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

Presentation on behalf of the
General Education Council
to
Regents Academic Committee on Effectiveness and Accreditation

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\text { April 25, } 2019 \text { 9:45 to 10:15 am }
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General Education Council

## Augusta University

- Dr. Christopher Terry
- Assistant Chair, Department of Mathematics
- AU Representative

BOR University System Office

- Dr. Barbara Brown
- Asst. Vice Chancellor for Transitional and General Education
- USG Liaison

Clayton State University

- Dr. Kevin Demmitt
- Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- eCore Representative

Dalton State College

- Dr. Sarah Mergel
- Associate Professor of History
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## East Georgia State College

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- Professor of English
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- Dr. William K. Vencill
- Associate Vice President for Instruction
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- Dr. Pamela Sachant
- Head, Department of Visual Arts
- Fine Arts Representative

University of West Georgia

- Dr. Micheal Crafton
- Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- State and Comprehensive University Representative


## Purpose of Today's Presentation

- Provide RACEA with a status report concerning the work of the General Education Council concerning re-envisioning the core curriculum in the USG
- The General Education Council recommended* to RACAA that RACAA support a process of re-envisioning the core curriculum in the USG.
- See attached 11/15/2018 recommendation
- Presented to RACAA on 02/21/2019
- The need to re-envision the core curriculum and to adopt a process to accomplish that goal was endorsed by RACAA on 2/21/2019
- *All action taken by the USG General Education Council is advisory to the USG's Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer
- The General Education Council has not yet recommended a specific structure for a re-envisioned core curriculum. 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 play a key role in the effort to re-envision the core. However, the process must individuals and groups beyond the General Education Council if it is to be successful. The process and timeline to carry out the re-envisioning will be established by the USG.


## Geoffrey Galt Harpham, What Do You Think, Mr. Ramirez? The American Revolution in Education (2017)

"Harpham once met a Cuban immigrant who told him of arriving, penniless and undocumented, in the 1960s earning a G.E.D. and eventually making his way to a community college. In a literature course one day, the Professor asked him, 'Mr. Ramirez, what do you think?' The question, he told Harpham, changed his life: realizing that his opinion of a text has value set him on a course to becoming a distinguished professor." (back cover note).

Does the USG core curriculum now maximize the opportunities for our students to have similar life-changing experiences?

## Re-envision the Core Curriculum 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).

## 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.\}

## The Core Curriculum Should Inspire Our Student to be All They Can Be Is The Core Curriculum Now Doing That?

- Does Our Current Approach to the Core Curriculum 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? Needed flexibility provided?
- 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


## Does the USG Core Curriculum Clearly Communicate This Message to Students?

"The title of a popular guide for first-year students published by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC\&U) asks a question that has beleaguered general education advocates for years: Why Do I Have to Take This Course? In that publication, author Robert Shoenberg presents a clear case for curricular requirements and educates students about broad learning outcomes developed in the major and general education courses during their undergraduate years. Schoenberg writes that general education requirements are not 'hurdles to jump over or courses to be gotten out of the way, but rather the educational journey of a lifetime, the base on which to build a life as well as earn a living.' To paraphrase the above epigraph, general education helps students discover academic passions about which they didn't know they were passionate."

Carey, Shelley Johnson, Peer Review, Vo. 20, No. 3 (Summer 2018) at p. 3.

## Consider how we describe the core curriculum on the website* of my own institution? <br> 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: $\mathbf{A}-\mathbf{E}$ 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.

| AREA A1: Communication Skills (6 hrs.) | Sem | Cast | Cad |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| *ENCL 1101 Composition I |  |  | 3 |
| *ENCL 1102 Composition II |  |  | 3 |
| AREA A2: Quantitative Skilk (3 hrs) |  |  |  |
| *MATH 1001 Quant. Skills and Reasoning |  |  | 3 |
| AREA B: Institutional Options (4 hrs.) | sem | Grase | Cols |
| COMM 1110 Public Speaking or COMM 1010 Intercullural Commamication ENGL $1104 \begin{aligned} & \text { Introduction to Technical sod } \\ & \text { Business Commanication }\end{aligned}$ |  |  | 3 |
| CATS 1101 Critical \& Academic Thinking for Success |  |  | 1 |
| AREA C: Humanities Fine Arts (6 hrs) | Sem | Onde | Cols |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { (CJ-Choase ons) ENGL 2111, ENGL 2112 } \\ & \text { ENGL 2120, ENGL 2130, } \\ & \text { ENGL 2150 } \end{aligned}$ |  |  | 3 |
| (C2-Choose one) ART 1100, ART 2030, ART 2031, ENGL 2111, ENGL 2112, ENGL 2120 , ENGL 2130, ENGL 2150, FLLM1100 MUSC 1100, SPAN 1001, SPAN 1002, SPAN 2001, SPAN 2002, THEA 1100 SPAN 2001, SPAN 2002, THEA 1100 |  |  | 3 |





