

## Subcommittee on the Core Curriculum Annual Report

2014 – 2015 Academic Year

### COMMITTEE NAME: SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CORE CURRICULUM

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2014 - 2015

### COMMITTEE CHARGE:

**V.Section2.D.1.d. Scope.** The Subcommittee on the Core Curriculum shall be concerned with matters relating to the University Core Curriculum (Core), which include, but are not limited to, reviewing proposals for courses to be offered in the Core and assessing the Core. This subcommittee also provides advice, as appropriate, on procedural matters relating to the Core and its assessment.

### COMMITTEE CALENDAR:

8/22/14	9/26/14	10/31/14	02/06/15	03/27/15
8/29/14	10/3/14	11/7/14	02/20/15	04/03/15
9/05/14	10/10/14	01/16/15	02/27/15	04/19/15
9/12/14	10/17/14	01/23/15	03/06/15	04/17/15
9/19/14	10/24/14	01/31/15	03/20/15	05/01/15

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

As in previous years the primary focus of the committee's work was devoted to the review and approval of courses. Despite significant improvements in the revision process, the committee struggles to find time to address issues of a more global nature such as oversight, distinctiveness, assessment and consistency in the curriculum. The committee did have several substantive discussions about these issues, however, wasn't able to make much progress in establishing new policies or practices. A notable exception was the development and administration of a survey gauging faculty perceptions of the core. The results of this survey along with an analysis of the core are included in this report as a very early draft of the "State of the Core Report". The committee was also able to resolve an issue regarding membership through a collaborative effort with ECUS and the university President. The new membership requirements have been approved by University Senate and included in the Senate bylaws.

A list of courses approved by the committee is available at <http://intranet.gcsu.edu/socc>

### COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND RECORD OF ATTENDANCE:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representation</u>	<u>Attend</u>	<u>Regret</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Kay Anderson	University Registrar (non-voting)	19	5	0
Nancy Beasley	(CoAS), Area A1: Communication Skills & Area C1: Humanities & Fine Arts	19	5	0
Ruth Carter*	(CoAS), Area C2: Fine Arts	10	12	2
Roberta Gorham	(CoB)	22	2	0

Mary Magoulick	(CoAS), Area B2: Global Perspectives	22	2	0
Cara Meade Smith	(CoE), University Assessment Team (non-voting) & Chief Academic Officer Designee	18	6	0
Julia Metzker*	(CoAS), Area B1: Critical Thinking & Area D1: Natural Sciences	19	5	0
Joe Mocnik	(Library)	17	7	0
Brandon Samples	(CoAS), Area A2: Quantitative Skills & Area D2: Mathematics	20	4	0
Patrick Simmons	(CoB), Area D3: Technology	21	3	0
Amy Sumpter*	(CoAS), Area E: Social Sciences	20	4	0
Sheryl Winn	(CoAS), Area E: Social Sciences	16	8	0
Dana Wood	(CoHS)	20	4	0

\*Senators marked with an asterisk.

### **MOTIONS BROUGHT TO THE SENATE FLOOR:**

As a standing subcommittee of CAPC, SoCC doesn't typically recommend motions directly to the senate floor. GCSU Senate Motion 1314.EC.001.B addressed issues related to committee membership and was brought to the senate floor by ECUS and approved. The changes are summarized below

- (1) a non-senator members allowed to hold the elected chair position
- (2) a teaching representative is defined as a full-time member of the Corps of Instruction who has taught at least one (1) course in the represented area in the two (2) calendars years preceding the date of appointment to the subcommittee.
- (3) a process for electing the chair with approval from CAPC is established

### **OTHER SIGNIFICANT DELIBERATION (NON-MOTIONS):**

Issues related to oversight and leadership continue to concern the committee. For example, one of the goals established at the onset of the committee's work was to establish a protocol for review existing core cores to ensure they meet the articulated learning goals. However, it quickly became clear that to do so was complicated by the fact that the courses in the core curriculum have shared oversight with departments and colleges.

### **AD HOC COMMITTEES AND OTHER GROUPS:**

In an effort to streamline the course proposal review process, the committee was broken into review teams consisting of 3-4 committee members. In Spring semester one of these teams focused on preparing the State of the Core report.

## **COMMITTEE REFLECTIONS:**

This year, SoCC established a proposal review process that was very successful and reduced the work load of the committee. The process is loosely modeled after grant reviews in which each proposal is assigned a lead and a team to provide a close reading of the proposal. We also established a method for informing the applicants, chairs and colleges that the proposal was received, in review, approved, etc. This process is explained in the operating procedures.

## **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:**

At the organizational meeting on May 12, 2014 the committee established several goals, which are listed in the table below along with notes regarding the progress made.

<b><u>Goal</u></b>	<b><u>Progress</u></b>
Providing information to campus on the course approval process <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>An intranet site was established for easy access to forms and the proposal procedures</li><li>Several messages were sent to department chairs and through frontpage articulating a streamlined course proposal and approval process</li><li>A course approval rubric was developed for Area B courses</li></ul>	Complete
Developing a procedure for reviewing existing core courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>This goal is difficult to achieve given that many of these issues impinge on department chair's role in oversight of faculty work.</li></ul>	Incomplete
Investigate alternatives to the current global overlay requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A pilot using a domestic diversity overlay as an alternative to the global overlay is currently underway.</li></ul>	In progress
Address issues related to leadership and management of the core, including faculty load for 2Y courses, class sizes, best 4th hour practices for 2Y courses, and consistency among core sections <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>This goal is difficult to achieve given that many of these issues impinge on department chair's role in oversight of faculty work.</li></ul>	Partially complete
Address issues of distinctiveness in the core. Look for opportunities to create innovative or unique experiences consistent with our liberal arts mission. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>This work was initiated with a survey of faculty and an early draft of a "State of the Core" report</li></ul>	Partially complete
Make committee work and processes more transparent to the larger GC community, including establishing a web presence with easy access to forms and information and consistently communicating approval processes with faculty and departments <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>An intranet site was established for easy access to forms and the proposal procedures</li><li>Several changes were made to the application forms to streamline the review process</li><li>A committee process was established for communicating with proposers at all steps of the process</li><li>A course approval rubric was developed for Area B courses</li></ul>	Complete
Focus on core assessment	Incomplete

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The committee was unable to find time to address assessment.</li></ul> |  |
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The committee continued to meet weekly to address proposals but several meetings were cancelled when no proposals were submitted for review. Next year the committee may wish to consider reducing their meeting times to bimonthly.

