

**The RUGS Connection**

**Dean's Corner**



As Associate Dean of the University Graduate School, I believe the most critical roles of the UGS are to assure excellent academic support and mentoring for developing scholars. To that end, UGS has stepped up efforts during 2008-2009 to improve the level of service that we provide to graduate students, Graduate Program Directors and graduate program staff. At the center of these efforts are the doctoral program reviews that pay particular attention to doctoral student mentorship and retention efforts by faculty. UGS has also intensified efforts to evaluate and improve the customer services provided by UGS Support Services and Graduate Admissions. UGS is pleased to share the results of our Fall 2008 customer service survey with you in this month's newsletter. I look forward to serving the graduate students and graduate program faculty and staff at FIU. Please do not hesitate to let me know how I can be of service to you. [Note: Dr. Castellanos has been on the faculty of the Department of Dietetics & Nutrition since 1996 and formerly served as PhD Program Director.]

Victoria Castellanos, Associate Dean, University Graduate School

**University Graduate School**

**Call for Papers: FIU English Graduate Student Forum on Religion, Ethics, Violence**

The FIU English Graduate Student Forum is an opportunity for all students, especially those early in their graduate careers, to present works in progress before an appreciative and supportive audience. With that end in mind, presentations are limited to ten minutes (about five typed pages).

We are soliciting papers from graduate students in English, Foreign Languages, History, International Studies, and related disciplines for a one-day graduate student forum on Religion, Ethics and Violence.

Possible Topics include but are not limited to:

Religion and Violence in literary texts or traditions

The ethical turn in literary theory and its impact on ideas of community or conflict  
 Religion and Violence in an international context, past or present  
 Reparative justice and/or redemption

Proposals should include a 200 – 300 word abstract. Paper proposals must also include the paper title, and the name, phone numbers, e-mail address, surface mail address, and institutional affiliation of the presenter.

This forum has been inspired by a two-day symposium on John Milton's Samson Agonistes and religious violence, co-hosted by the University of Miami and Florida International University ([www.milton400.fiu.edu](http://www.milton400.fiu.edu)). However, as the symposium uses Milton's text as a springboard for interdisciplinary discussions of religion and violence in the modern world, so

this conference seeks to gather a range of disciplinary perspectives on religion, ethics and violence.

**Submissions:**  
 Please send submissions as an attachment (Word, RTF, OpenOffice) to [fiuEngGradConf@gmail.com](mailto:fiuEngGradConf@gmail.com).

**Deadline:**  
 Friday, March 6, 2009

**Registration:**  
 There is no registration fee for the conference.

**Conference Date:**  
 Friday, April 3, 2009  
 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

**Professional Development**

**Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Workshops**

The University Graduate School and Office of Research Integrity will be hosting RCR workshops for the graduate student community. Faculty-facilitated RCR workshops are intended to supplement the online RCR training now mandatory of thesis-option master's and all doctoral students. RCR workshops will cover a breadth of topics including research misconduct/ethics, mentor/mentee relationships and publication practices.

As of July 15, 2008, graduate students filing their M2 or D3 forms are required to complete the online RCR Certificate Program. A copy of the completed RCR certificate should be included with the M2 or D3 form upon submission. Form deadlines and information on the RCR can be found at [grad-school.fiu.edu](http://grad-school.fiu.edu) or [ori.fiu.edu/training](http://ori.fiu.edu/training).

For future training dates, please consult the [UGS calendar](#)

**UGS Calendar**

- 3/3 Avoiding Plagiarism; GL 124; 5-6:30 pm
- 3/16-3/21 Spring Break
- 3/24 UGS Formatting Workshop (invite only); GL 124; 2-4 pm
- 3/26 Research and writing in the 21st Century; GL 124; 10:30-12:30 pm

For events, workshops, important deadline dates and information, you can visit our online calendar at: [UGS Calendar](#).

**Staff Spotlight**



**Graciela Laforest, Associate Director, University Graduate School**

With more than 20 years of Admissions experience, Graciela Laforest has seen her fair share of applicants come through FIU. As Associate Director of the Graduate Admissions Office, she oversees a staff of 12 that processes more than 10,000 applications a year. These include applicants to Doctoral, Masters, Specialist and Certificate programs.

