Defining Teaching Ethos

John noted that the only site on which he found any information about teaching ethos is a Singapore site which limits access. He has requested access to the site and is waiting to hear back. Essentially, this site summarizes teaching ethos as "an unspoken set of professional beliefs and practicing conducts" which leads to a "distinct professional identity."

For the white paper, we need to:
- Define teaching ethos
- Determine how to measure it
- Focus on how to monitor it—especially for negative changes

It was suggested that to define teaching ethos we may need to review the research on organizational behavior. Other options:
- Review the survey of instruction conducted (approximately) 3 years ago
- Survey current faculty
- Survey alumni

There was a very lengthy and passionate discussion relating to the concern felt by faculty that the institution (by emphasizing increasing research) is unfavorably impacting teaching. For example, faculty whose class sizes are doubling or tripling can no longer offer the quality learning experiences students deserve, but have to rely on abbreviated activities that they can realistically grade within the allotted time (e.g., giving multiple choice exams instead of essays; shortening project requirements). The students are the ones who suffer in this environment.

Another comment took issue with the statement that research informs teaching when the majority of students faculty teach are freshmen and sophomores who are being taught the fundamentals of a discipline. In considering our teaching ethos and what type of institution we should be, Georgia Southern must consider its current and future student demographic. We need to become effective teachers for this demographic, but faculty do not have time to reflect and research on how to become more effective. From this perspective, the combined center ought to be able to provide this research to faculty.

It was asked repeatedly why we cannot focus on what we do well and become one of the best teaching undergraduate institutions. Why must we change? Is it all about money? How can we realistically compete for diminishing research dollars?

Faculty truly want to be good teachers, but given the declining resources and growing enrollments are less motivated than ever to put in the extra effort. Even then, they simply cannot teach the way that they believe is best given current class sizes. We are rapidly reaching the point where faculty are going to go elsewhere rather than continue to deal with this stress plus the now added burden of increasing research.

Many of our educational programs have an applied focus which means that we prepare undergraduates for a job rather than preparing students for further study (PhDs). This focus serves a value to society and complements the Complete College Georgia initiative. It also serves our student...
demographic. Again, why the need to change? This rationale has not been clearly communicated to faculty.

What constitutes good teaching? A lecturer can be an excellent teacher. How does one get students engaged in the topic? Excellent teaching is not dependent upon technology, but more on the values of the faculty member and his or her passion for the subject matter.

It was also recommended that when the white paper is complete that a subset of faculty from the Teaching Legacy Task Force ask to meet with the Provost to present the white paper.

Several from the group suggested that current faculty need to respond to a brief survey based on the Pathways group’s suggestions for each faculty pathway (e.g., teacher-scholar, practice, research, service) to poll the current population for which track they would be interested in pursuing at this moment in time. From this information, the administration would have a clearer picture of the climate on campus concerning the tension between teaching and researching expectations/desires.

Adjourned: 3:10 p.m.

**Next meeting: TBA**