### **Recommend items for consideration at the governance retreat:**

Given the fact that this committee has not been able to address issues of oversight of the curriculum, assessment of the courses and inconsistency in the curriculum despite substantive discussions since the inception of the committee it may be advisable to move the charge for these issues to a different body. It is difficult for the committee to address issues beyond course review and approval. Realistically, if these more global issues are to be addressed another group is likely to have to pick up this work. Perhaps establishing a general education council or some other committee charged with addressing the host of issues that arise would provide a venue for addressing these issues.

A consistent concern that arose in the committee's discussions was the lack of faculty development or training available in support of developing course for the core curriculum, especially in Area B. There is strong demand for proposal clinics to help faculty develop their proposals, build appropriate syllabi and understand issues particular to Area B such as "learning beyond the classroom" and the "fourth hour". If regular workshops in this area were offered, many of the issues faced during the review of proposals would be avoided.

### **Appendix: Committee Operating Procedures**

Significant effort was devoted to establishing a process for proposal review and communication with the Georgia College community about the procedures. This process is outlined below.

- At the beginning of the academic year, update <http://intranet.gcsu.edu/socc> with committee membership, representation and the meeting schedule.
- Review application forms for consistency and upload to the intranet site
- Send an email message to department chairs, deans and through FrontPage requesting course submissions that included a link to the intranet site. Examples:  
<https://frontpage.gcsu.edu/announcement/reminder-propose-course-core-curriculum>  
<https://frontpage.gcsu.edu/announcement/subcommittee-core-curriculum-call-proposals>
- Divide the committee into proposal teams of 3-4 members
- Proposals are submitted by the Dean's Office of the appropriate college
- Upon receipt of a proposal, send the "submission receipt notification" via email.
- Assign the proposal for review by sending the "committee assignment notification" via email.
- If the proposal is approved, the Chair of SoCC signs the proposal, sends "approval notification" and "requested signature" via email.
- The proposal is uploaded to the D2L site – this was done by the vice chair.

### **Submission Receipt Notification:**

To: Proposer

To: Proposer

CC: Chair, Dean, Team Lead

Subject: SoCC Proposal Submission has been received and assigned for review

This message confirms that the attached proposal, [TITLE] has been received by the Subcommittee on Core Curriculum (SoCC). The proposal has been assigned to a team of three members of SoCC and is scheduled for review on [DATE]. [TEAM LEAD] will serve as the team contact for the proposal review. [HE/SHE] may contact you with questions or clarifications regarding the proposal. I encourage you to review the materials posted at [intranet.gcsu.edu/socc](http://intranet.gcsu.edu/socc) for more details regarding the process. You may also wish to share this notification with your department chair or direct supervisor.

The approval form you submitted will now be routed through the following steps:

- (4) The proposal has been assigned to a team led by [TEAM LEAD], who will review the documentation you provided and score your proposal according to the course approval rubric.
- (5) Your team lead may contact you to request additional information or clarification.
- (6) Your team lead will determine when the proposal will be brought to the subcommittee for review and will contact you by email informing you of the date.

You are welcome (but not required) to attend SoCC meetings, which occur at 1pm in the A&S Dean's conference room (A&S 2-51). I encourage you to review the materials posted at [intranet.gcsu.edu/socc](http://intranet.gcsu.edu/socc) for more details regarding the process including copies of the Course Approval Rubrics.

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### **Committee Assignment Notification:**

To:SOCC

CC: TEAM LEAD

Members of SoCC,

This message is to confirm that the attached proposal has been received for review by SoCC. This proposal is assigned for initial review by [TEAM NAMES]. [TEAM LEAD] is assigned as the team lead and will initiate contact with proposers if necessary. If you have questions regarding the proposal, please direct them to the team lead.

As a reminder, our process has been modified - the process is outlined below.

- (1) Upon receipt of a proposal, the SoCC chair will assign the proposal to a team of SoCC members. One member of that team is designated as the lead and as such will be responsible for initiating any and all contact with the proposer.
- (2) The team will review the proposal using the course approval rubric (if applicable). During their review they may decide to request a revision of the proposal or a face-to-face meeting prior to bringing the proposal to SoCC for review.
- (3) The team lead is responsible for informing the SoCC as to when the proposal will be brought forward for review and vote. While time for review may vary depending on the proposal, teams should make every effort to complete the review within two weeks of receiving the proposal.

All members of SoCC are responsible for reviewing the proposal prior to the committee review using the course approval rubric if applicable.

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**Approval Notification:**

To: Proposer

CC: Chair, Dean's Office, Provost Office

BCC: SoCC

SUBJECT: SoCC: Your course has been approved.

ATTACHMENT: Complete application including the SoCC Chair's signature.

I am pleased to inform you that your course application, [course name], has been recommended for approval by the Subcommittee on Core Curriculum (SoCC) for inclusion in [core area] of the core curriculum [as a section of GC2Y: Global Perspectives /as a section of GC1Y: Critical Thinking].

What are the next steps?