She spent five years as a Student Counselor for the Educational Center of the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City (IIE/Mexico). In her role as Student Counselor, she advised Mexican nationals about educational opportunities in the U.S. as well as financial aid sources for international students. It also implied giving presentations about the U.S. system of education and educational opportunities not only at private high schools but also at institutions of higher education throughout Mexico.

Graciela's career at FIU began when there was just one Admissions office. She rose up the ranks and eventually became supervisor of the international evaluators until the separation of Undergraduate Admissions and the University Graduate School, at which point she was assigned to oversee the processing area of the Graduate Admissions Office.

A self-admitted workaholic, she strives to provide the most efficient service to the academic units, faculty, staff and applicants. She has attended numerous conferences and workshops that deal with academic credentials and international evaluations.



**UGS Customer Service Satisfaction Survey**

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During fall 2008, graduate program directors, faculty and staff were asked to evaluate UGS Support Services and Graduate Admissions areas based on their experiences August 2007-August 2008. Participants were asked to state their level of satisfaction with the UGS in the areas of staff skill, general customer service, phone call return(s), accuracy of information, timeliness of processed requests, professionalism, knowledge and courtesy. The survey also called for feedback pertaining to the UGS website, quality of service, confidence in delivery of services and overall performance. The table below represents a summary of highlights from that survey:

<b>Total number of responses to survey:</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>QUALITATIVE RESPONSES</b>	
<b>Areas for improvement:</b> communication (both student services and graduate admissions)	
<b>Significant challenges faced by graduate faculty:</b> funding/budget cuts, qualified faculty/faculty overload	
<b>Significant challenges faced by graduate students:</b> bureaucracy, forms processing	
<b>Significant challenges faced by int'l graduate students:</b> housing, funding	
<b>Training most beneficial to graduate faculty:</b> UGS/graduate admissions policy, PantherSoft queries, International student information, GA contracts/information	

<b>QUANTITATIVE RESPONSES</b>		Level of agreement: strongly agree or agree (combined %)
<b>Student Services Staff:</b>		
Courtesy		74.3%
Has the skills to resolve my concerns		71.4%
Addresses requests in a professional manner		68.6%
<b>Graduate Admissions Office:</b>		
Courtesy		75%
Knowledge		71%
Provides accurate information		71.9%
<b>OVERALL RESPONSES</b>		
Quality of services/assistance (good/excellent)		66.6%
Confidence in UGS to deliver services/assistance required (high /very high)		64.7%
Experiences with the UGS over the year (much/significantly improved)		55.9%

**Office of Research**

**Training Information**

The Office of Research is pleased to offer the following Training Sessions in the month of March:

**March 4 Payroll and Non-Payroll Transfers and Effort Reporting**  
Training will address how payroll and non-payroll transfers are processed along with the requirements of effort reporting.

**March 11 Ethics and Awareness of FIU's Code of Conduct**  
The Office of the General Counsel & the Office of Compliance will address ethics requirements.

**March 18 Understanding Sponsored Research Administration at FIU**  
This is a general overview of Sponsored Research at FIU from proposal development and submission, award processing, post-award project administration and project close-out.

**March 25 Budget Preparation**

This session will cover the requirements for budget preparation for sponsored projects. Other budget topics to be addressed are: cost share, stipend/tuition/student payments, extras state compensation, consultant services, salary and wage charges.

**All sessions will take place from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm in MARC 412. Space is limited; therefore, please reserve a seat by contacting Natalia.Hernandez1@fiu.edu no later than 12:00 pm the day before each session.**

**Intellectual Property News**

The Office of Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer has a new Invention Disclosure form, which can be found at [http://osra.fiu.edu/intellectual\\_property/index.htm](http://osra.fiu.edu/intellectual_property/index.htm).

For questions and/or other intellectual property matters, please contact Susan Webster at 305-348-2494 or via e-mail at [websters@fiu.edu](mailto:websters@fiu.edu)