and accessible undergraduate education to a diverse population spanning multiple counties along Florida's southeastern coast. The purpose of the Bachelors of General Studies degree is to put an undergraduate degree within reach of a larger number of residents in our service area and to meet critical workplace needs in an expanding regional and statewide economy.

**Enrollment Estimates:** We estimate 150 students will graduate with the Bachelors of General Studies degree by summer 2015 and an estimated 300 students in 2015-2016. Much of the increase will result from students graduating who had been prevented, for one reason or another, from completing their degree. We hope to maintain the annual number of graduates in the 350-400 students range through the recruitment of new students into the program, especially from among working professionals who had never completed all of their requirements for a degree.

**Resources Needed to Support Program:** Students in the Bachelors of General Studies take coursework in multiple disciplines across the university, so we do not anticipate that additional faculty or courses will be needed to support the program. If enrollment increases significantly by year 5, an additional advisor might be needed to handle the additional load.

**Oversight:** A coordinating committee, comprised of one faculty member from each college offering undergraduate instruction, will oversee all aspects of the program. The committee will

report to University Faculty Senate at the end of spring 2015 and spring 2016: the number of students graduating with the degree, their concentrations, their status upon entry to FAU (FTIC or transfer), and their previous major. Similar information will be provided to the colleges on an annual basis.

Submitted by:

Barclay Barrios, Assistant Dean, College of Arts and Letters

Karethy Edwards, Associate Dean, College of Nursing

Deborah Floyd, Interim Dean, Graduate College

Jerome Haky, Associate Professor of Chemistry

Michael Harris, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Anthropology

Paul Hart, Associate Dean, College of Business

Barry Linger, Associate Dean, College of Medicine

Edward Pratt, Dean of Undergraduate Studies

Ellen Ryan, School of Social Work

Donald Torok, Associate Dean, College of Education

Elijah Watlington, Associate Provost for Northern Campuses



# Bachelor of General Studies

*Presented by Ed Pratt, Dean of Undergraduate Studies  
Board of Trustees - Committee on Academic and Student Affairs  
October 21, 2014*

*Making Waves*

## Bachelor of General Studies (BGS)

- Allows students to design a plan of study to meet personal interests and career goals
- More flexible than traditional degree programs
- Target demographics:
  - Community members in careers who need a degree to advance professionally
  - Current FAU students who meet the 120-hour requirement but need to hasten time to degree

# Degree Requirements

- In consultation with an advisor:
  - Students select a concentration, such as business, communications, computer science
  - Students map out a plan of study that includes 15 credit hours of upper-division coursework in discipline
- All other FAU degree requirements apply



## Rationale – National and State

- The BGS is designed to open doors for working professionals and students near completion:
  - In a lifetime, college graduates of any discipline earn up to \$1M more than non-graduates
  - In Florida, General Studies degree holders rank 4<sup>th</sup> in percent employed full-time (SUS Data)
  - During the recession, college graduate unemployment rate was 2 percentage points below national average



## Rationale – Florida Atlantic

- The BGS is particularly suitable for our University:
  - 13% of our students are over the age of 30
  - Of those students, 77% are taking classes part-time, mostly due to obligations as working professionals
  - Last year, we graduated 97 students in Interdisciplinary Studies, which is similar but confined to arts, humanities, and social sciences
  - Of our active students with 100+ credit hours, 49% expressed interest in this new degree program
  - 1,461 current students have more than 150 credit hours and many could graduate if given the option of a BGS

## Enrollment Estimates

- FAU aims to graduate 150 BGS students by August 2015 and another 300 students in 2015-2016 academic year
- Most of these graduates will be existing students who haven't been able to succeed in their current degree programs
- Annual goal is 350-400 students, with special emphasis on recruiting working professionals

# Necessary Resources

- BGS students will take coursework in multiple disciplines across the university, so we do not anticipate a need for new faculty or courses
- If enrollment increases significantly by year 5, an additional advisor may be needed