- (1) The approval form you submitted will now be routed through the following steps:
- (2) The Chair of SoCC will sign the form and route it to the Chair of CAPC as an information item.
- (3) The Chair of CAPC will sign the form and route it to the Office of the Provost.
- (4) The Provost will provide final approval for the course section by signing the form. Records for core curriculum courses, sections and overlays approved by SoCC are kept in the Office of the Provost.
- (5) A copy of your proposal will be added to the SoCC D2L course, which is made available to all Georgia College faculty.

If this application is a new core course or adding a global overlay to a core course it will be sent for review to the University System of Georgia General Education Council. You may be contacted by Cara Meade provide a revision of the application depending on the Council's requirement. You can learn more about the General Education Council here.

At this point it would be advisable to begin working with the Office of the Registrar to begin the process for scheduling the course or section.

As you move from the planning phase to the implementation phase you may wish to enlist the resources of Jolene Cole, the library instruction coordinator. Jolene can offer support as you design components of your course that address student research, information literacy or other library resources.

Please also note that all faculty teaching courses in the core are expected to contribute assessment data for their courses as described in the Core Assessment Plan. Details about the requirements for your course are available at <http://assessment.gcsu.edu/thecore>. Please contact the Director of Assessment or your assessment coordinator for support as you build the assessment portion of your course.

Please don't hesitate to contact me by email ([julia.metzker@gcsu.edu](mailto:julia.metzker@gcsu.edu)) or phone (8534) should you have any questions about the process.

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**Submission Receipt Notification:**

TO: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Committee Chair (Stephen Wills)

CC: Registrar (Kay Anderson), Associate Provost (Tom Ormond)

Please find attached the core curriculum approval form for the following courses. I have signed the forms, indicating that approval by SoCC for inclusion in the core curriculum.

- Human Revolutions in Historical Perspective (GC2Y)
- History of Rock and Roll (GC1Y)

Once CAPC has acknowledged receipt of the form, please sign and deliver to the Office of the Provost for final approval. The following information has been shared with the applicant regarding the approval process.

The approval form you submitted will now be routed through the following steps:

- (1) The Chair of SoCC will sign the form and route it to the Chair of CAPC as an information item.
- (2) The Chair of CAPC will sign the form and route it to the Office of the Provost.
- (3) The Provost will provide final approval for the course section by signing the form. Records for core curriculum courses, sections and overlays approved by SoCC are kept in the Office of the Provost.
- (4) A copy of your proposal will be added to the SoCC [D2L course](#), which is made available to all Georgia College faculty.

At this point it would be advisable to begin working with the Office of the Registrar to begin the process for scheduling the course or section.

# State of the Core Report

## I) Brief history (core development, mission, core revision)

The University System of Georgia's Core Curriculum Policy enacted in 2009 provided some flexibility in the core curriculum requirements, allowing USG institutions to align "students' general education experience with individual institutional missions and strategic plans". The following list summarizes the flexibility:

- Minimum credit hours were established for each area of the core (A-E) allowing institutions to vary the number of required credit hours in each area
  - GC opted to move three (3) credit hours from Area E to Area B.
- Each institution drafted unique learning outcomes for core areas
  - GC's learning outcomes are available in the [2014-2015 Catalog](#)
- Institutions have option to add additional overlays
  - GC adopted writing and speaking overlays, which were later removed.
  - GC opted to include two additional exposures to the Global Overlay (3 total)
  - GC is currently piloting a Domestic Diversity overlay

With some notable exceptions, institutions have new flexibility in their course offerings in areas A-F. The primary requirement is that the courses must align with the area learning outcome. Areas A1 and A2 are relatively restricted and do not offer opportunities for distinction, however, any of these minimum requirements can be met with higher level courses but institutions cannot require students to do so.

### [Area A1. Communication Skills \(6 semester hours\)](#)

ENGL 1101 & ENGL 1102 must be in A1 if offered

Must be completed in the first 30 hours

### [Area A2. Quantitative Skills \(3 semester hours\)](#)

Math 1111, Math 1113 and either Math 1001 or Math 1101 must be in A2 if offered. Must be completed in the first 30 hours

Area D has some restrictions that primarily apply to students majoring in physical, life or health sciences. The



opportunities for distinction in this area are generally limited to non-science majors (see below). The total credit hours can only be dropped below ten (10) with permission from the USG. Creative writing and technical communication courses may not be included in Area D.

[Area D. Natural Sciences, Math, and Technology for Science Majors \(11 semester hours\)](#)<sup>2</sup>

Science programs must require two four-hour laboratory science courses in Area D. Science programs may specify a higher level math course in Area D.

[Area D. Natural Sciences, Math, and Technology for Health Professions Majors \(11 semester hours\)](#)

Students in the health professions, including nursing, must fulfill the Area D science requirement with a two-semester laboratory sequence in either physics, chemistry, or biology. The only biology courses that may be used to fulfill this requirement are Introductory Biology (designed for non-science majors) and Principles of Biology (designed for science majors). The Survey of Chemistry sequence (Chem 1151 and Chem 1152) has been designed for the Area D health professions track. Health professions majors have the option of taking the Survey of Chemistry sequence or the sequence appropriate for science majors, but they may not fulfill their Area D requirements with chemistry courses designed for non-science majors.

[Area D. Natural Sciences, Math, and Technology for Non-Science Majors \(11 semester hours\)](#)

At least 4 of these hours must be in a lab science course.

Areas C (Humanities, Ethics and Fine Arts) and E (Social Sciences) present unexplored opportunities for distinction. Institutions are relatively free to offer unique courses in these areas. Indeed, Georgia College offers several interdisciplinary courses in Area C (Topics in Humanities & Fine Arts, America's Diverse Cultural Heritage, Fine and Applied Arts in Civilization). More interdisciplinary courses or specialized topic courses could be developed for Area C and similarly, unique courses in the social sciences could be developed for Area E.