Additional Courses


Statistics) CSCI 1301 (Programming Priscip
MATH 1540 (Calculas I) MATH 2012 .
Calcalus II), MATH 2013 (Calcalus III)
CHEM1211/ BIOL $1107 / 1108$

Institutional Requirements (4 hrs.) PHED/HPRG(PE)(1) PHEDHPRG (P.E.) (1) HLTH 2181 FirstAid (1)

* A grade of $\mathrm{C}^{\text {"or better is required. }}$


## What constraints exist if the choice is made to reenvision general education in the USG

- Constraints of law and accreditation standards incuding
- SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation (see attached excerpts from Principles and Resource Manual)
- 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

See generally Phillips, Loraine, Grounding General Education in Principles That Matter, Peer Review, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Summer 2018) at pp. 4-6 (discussing the ongoing national conversation about general education and the status of specific efforts in Texas).

## Questions for your consideration:

- What goals should the design of the core seek to attain? What are the attributes you want graduates to have?
- Is the core curriculum now achieving those goals?
- If the core curriculum 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 the USG core -- consider:
- USG institutions are given flexibility to tailor the core to their mission?
- Student acquire base knowledge required to succeed in their chosen area of focus?
- Students have room to explore?
- Attainment of required 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?

Your input about this proposal to reenvision the USG core curriculum is valued

## 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:


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


## SECTION 9: Educational Program Structure and Content

Collegiate-level educational programs emphasize both breadth and depth of student learning. The structure and content of a program challenges students to integrate knowledge and develop skills of analysis and inquiry

General education is an integral component of anundergraduate degree program through which students encounter the basic content and methodology of the principal areas of knowledge. Undergraduate and graduate degrees develop advanced expertise in an integrated understanding of one or more academic disciplines or concentrations.

The institution is responsible for delivering an appropriate portion of the academic experiences applicable to the degrees or credentials awarded.

1. Educational programs (a) embody a coherent course of study, b) are compatible with the stated mission and goals of the institution, and (c) are based on fields of study appropriate to higher education. (Program content)[CR]
2. The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. The institution provides an explanation of equivalencies when using units other than semester credit hours. The institution provides an appropriate justification for all degree programs and combined degree programs that include fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit.
(Program length)[CR]
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) $[\mathbf{C R}]$
4. At least 25 percent of the credit hours required for an undergraduate degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. (Institutional credits for an undergraduate degree)
5. At least one-third of the credit hours required for agraduate or a post-baccalaureate professional degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. (Institutional credits for a graduate/professional degree)
6. Post-baccalaureate professional degree programs and graduate degree programs are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs, and are structured (a) to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and (b) to ensure engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practioe and training. (Post-baccalaureate rigor and curriculum)
7. The institution publishes requirements for its undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate professional programs, as applicable. The requirements conform to commonly acoepted standards and practices for degree programs.
(Program requirements)

The institution requires the successful completion of a general education componentat 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]

## Rationale and Notes

General education is an integral component of an undergraduate degree program through which students encounter the basiccontent and methodology of the principal areasof knowledge. This Core Requirement establishes four key principles regarding the general education component of undergraduate degree programs:

- The General education component is based on acoherent rationale.
- General education courses are college level.
- In order to promote intellectual inquiry, general education courses presentabreadth of knowledge, not focusing on skills, techniques, and procedures specific to the students soccupation or profession, and are drawn from specific academicareas
- The general education component constitutes a minimum numberof semesterhours, or its equivalent, and comprises asubstantial component of each undergraduate degree.

It is essential to understand the general education component of the degree program within the context of the institution's mission and within the expectations of acollege-level institution. Through general education, students enoounter the basic content and methodology of the principal areas of knowledge: humanities and fine arts, social and behavioral scienoes, and natural scienoes and mathematics. Courses in each of theseareasintroduce abreadth of knowledge and reinforce cognitive skills and effective learning opportunities for eachstudent. Suchoourses mayalso include interdisciplinary studies. It is important, however, that courses selected by students as"general cation" do not focus on skills, techniques and proedurs specific to that studen or profession.

