Re-Envisioning the Core Curriculum in the University System of Georgia

Presentation on behalf of the

General Education Council of the USG

to

Regents Advisory Committee on Effectiveness and Accreditation

April 25, 2019 9-9:30am

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Re-envision General Education in the USG?

"What comes to mind when you hear the term 'general education'? A menu of random courses? A way to fill seats in a department? Requirements disconnected from the major? If you are a student or a member of the increasingly skeptical public, you may also add: a waste of time?"

Chronicle of Higher Education, *Reforming Gen Ed (Strategies for success for your campus)* (2018).

Purpose of Today's Presentation

- The General Education Council recommends that you **support a process of re-envisioning general education** in the USG.

- The General Education Council has **not yet recommended a specific structure** for general education. Why?

  - Before nuts and bolts are addressed, the question is whether the case to re-envision the core is strong enough to convince you that we should all roll up our sleeves, put on our body armor and take on the task of developing a structure which meets the needs of our state.

- The General Education Council stands ready, if asked, to take a leadership role in the effort to re-envision the core.

Importance of Beginning with the Big Picture

"Before you tackle the gen-ed curriculum, step back and think about what it is you're hoping to achieve. Experts and those with on-the-ground experience recommend the following steps:

- "Begin with the big picture. **Don't jump right into a discussion of general education. Instead, draw faculty members into a deeper conversation of what kind of graduates they want to produce.** …"

Chronicle of Higher Education, *Reforming Gen Ed (Strategies for success for your campus)* (2018). [note: this article focuses on gen ed reform at institutions which are not part of a system. In a system, the need for transferability, of course, makes the reform process even more complex and makes this point about addressing the big picture first even more compelling.}

General Education Should Inspire Our Student to be All They Can Be
Is General Education Now Doing That?

- Does Our Current Approach to General Education Accomplish These Goals?
  - **Inspire** our students to pursue a lifetime of learning
  - Provide our students with the **opportunity to explore** and find their unique passion/talent
  - **Prepare our students to adapt** to the rapidly changing world which awaits
  - Provide our students with the **base level of knowledge** to enable them to succeed in their chosen area of focus
  - Provide each of our 26 institutions with the ability to **tailor the core to their unique mission**
  - **Assure transferability** among our 26 institutions without loss of credit

What prevents us from achieving us from achieving our general education goals – consider:

- Grandfathering

- Communication
  - What does Area A, B, C … mean to the typical high school graduate or parent of that graduate?
  - Do we inspire students by how we describe this important step in their education?

- Checklist approach: Do we provide room for students to explore?

- A Common course name/number/description system which isn't ….. Really common, that is
  - See attached example

- Current process for system-wide review of proposals for changes to the core

- Learning outcomes for areas established at institutional level

Consider how we describe gen ed on the web at my institution?
Does this inspire a student to explore, grow, learn?

East Georgia State College, in cooperation with other institutions of the University System of Georgia (USG) has adopted a core curriculum to allow the transfer of credit from one USG institution to another without penalty to the student. The **Core Curriculum is subdivided into five areas: A – E as outlined below. Areas A, B, C, D, and E totaling 42 credit hours are composed of general education courses.** Students successfully completing an Area A – E course at one USG institution will receive full credit, even if the area has not been completed, as long as the course is within the area hour limitations of either the sending or the receiving institution and the student does not change from a non-science to a science major.

What constraints exist if the choice is made to re-envision general education in the USG

- Constraints of law and accreditation standards
  - SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation*
  - Standards of specialized accrediting bodies
  - Georgia State Law
- Natural resistance to change because the roles of highly valued faculty and staff will be altered if general education changes
  - Impact of likely shifts in faculty workloads
  - Impact upon advising – if we provide more room to explore, students must be even more aware of the impact of their course choices on their future plan
- Time and expense of design and implementation

Questions for your consideration:

- What goals should general education seek to attain? **What are the attributes you want your graduates to have**?

- Is general education now achieving those goals?

- If general education is not achieving those goals, **do we have the will** to put in the hard work necessary to change?

- What are the guiding principles of an ideal structure for general education -- consider:
  - USG institutions are given flexibility to tailor gen ed to their mission?
  - Student acquire base knowledge required to succeed in their chosen area of focus?
  - Students have room to explore?
  - Completion of required general outcomes based on attainment of outcomes not completion of courses?
  - Promotes higher retention and graduation rates
  - Complete transferability within USG
  - Meet requirements of accrediting bodies and law

Council on General Education stands ready to take a leadership role in developing a detailed proposal, if asked.

Thank you for listening!

"Robust discussion" to follow

Appendix

BOR Policy Manual exerpt

USG Academic Affairs and Student Handbook exerpt

SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation exerpt

Commonly Numbered Course Example

BOR Policy Manual

3.3.1 Core Curriculum

The USG core curriculum was developed with the goals of assuring institutional accountability for learning, incorporating learning requirements in global perspectives and critical thinking, allowing institutions some flexibility in tailoring courses to their institutional mission, while ensuring that core curriculum courses completed at one USG institution or through eCore, the USG's designated online core curriculum, are fully transferable to another USG institution. All core curriculum requirements must be completed as part of the associate of arts, associate of science, bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degree programs.