The USG rules provide the most flexibility to institutions in Area B. This area is reserved for institutional options and courses offered in this area are under the discretion of the institution. In 2010, Georgia College increased the credit hours in this area from 4 to 7 hours and developed to liberal arts seminar courses, a 3-credit hour critical thinking seminar taken in the first year and a 4-credit global perspectives seminar taken in the second year with a writing emphasis. These seminar courses are proposed by faculty and address a variety of topics.

It is interesting to note that survey responses indicated that faculty are aware of the opportunities for distinction in area B but are under the impression that there is little flexibility in Areas C & E, which contain those disciplines traditionally contained in a liberal arts curriculum (literature, philosophy, art, theatre, history, etc)

Area B represents.

The rules regarding the core curriculum are available in [section 2.4 of the USG Academic & Student Affairs Handbook](#).

**II) What is a liberal education? Best practices? How would this be reflected in a general education program at a public liberal arts university (emphasizing core)?**

As a liberal arts college, we are tasked with helping students develop the knowledge, intellectual competencies, and practical skills that form the foundation for professional and personal success throughout adulthood (cite). Students should leave Georgia College with a broad knowledgebase derived from the liberal arts disciplines, the ability to analyze and apply complex information, and strong written and oral communication skills. During their time here, they should have opportunities to develop their sense of personal and social responsibility through direct and active involvement with the diverse populations of Baldwin County. They should also have opportunities to experience a strong sense of personal accomplishment as they apply their knowledge and skills toward solving novel problems and synthesizing new information and ideas. The competencies emphasized by liberal education are transferable across settings and problem types, and therefore are highly valued by employers (cite).

The Association of American Colleges & Universities has identified a set of evidence-based high-impact educational practices that move students toward the goals of liberal education. These include:

- First-year seminars that [describe best practices in first-year seminars]....
- Intensive writing [describe characteristics of intensive writing]
- Collaborative projects
- Internships
- Learning communities
- Undergraduate research
- Capstone courses
- Diversity/global learning courses and programs

By strengthening these practices within our core curriculum, we can ensure that all Georgia College students leave our institution with a high quality liberal education.

### III) Current (creative) models at other institutions (including COPLAC schools if possible)

A. Appalachian State University: [App State Interactive Model](#)

B. Northern Illinois University: [NIU Proposal for Gen. Ed. Models](#)

C. University of Missouri: [UoM General Education Requirements](#)

D. California State University: <http://www.csun.edu/catalog/general-education/>

E. SUNY Albany: <http://www.albany.edu/generaleducation/>

F. Utah State: <https://www.aacu.org/campus-model/aligning-general-education-and-major-utah-state-university>

G. Nebraska Wesleyan University: <https://www.aacu.org/campus-model/integrative-approach-global-learning-nebraska-wesleyan-university>

H. University of Maryland, College Park: <https://www.aacu.org/campus-model/innovation-inquiry-key-outcomes-new-general-education-program-university-maryland>

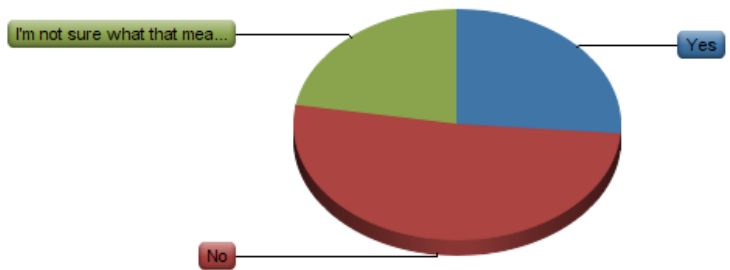
I. Lynn University: <https://www.aacu.org/campus-model/whats-dialogue-lynn-universitys-core-curriculum-explores-big-questions>

J. University of Southern Maine: <https://www.aacu.org/campus-model/university-southern-maine-reenvisions-general-education>

***(Models F-J are campus models that represent direct partnerships with AAC&U)***

**IV) Issue of distinctiveness at GC. What currently makes our core distinctive (HIPs, innovative pedagogies)? Discuss LEAP initiative and meaning/implications. National prominence?**

**1. In your opinion, is our Core curriculum a distinctive liberal arts curriculum?**



#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Yes	<div style="width: 26%; height: 10px; background-color: blue;"></div>	20	26%
2	No	<div style="width: 51%; height: 10px; background-color: blue;"></div>	39	51%
3	I'm not sure what that means	<div style="width: 22%; height: 10px; background-color: blue;"></div>	17	22%
	Total		76	

**Faculty Perceptions of the Distinctiveness of the Core**

Faculty perceptions of the distinctiveness of the core curriculum at Georgia College usually reflect a comparison to other schools in the USG system. Faculty responses to survey questions indicate that faculty members are most concerned with making the core at Georgia College distinctive within the state of Georgia; many of the responses indicated that the core at Georgia College should be *more* distinctive because of the school’s special mission. It is noteworthy that almost none of the faculty responses made comparisons to the curricula of other liberal arts institutions in COPLAC or anywhere else. This may reflect two different issues. The first is that faculty on our campus lack information about trends and practices at other liberal arts schools. The second is that faculty members have great concerns over the trend toward “interchangeability” (i.e. the ease of transfer) of the curricula of schools within the USG. (blue comments are positive, red are negative)

Perceived Areas of Distinction

I) A large number of faculty responders to the survey remarked that they found areas of distinctiveness in our core. Distinctiveness was overwhelmingly connected to the Area B/GC1Y and GC2Y offerings, although some faculty had reservations or thought the courses could be improved.

- “The GC1Y and 2Y classes make it distinctive.”