The SACSCOC Executive Council adopted the following interpretation in February 2010

Coursesin basic composition that do not contain aliterature component, courses in oral communication, and introductory foreign language courses are skill courses and not pure humanities courses. Therefore, for purposes of meeting this standard, none of the above may be the one course designated to fulfill the humanities/fine arts requirement in [this standard].

Note that this interpretation does not precude the mentioned coursesfrom being part of general education requirements beyond the required courses in the three specifically mentioned areas; while hey are "skill courses," theseare not skills specific to a particular occupation or profession. Courses that would not be acceretable as meeting this standard are courses such as "dosage calculations" specific to occupations) or most upper-level courses with multiple prerequisites (lack breadth of knowledge).

The rationale undergirding the courses that meet general education requirements is often publishedin institutional documents such as the catalog. It is important that institutions have criteria for evaluating courses for inclusion in the core curriculum, both to maintain adherenoeto the underying rationale and to ensurethe expected breadth of knowledge.

NOTES
In its publications, an institution is obligated to deanty designatethe specific general
education coursesinduded in the three areas of knouledge:humanities and fine arts, socia and behavioral saiences, and natural saiencesand mathematics. Publioations should deanty indicate or direct studentsin their optionsfor selecting generaleducation courses and, in particular, thoseconsidered pure humanities/finearts that are in accord with the interpretation above. Finally, the institution should indicate howit enswresthat all students follow the pathway for selecting generaleducation courses asdescribed in it ppublioations.

In its assessmentof institutions, the SACSCOC review wom miltee will speafically evaluate whether each of the three subpartsin the standard havebeen addressed This review shoula specifically determine (with narrative supporting) its findings under part (c), whether credit hoursthat consititute the generaleducation program at an institution are (1) draun from and includeat leastonecoursefrom each of the following areas: humanities/finearts, social/ behavioral sciences, and natural science/ mathematics; (2) are consistentwith the Exeautive Council'sinterpretation cited above; and (3) indude coursesthat do not narowty focus on thoseskills, techniques, and procedures specificto a students particular occupation or profession.

## Questionsto Consider

- Does the institution have aformal guideline or policy that establishes arationale for its general education requirements?
- How does the institution ensure that the student's breadth of knowledge accauired through the general education component of the degreeprogram is sufficient and appropriate to its mission?
- What measuresdoes the institution useto ensure that general education represents a substantial component of the undergraduate degree program?
- What process is usedto ensurethat courses students may take to fulfill general requirements support the goals of the general education component of the degree program?
What criteria does the institution useto ensure that the desired general education outcomes meet college-level standards?
- Evenif there is some variation in general education requirements across some majors, do all undergraduate degree programs include at leastone course from the three required areasof study, aswell as the requisite total hours?
- Does the institution designate in its publications those general education courses that are Does the institution designate in its publications those general education courses that are
considered pure humanities/fine arts in acoord with the interpretation above? How hasthe institution validated that the coourses that the institution designates are in accord with the standard?
- Are printed materials describinggeneral education requirements clear asto how astudent can meet the requirements?
- How does the institution ensure that all students follow the pathway for selecting general education courses asdescribed in itspublications?
- How does the general education program apply to transfer students, distance and correspondence education programs, or competency-basedprograms?


## Sample Documentation

Description of and rationale for general education, including expected studentlearningoutcomes

- Publications that consistently describe the general education requirements.
- Explanation of the processusedto review or change how students meet general education requirements.
If requirements vary by major or degree, documentation that the standard is met for all degree seeking students.
- Specific information asto how general education requirements are met for transferstudents aswell asstudentsin competency-based, direct assessmentprograms.
- An explanation (and examples) of how completion of general education requirements is tracked and verified.

Reference to SACSCOC Documents, If Applicable
None noted.
Cross-References to Other Related Standards/Requirements, If Applicable
Standard 8.2.b (Student outcomes: general education)
Standard 9.7 (Program requirements)

# USG Academic and Student Affairs Handbook 

2.4.10 Common Course Prefixes, Numbers, and Descriptions

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

| 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. |

See example on the following page of the status of the common name, numbering of this course in the USG


