

## Creating easy access to online learning in the University System of Georgia

Suppose that you're a single, working parent who wants to earn a college degree. The best time for you to take classes and study is at night after your children are in bed. You need a way to start college without going to campus during the day when you work.

Or suppose that you have an undergraduate degree, you've worked a few years, and now you want to earn a graduate degree. You travel as part of your work, and you can't see any way to get to all your classes on campus for a whole semester.



While University System of Georgia (USG) institutions have developed more than 90 online degree programs with their own resources, sharing the costs of developing and delivering online programs collaboratively across institutions is more efficient and meets system-wide strategic needs.

Advanced Learning Technologies (ALT), a division of the Office of Information and Instructional Technology (OIIT), advocates technology as an integral part of the instructional process in order to expand access to higher education, enhance learning, and enrich opportunities. ALT fosters cooperation among institutions to develop and implement quality e-learning by collaborating with groups of USG institutions to create flexible online learning opportunities for students.

### COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMS



**eCore**<sup>®</sup> (electronic core curriculum) provides USG students the opportunity to complete the first two years (the "core" curriculum) of their collegiate careers in an online environment. While eCore<sup>®</sup> was originally designed for non-traditional students, many current students on campus find that eCore<sup>®</sup> increases their flexibility in managing their course loads.



The **Georgia WebMBA**<sup>®</sup> offers qualified and highly motivated professionals the opportunity to earn online MBA degrees with limited interruptions in their work and personal lives. Students benefit from a program with the same rigor and commitment to quality as traditional on-campus programs. Participating universities are accredited by the Association to Advance

Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the premier accrediting body for degree programs in business administration.

The Georgia WebMBA received a "Best Buy MBA" award from GetEducated.com's independent team. The WebMBA program, which offers a high-quality distance degree to a national audience at tuition rates well below the national average, was ranked 16th among 130 distance-learning MBA programs in the United States accredited by the AACSB.



The **WebBSIT** (Bachelor of Science in Information Technology degree) is a collaborative online project of five USG colleges and universities. The program of study provides a foundation in the technical, user-centric, and managerial skills that information technology managers need. Graduates enter careers in programming, systems design, database design, e-commerce, and other areas of IT.

### CHALLENGES

- The new program review process to initiate a collaborative degree is lengthy and complex.
- Campuses may use different funding models.
- Academic, administrative, and fiscal barriers must be resolved to establish and maintain courses.
- After a collaborative program is initiated, strong institutional leadership is required to support it.
- Although a small amount of start-up funding is available, collaborative programs must sustain themselves for the long term.
- Inter-institutional collaboration is needed to handle registration, tuition, and grade functions.
- Initial course and program development is a time consuming and labor-intensive process.
- Attracting and rewarding faculty for developing and teaching online courses can be difficult.

### SOLUTIONS

ALT supports inter-institutional development of online degree programs by facilitating plans for curriculum and administrative processes, training faculty in use of the USG's learning management system, and providing instructional design consultation. In addition, modest start-up and course development funding for strategic programs approved by the USG Board of Regents has been available.

## OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

- Increased access for students to educational opportunities using a flexible format that crosses geographic and time constraints.
- Shared costs and resources among institutions to develop and deliver programs that otherwise might be prohibitively resource-intensive.
- Positive impact on instruction by diverse faculty from different institutions working together.
- Training in online course development for faculty.
- Technical support for system-level LMS rather than separate institutional versions.
- eCore® enrollments of 1,500–1,900 students per semester.
- Approximately 30 WebMBA students graduate each year.

## WHAT'S NEXT

- Developing partnerships and strategies with national and state institutions and technology partners to create new courses and maintain existing programs.
- Planning for additional online programs and materials that will meet strategic initiatives, such as courses for education and nursing majors.
- Developing online educator preparation is underway in collaboration with the USG Office of P-16

(Pre-school–College) Initiatives, whose mission includes improving teacher preparation.

- The nursing effort is underway in collaboration with Georgia's Intellectual Capital Partnership Program (ICAPP), USG's economic development initiative. ICAPP connects the intellectual resources of the USG's campuses to the state's business community in innovative ways.

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

To learn more about USG's collaborative online learning programs, visit the *Collaborative Development* area of the ALT website at

<http://alt.usg.edu/>

For more information on online degree programs and distance education in the USG, see the following websites:

[www.usg.edu/academics/distance\\_ed/](http://www.usg.edu/academics/distance_ed/)

[www.georgiacenter.uga.edu/ecore/](http://www.georgiacenter.uga.edu/ecore/)

[www.webmbaonline.org/](http://www.webmbaonline.org/)

[www.webbsit.org/](http://www.webbsit.org/)

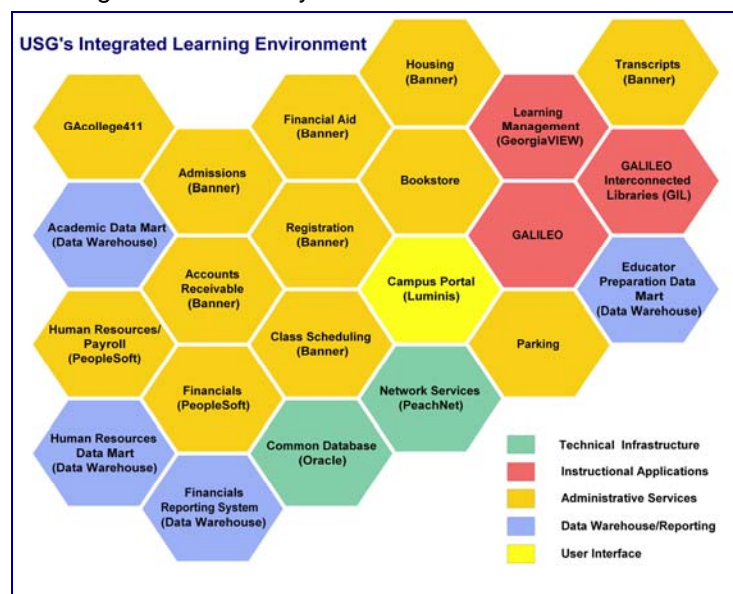
For information about partners in upcoming collaborative projects, go to the following websites:

[www.icapp.org/](http://www.icapp.org/)

[www.usg.edu/p16/](http://www.usg.edu/p16/)

## COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMS AND THE USG'S INTEGRATED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Increased access to classes and degree programs enhances the growth and effectiveness of the Integrated Learning Environment (ILE). The graphic shows some of the instructional and administrative functions and enterprise technologies that must work together seamlessly in the ILE.



- Students must be recruited, admitted, and registered; they need access to books, e-mail, and the Internet; they must be able to take courses at multiple USG institutions and graduate.
- Students must receive financial aid and pay tuition, parking, and housing bills.
- Faculty and staff must have technological tools to teach, conduct research, and provide services.
- Those with visual, auditory, or motor impairments need full access to all online educational opportunities.
- Data for informed decision making and reporting must be collected.
- Technologies for learning in the classroom and on line, and for accessing library resources and student services throughout the state from anywhere must be robust, reliable, and secure.
- Faculty and staff must be compensated and receive benefits.