- “The GC(X)Y courses contribute nicely to the core allowing the opportunity to teach nonstandard courses relevant to the modern world.”
- “The only really distinctive elements are the GC1Y and GC2Y courses, which are meant to reflect our particular mission and a liberal arts curriculum.”
- “Inclusion of the GC1Y, 2Y in theory provides this [distinctiveness] although I'm not certain that it has accomplished its goal.”
- “The Area B courses set us apart from other universities.”
- “Area B1. Almost everybody else i USG has something like "global perspectives." Everyone else in USG has everything else we have in the rest of the core.”
- “In my opinion, Area "B" is the only portion of the CORE that specifically addresses Liberal Arts.”
- “Area C2, GC1Y, GC2Y”
- “GC1Y & GC2Y”
- “Our Area B, institutional options, would be the most clearly distinctive. However, a great range of quality is said to exist in the sections of GC1Y and GC2Y. Additionally, state-wide transfer mandates make it possible for native students to receive a Georgia College degree without receiving a distinctive liberal arts core.”
- “4 hour classes with personal attention small classes in the GC2Y courses”
- “The GCY1 and GCY2 courses.”
- “GCY1 and 2”
- “I teach one of the GC1y/2y courses. I really enjoy teaching this course and believe it’s important that the faculty had the ability to propose their course and that students were given a large degree of choice.
- I love the GC2Y focus on an international aspect and the GC1Y focus on learning beyond the classroom. It gives freshman the opportunity to get off campus and learn a little about the local surroundings and people.”
- “The Area B courses, the breadth of choices (impressive for such a small institution)”
- “Of course I think the GC1Y and GC2Y courses are some of the strongest representations of the Georgia College mission.”
- “Our attempt to do something different with Area B.”
- “7 hours just for GC to use”
- “I think that the strongest characteristics are the idea of the GC1Y and GC2Y courses. I think any issues that exist with them have to do with finding people who are excited to use the freedom of the courses to teach the critical thinking skills and global approaches inherent within.”
- “The GC1Y and GC2Y”

II) Other faculty noted that the breadth of course offerings in other core areas, such as Area D (Science, Math, and Technology) spoke to the mission. Others felt that the lack of structure or lack of student access to this breadth proved troubling.

- “The foreign language requirements and diversity, particularly with the sciences, definitely contribute to the liberal arts focus of the core.”

- “Of course I think the GC1Y and GC2Y courses are some of the strongest representations of the Georgia College mission. Again, I also think the forgone language requirements and Area D and Area F flexibility are important attributes.”
- “[We need] more freedom in choosing courses that are of interest & applicable to students; More diversity in courses that students want to take, not just courses that faculty want to offer (e.g., Folklore, America's Diverse Cultural Heritage)”
- “We have a hodgepodge of unrelated courses”

III) The other areas of the core that faculty perceived to be distinctive were engaged learning connected with courses and areas within the core, the global overlay, and the critical thinking component. It should be noted that the required global overlays are connected to the GC2Y course and other areas of the core, and the critical thinking component is connected with the GC1Y course. Although many courses and areas of the core likely promote this skill, there is currently no institutional way of measuring or ensuring that students have exposure to this skill outside of Area B.

- “Contribution [to distinctiveness]: global overlay requirement, varied courses in each area”
- “The emphasis on critical thinking and global perspectives.”
- “I love the GC2Y focus on an international aspect and the GC1Y focus on learning beyond the classroom. It gives freshman the opportunity to get off campus and learn a little about the local surroundings and people.”
- “[An area of distinction is] the emphasis on critical thinking and global perspectives.”
- “The liberal arts were designed to create civically engaged students.”

#### Perceived Lack of Distinction and Other Concerns

I) Many faculty members expressed concern over the core’s lack of distinctiveness and felt that it resembled too closely other schools in the system. Some of these concerns centered on restrictions (real or perceived) by the USG.

- “It’s hard to have a distinctive liberal arts curriculum when a centralized state power (the USG) tells us what to do and most schools in the state have a similar core.”
- “It is too tied to the core of all the other cores of all the other schools in the university system.”
- “Since the UGA requires the same Core areas for all its schools (including non-liberal arts), it is hard to see it as especially for the liberal arts.”
- “The fact that it is nearly identical to every other core curriculum in the university system, to me, keeps it from being distinctive.”
- “It is just like the rest of USG. There is nothing distinctive about it. It is too structured with little or no allowance for interdisciplinary learning.”
- “Areas A, C, D & E look like the core at just about every other USG school.”
- “[The] largest issue is that the core curriculum must meet transferability requirements of USG. With this, it is difficult if not impossible to be distinctive.”

II) Perhaps because of the strong perceived connection between core distinctiveness and the mission, many faculty members believed that greater distinctiveness could be achieved by focusing on areas they believed to be a part of a liberal arts education. Writing, philosophy, art, theatre, language, and history were mentioned most often by the faculty.

- “... the entire core needs to reflect our liberal arts mission”
- “It has no features relating to a liberal arts core. It is simply a bit of fluff and checkboxes there to make it appear as if we are actually providing some sort of general education.”
- “not sure it really represents a distinctive liberal arts curriculum”
- “Perhaps the Arts/Literature/Humanities should be further expanded and enriched.”
- I would make our core more classical in its approach to the liberal arts classes (literature, language, art history, music history, philosophy, history, math, science).
- “All core classes must be discussion and writing intensive. No multiple choice exams. Small class sizes. Rather than use "text books" core classes should focus on critical reading of primary texts.”
- “I think every student should be required to take both semesters of World Civ, for example, but in the new Core that can be easily avoided...and if all students took World Civ in their first or second year, they'd be much better prepared for the courses I offer.”
- “There should be a Writing Program and/or a Writing Across the Curriculum Program at Georgia College. Collaboration between the research librarians and the instructors teaching ENGL 1101 and 1102 should be formally required so that first-year students are learning the academic research skills they need to be successful as they write for audiences outside of the humanities.”