Each institution's core curriculum shall consist of 42 semester credit hours, with minimum credit hours in each area of the core as follows:

Area A1	Communication Skills	At least 6 semester hours
Area A2	Quantitative Skills	At least 3 semester hours
Area B	Institutional Options	At least 3 semester hours
Area C	Humanities/Fine Arts, and Ethics	At least 6 semester hours
Area D	Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Technology At least 4 of these hours must be in a lab science course. *Given the importance of the STEM disciplines, any institution that wishes to drop Area D below 10 hours must make a compelling intellectual case that its core proposal will not lead to students knowing less about the natural sciences, math, and technology. [An example of such a compelling case might be if the institution proposed to put 3 or more hours of math in Area B and 7 hours of natural science in Area D.]	At least 7 semester hours*
Area E	Social Sciences	At least 6 semester hours

The specific learning outcomes for areas A through E of an institution's core curriculum are approved by the Council on General Education. Students completing any core curriculum course at one USG institution or through eCore will receive full credit for that course upon transfer to another USG institution within the same major, even if a core area is not completed and even if it means giving transfer credit across areas (e.g., credit of a math course in Area C).

Assessment of the core curriculum by each institution is required as part of their accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and by the USG Comprehensive Program Review process.

USG Academic and Student Affairs Handbook

2.4.2 Areas A–F

Every institution in the USG will have a core curriculum of precisely 42 semester hours and an Area F of precisely 18 hours. All students must meet the core requirements of the institutions from which they receive their degrees. However, see the rules regarding transfer credit in .

A1	Communication Outcomes	Courses that address learning outcomes in writing in English	At least 6 hours
A2	Quantitative Outcomes	Courses that address learning outcomes in quantitative reasoning	At least 3 hours
B	Institutional Options	Courses that address general education learning outcomes of the institution's choosing	At least 3 hours
C	Humanities, Fine Arts, and Ethics	Courses that address learning outcomes in humanities, fine arts, and ethics	At least 6 hours
D	Natural Science, Mathematics, and Technology	Courses that address learning outcomes in the natural sciences, mathematics, and technology.	At least 7 hours. At least 4 of these hours must be in a lab science course.
E	Social Sciences	Courses that address learning outcomes in the social sciences	At least 6 hours
F	Lower-Division Major Requirements	Lower division courses required by the degree program and courses that are prerequisites to major courses at higher levels.	18 hours

SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation 9(3)

The institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the undergraduate level that:

(a) is based on a coherent rationale.

(b)is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree program. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent.

(c) ensures breadth of knowledge. These credit hours include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/ fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/ mathematics.

These courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. (General education requirements) [CR]

USG Academic and Student Affairs Handbook

2.4.10 Common Course Prefixes, Numbers, and Descriptions (Last Modified March 10, 2016)

Following are **common course prefixes, numbers, and descriptions that all institutions shall use for their programs of study.**

…

Course Prefix	Course Number	Course Name	Course Description	Credit
BUSA	2105	Communicating in the Business Environment	A course emphasizing both interpersonal and organizational communications; to include written and oral exercises appropriate to business practice.	
BUSA	2105	Communicating in the Business Environment	Emphasizes both interpersonal and organizational communications as they relate to the business environment; includes delivery of different types of speeches as well as written exercises appropriate to business practice; designed to develop written and oral communication skills including the clear, concise, effective oral presentation of ideas and to develop an acceptable speaking voice.	3
BUSA	2105	Communicating in the Business Environment	This course emphasizes both interpersonal and organizational communications, including written and oral exercises appropriate to business practices.	3
ENGL	2020	Communication for Business and the Professions	This advanced writing course examines the various types of letters and reports used in professional settings. The focus is on skill development in using appearance, style, persuasion, and tone when preparing purposeful communication such as sales, collections, employment, requests, goodwill, bad news, or analytical correspondence.	3
BUSA	2105	Small Business and Entrepreneurship for Non-Business Majors	This course is not available to business majors. An introduction to financial planning for small and start-up businesses that includes projections, business planning, and sources of funding.	3
BUSA	2105	Business Communications	Emphasizes both interpersonal and organizational communications including written and oral exercises appropriate to business practice.	3
BUSA	2105	Communicating in the Business Environment	Students study both interpersonal and organizational communications; to include written and oral exercises appropriate to business practice.	3
BCOM	2285	Business Comm and Reports	The study and application of external and internal communications within business organizations. The course provides an analysis of and practical experience with written and oral communications involving word and information processing systems, telecommunications, multimedia, mail systems, and computer-generated graphics. Business ethical, cross-cultural, and international issues associated with communications are explored and analyzed.	3
BUSA	2105	Communications in the Business Environment	Emphasis on interpersonal and organizational communication; includes written exercises and oral presentations appropriate to business practice.	3
BUSA	2105	Communicating in the Business Environment	A course emphasizing both interpersonal and organizational communications; to include written and oral exercises appropriate to business practice.	3
SCOM	2300	Business and Professional Communication	This course focuses on the principles to manage communication in a variety of organizational contexts. Emphasis is on effective communication and the preparation of business presentations. Topics include, but are not limited to, interviewing, managing business meetings, and conflict management.	3
BUSA	2105	Communicating in the Business Environment	An analysis and practical applications of the external and internal communications of business organizations.	3
ORGC	2205	Introduction to Organizational Communication	This course is an introduction to methods and applications of basic theories, interactive structures, and directions within various organizational environments.	3
BUSA	2105	Communicating in the Business Environment	This is a course emphasizing both interpersonal and organizational communications to include written and oral exercises appropriate to business practice.	3
BUSA	2105	Communicating in the Business Environment	An emphasis on both interpersonal and organizational communication through written and oral exercises appropriate to business practice.	3
BUSA	2105	Communicating in the Business Environment	A course emphasizing both interpersonal and organizational communications; to include written and oral exercises appropriate to business practice.	3
COMM	3200	Business and Professional Communication	Students will learn to manage communication in a variety of professional and organizational contexts and will be introduced to the research basis of recommended principles. Emphasis is on clarity and persuasiveness in communicating with clients, associates, and other decision-makers.	3
BUSA	2108	Business Communication	A management-oriented course emphasizing theories and channels on communication, semantic problems, and other barriers to effective communication with emphasis on both oral and written communications.	3