III) Some faculty noted that the structure of the core—the placement of specific courses within different areas—may actually contradict the liberal arts mission of the school. This was noted in particular in Area C. Some faculty expressed a concern that literature should not compete with philosophy as a part of a liberal arts curriculum.

- “Taking a literature class and an art history class and a philosophy class should NOT be one choice among many choices. Area A (Communication Skills and Quantitative Skills) indicates vocational school, not liberal arts. Why are multicultural/world literatures put in the same category as philosophy and religion? Everyone should take a philosophy class, and everyone should take a lit class. Why are they competing with one another?”

IV) Faculty also felt strongly that large class sizes, particularly in the core, were out of line with our mission.

- “Detract from [the mission]: large lecture courses”
- “Detractions: The class sizes are too large in ENGL 1101 and 1102. One ENGL 1102 class this semester has 42 students. Most ENGL 1101 and 1102 classes have an enrollment of 22, which is still larger than the University of Georgia's ENGL 1101 and 1102 classes, which are limited 20 students or fewer.”
- “Courses should be a bit smaller--ideally 15 for writing intensive course courses.”

#### IV) Current state of the core: Perceptions From the Faculty

##### 1. Writing

A recurring theme from the faculty survey was that GC students do not demonstrate writing skills that meet the expectations of the faculty. Concerns were repeatedly voiced that our students are “poor writers” and that they lack the written communication skills necessary for graduate school or the professional work force. A very common suggestion was to consider Writing Across the Curriculum models. Other suggestions focused on capitalizing on the requirements that we have in Area B in regards to the writing intensive components in the GC1Y and GC2Y sections.

##### 2. Faculty development/ Resources

Out of 69 responders to the survey item regarding faculty development, roughly half of the faculty reported that they do not feel that they have had adequate support or faculty development opportunities to develop core courses. Many report having “none” or “zero” support from GC to support their core teaching, with one reporting having no memory of any opportunities offered in many years of service to the university.

*“Faculty development and adequate support is largely missing from my Georgia College experience, which makes it very hard to perform my job in manner that I know matches the best practices in...” [discipline removed for anonymity]*

*“Beyond the CoAS, there is little to no support for faculty for developing courses within the Core”*

*“To be clear, all the support I've had has been from before I came to GCSU -- i.e. my graduate education and all the years of teaching before then. I have received ZERO support from GCSU (in terms of monetary reward, time off, reduced course loads, faculty development seminars, etc.) to support any of my core teaching, and I have taught in the core for 3/4 of my load for 14 years here.”*

Suggestions were varied and creative, including:

*“A series focusing on the AACU areas of liberal arts and how to apply them to different disciplines. This could be conversations among GC faculty, and would not necessarily need an outside speaker.”*

*“I think a GC1Y/2Y building seminar would be useful”*

*“Perhaps a workshop on developing GC2Y or GC1Y courses, led by those who currently teach them or serve on the committees that approve them.”*



*"Something on critical thinking and teaching critical thinking."*

*"Encouraging co-teaching of courses would allow much more creativity in the classroom, as professors from different fields and/or research interests could combine their knowledge in ways that will engage the students and help them to think outside the standard academic boxes."*

*"Grants should be given to revise and improve courses--i.e. summer grants where faculty would spend a month working and improving their courses."*

*"New technological tools to be incorporated in the classroom"*

*"A lot of the faculty development would have to be long term and based on professional learning communities; it couldn't be a brown bag lunch here and a 2 hour workshop there. Go big or go home."*

### **3. Overlays: CT, GL, US, Diversity**

According to the faculty survey, while the overlays add to the distinctiveness of our curriculum, there is confusion and concern regarding their purpose and implementation. Faculty report that the overlays "add a layer of confusion", have "muddled" the core, "are too much", and "are too complicated". It is surmised that much of these types of concerns could be alleviated with faculty development and education about our Core curriculum. Worth noting however is that several positive statements were made regarding the overlays such as "we are heading in the right direction" and many report that the global overlay in particular is a great element of GC's core curriculum. Unfortunately, the responses that voice concern for the overlays far outweigh those that support and/or understand them.

### **4. Courses/curricular issues, challenges and successes**

#### **i. Elements related to GC1Y/GC2Y: LBTC, 4<sup>TH</sup> hour, writing intensive, scheduling**

The distinctiveness of Area B courses was consistently lauded throughout the survey. This area clearly rose to the top of discussions regarding the core and it was clear that many feel Area B is worth further developing and cultivating. These same conversations were discussed time and time again during SoCC meetings throughout the year, and the committee was pleased to see many of their same sentiments echoed in the survey. At the same time however, faculty noted that the multi-faceted element of Area B also introduces some challenges. Consistently reported were the following:

- Scheduling the 4<sup>th</sup> hour is an issue. Faculty report that a single 4<sup>th</sup> hour meeting that is on the schedule has kept students from registering for whole courses or participating in other course-related (though maybe optional) endeavors.
- Classes too large, especially if these are supposed to be writing-intensive courses.

- Writing-intensive component isn't very uniform across sections.
- Students don't really have a choice as to what 1Y/2Y course they get to take, therefore are often "put into" a course in which they have very little interest and therefore are not very invested. (Several comments were made regarding student perceptions of Area B courses.)
- Overlays are meaningful but could be implemented differently perhaps.
- Domestic diversity overlay should be added.
- Our added requirement of global overlays is problematic in many ways.
- Faculty teaching these courses should be "seasoned" veteran faculty, the best GC has to offer, as these are entry courses for students and should be where we are putting our best foot forward. The general perception that hiring adjuncts or part time faculty to teach 1Y and 2Y courses is limiting our new students' access to our best and most engaging faculty.

## ii. Uniformity/Rigor

The sentiment that there are issues with rigor and uniformity in the core are reflected in faculty responses. A current issue we are experiencing is that we don't have process in place that revisits core courses periodically, ensuring that they: a) are reflective of the original course that was submitted and approved, b) continue to meet expectations of the particular area (align with area SLO(s), writing, critical thinking, global 4<sup>th</sup> hour, etc...), and c) conform to any across-sectional needs or expectations. These would be functions of a core curriculum committee but currently, SoCC is hampered by time constraints as it is, being consumed with core course approval. It would be difficult to add the duties of core oversight and sustainability to SoCC, given the way the committee currently operates.

Some perceptions from the faculty survey:

*"Some students have told me that the courses were "an easy A, but I didn't really learn anything" Please consider also surveying students who are in the junior level now to determine if this is an isolated few students or a general perception."*

*"a great range of quality is said to exist in the sections of GC1Y and GC2Y."*

*"we have GC1Y and 2 courses that range everywhere with grade distributions doing the same"*

*"...no consistency across courses... Too much variation in what counts as "critical thinking.""*

*"None." (answering the question of need for support to design a core course) I can develop a core course standing on my head - particularly with the current rigor in the core.*

*"I think some of the sections of GC1Y and GC2Y could be stronger, and in general there should be a means of ensuring some sort of standardization for all those sections -- at least in terms of things like amount and level of writing assignments required, amount of reading, and true focus on critical thinking and global perspectives (for GC2Y)."*

*"Better quality control in Area B course instruction; it was rolled out so quickly and demand for sections was so high, we approved many sections that are of questionable quality. This is based on what I hear from students."*

*"Having a diverse core is good if there is some consistency in rigor in the courses. If a course is writing intensive and the students write crap and get A's then the course is worthless. Just because a prof wants to teach a course doesn't justify its offering."*

*"I think it's fine overall, though I think there are a few issues with consistency within particular areas of the core -- for instance in the ENGL 1101 and 1102, there are differences with people who are brand new to teaching and maybe aren't making the classes as rigorous or high-level, versus full professors with 30 years of teaching experience."*

*"there are rigorous courses in many areas"*

*"I believe that we are especially strong in our Area D and Area E course offerings."*

### **iii. Courses**

Many suggestions regarding which courses should be included in the core were offered, often with strong rationales. There seems to be concern regarding courses that students *don't* have to take, thus detracting or straying from a liberal arts core. This concern brings to light a variety of interpretations of what should be included in a liberal arts curriculum. Cohesion and intentionality were also mentioned several times in terms of sequencing. Finally, the overall dispute of whether our core meets our mission was revisited time and time again with comments falling on both sides of the debate. Some feel like our core curriculum serves our mission while others feel that it clearly does not.

## **5. Misperceptions/Misconceptions**

From the faculty core survey, several misperceptions are evident. A few include:

*...the ban on courses [1Y and 2Y] related to a specific discipline is too restrictive...*

*Given USG requirements it is unlikely that meaningful change is possible.*

*I know that many students resent the required art course. (There is a fine arts requirement but not a specifically required art course)*

*Most of the core courses themselves have little to no meaningful content other than political indoctrination.*

*Almost everybody else i[n] USG has something like "global perspectives." (USG requires a global perspectives overlay so everyone must have this)*

As with several of the other issues and themes arising in the conversation regarding GC's core, many of these can be allayed through faculty development opportunities, workshops, and other educative experiences that could be offered centering on the core. Many responses from faculty indicate the misperception that given the USG guidelines, we can't make any changes to the core and have no leeway in regards to course offerings. Also, there were several comments that indicate a misunderstanding of the concept and intent of the overlays.

## **6. Committee oversight**

It is becoming evident that complete oversight of the core cannot be accomplished with one sub-committee, as currently is the case for GC. Four main components of sustaining a strong core program are (1) curricular matters, (2) logistics and sustainability, (3) faculty development, and (4) assessment. Oversight of these elements could be provided by 3-4 separate sub-committees, or one large committee with working groups. What remains clear however, is that after three years into implementation of our 'new' core, much of the work needed to sustain a strong core is either not being addressed, or is being addressed in an ad-hoc or piecemeal manner. As mentioned earlier, GC's one core committee has traditionally only facilitated endeavors related to course approval. This is only a very small portion of the work needed in relation to managing a core program such as ours. Many universities of our size have a Director or Coordinator of General Education (core, to us) that provides comprehensive oversight and coordinates efforts in regards to the supervision of the core program.

Additionally, worthy of noting are issues raised in the survey regarding the course approval process in the Subcommittee on the Core Curriculum (SoCC). Suggestions over the past two years have been made as to how the process could be improved, and significant improvements were implemented during the 2014-2015 year, but as with anything else, there is always room for improvement. One suggestion that SoCC discussed this year is possibly making a glossary of key terms, definitions, and concepts.

## **7. Assessment of the Core, SACS requirements**

Core (general education) competencies (SLOs 1-14) are assessed in a number of different ways at GC to determine the extent to which students are meeting them. In 2011, various GC assessment committees including the University Assessment Team (UAT), the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Committee (CAPC), and the Subcommittee on the Core Curriculum (SoCC) began to develop a comprehensive approach to assessing the new core that would streamline and simplify assessment of each area but that would also yield specific and ample data. The full implementation of the assessment for the Core was designed and implemented beginning in the Fall of 2012. Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 served as pilot semesters for many new assessment measures of the Core curriculum's student learning outcomes.

The assessment plan for the Core primarily consists of the following:

- The use of several (4) rubrics adapted from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). Three adapted *Value* Rubrics (Written Communication, Ethical Reasoning, and Global Understanding) are used to assess the Core outcomes and overlays in Areas A1, B, and C. An additional rubric was developed to assess the student learning outcome for Area B (GC1Y/GC2Y Area B Rubric). After piloting these rubrics for two semesters, Fall 2012 and Spring 2013, faculty determined that changes to the instruments were necessary in order to collect more accurate data that better reflects students' performance on these Core outcomes. New rubrics are in place for Fall 2013. All rubric data is collected and entered into LiveText (assessment software) and Baseline. Assessment reports for each rubric and resulting data are included below.
- The use of faculty determined course-based assessment measures (CBA) in Areas C, D, and E. Course-based assessment measures vary yet include rubrics, exam items, problem-based learning assessments, research papers (assessed by check sheet or rubric), and science lab pre/post tests. Faculty choose the most appropriate course-based measure that assesses the Core outcome for their area and report this data and their evaluation/interpretation of the results to their program coordinator.
- Common final exam test items determined by the Department of Mathematics faculty are used to assess students' performance in Area A2, Quantitative Skills.
- Overlays (as required by the USG BOR) are assessed in several different ways:
  - US Perspectives is assessed using GC's US History Exam. This is facilitated by the University's Center for Testing.
  - Global Perspectives is assessed in Area B, GC2Y courses, as this is a primary learning outcome for that area (along with the Area B learning outcome)
  - Critical Thinking is assessed using the national Collegiate Learning Assessment. Freshmen and Seniors are tested using the CLA. This traditionally has been primarily facilitated by Institutional Research and the Center for Testing.

The assessment of the Core at GC needs revisiting. Reviews in the survey were completely mixed. When asked about the effectiveness of the assessment methods used in the core, comments ranged from positive to negative, demonstrating some of the following sentiments:

- “Given the age of accountability, I understand the need for assessing the core but I see no reason to obsess over it”
- “Appropriate and acceptable [sic]”
- “Assessment is ineffective, top-down, decontextualized, and invalid”
- “fine”
- “My sense is that we are just going through the motions”
- “It’s fine; if assessment gets any more “effective”, we won’t have time to teach”
- “Moderately”
- “Not at all effective”
- “The rubric was helpful”
- “It seems to be effective within our program, but I do not know about others in the same area”
- “It has an entirely negative effect. It is simply not possible to meaningfully assess learning with a small set of overly general "SLOs" based upon sophomoric "action verbs". Trying to do so is absolutely guaranteed to produce utterly meaningless data. Since we are required to adjust our teaching to fit meaningless data, it is essentially guaranteed that our present assessment method makes teaching worse.”

Issues and recommendations follow:

Issue	Recommendation
Assessments may not be sensitive enough to determine if students are truly mastering the core competencies.	First, revisit the core outcomes, fully vetting them within each particular area. Redesign more sensitive assessments and train faculty in their use.
If continuing the practice of using common rubrics, faculty training and development must be provided.	Collaborate with CFD to create training and workshop opportunities.
Response rate for CLA is very low	University Assessment Day for students. If implemented, may also want to consider using a nationally normed Gen. Ed. assessment.
US History Exam has such a low pass rate that it is not demonstrating that students are meeting this competency.	Work with Center for Testing and Dept. of History and Geography to revise the exam to ensure the assessment is aligned with the learning outcome.
Course-based assessment across sections is inconsistent and lacks uniformity. Of primary issue is that it is difficult to make observations and determinations of a	This work is primarily going to have to be addressed in the individual academic departments that use CBA for reporting on core SLOs. Consistent practices will have to be determined

particular core course or in a particular area of assessment practices are so variable.	and developed that will best demonstrate student learning in each particular area.
Faculty have few opportunities to participate in discussions regarding the best assessment practices and procedures for the core. Traditionally, faculty have not shown much interest in participating in such decisions, yet do voice concerns regarding the current assessment scheme for the core in certain areas.	Create temporary 'area' committees with representatives from each course taught in a particular area to redesign assessment procedures and practices for their area
Outside (of the course) assessment of student work samples would be a stronger assessment of the core	Committee put in place to assess Core portfolios.

## 8. Recommendations

SoCC and the State of the Core workgroup recommend further research and inquiry in the following areas:

- Current national initiatives
  - LEAP (including VALUE) and other AAC&U initiatives
  - DQP
  - What Employers Want (survey and research)
  
- Conducting a student survey similar to that of the faculty survey exploring
  - Meaningfulness of the core
  - Class size
  - Importance of core and liberal arts education
  - Satisfaction with core
  - Room for comments/open ended statements
  
- Additional and different core offerings. Suggestions in faculty survey include:
  - Formal logic
  - History
  - Literature
  - Philosophy
  - Language

- Public Speaking
- Geography
- Economics

- LBTC: Learning beyond the classroom. The required LBTC component of the GC1Y and GC2Y courses is currently vaguely defined. Providing a clear definition and examples of LBTC appropriate for these courses would improve the course review process by providing clarity in course criteria.
- WAC: Writing Across the Curriculum. Many comments in SoCC and many comments in the faculty survey suggested looking at different WAC models. From the faculty survey:

*“There should be a Writing Program and/or a Writing Across the Curriculum Program at Georgia College.*

*“Add a writing across the curriculum program.”*

*“Make it a true writing across the curriculum Core. Since the quality of students' writing abilities and critical thinking skills vary, this would entail clear and consistent goals for students in ENGL 1101 & ENGL 1102 such as number of words written (or the equivalent in pages) and types of writing assignments (essays, etc.).”*

*“I believe there should be a Writing Program or a Writing Across the Curriculum Program.”*

- Other creative core and/or gen. models across the country (tracks, certificate programs, learning communities, menu-type core)