

From: "Mailgroup Postmaster" <postmaster@mailgroup.gsu.edu>
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Subject: Core Curriculum Letter from USG

May 12, 2008

Dear Colleagues:

One of our most significant challenges, one that nearly all universities and colleges struggle with, is how can we assure that we are providing the best possible core curriculum for our students. The only way to do that, of course, is to constantly challenge its efficacy. We would like our students to leave USG institutions with a breadth of knowledge that will enable them to be strong citizens and leaders of their organizations and communities. It is also vital that we help our students to move easily through the system -- from institution to institution -- as they see fit, given the way we have structured this system and their own constraints and ambitions. Finally, we want to assure parents, supporters, and employers that our students have achieved levels of competence befitting an educated person in the 21st century, through an attention to learning outcomes and quality instruction.

Efforts to reform our core curriculum began long before my arrival, and I have been impressed with how many colleagues -- faculty and administrators -- joined the discussion with vigor and tremendous thoughtfulness. Watching the project evolve these past months, I have noted an abundance of wonderful ideas, critiques, and most of all, a deep dedication to our students and their success. All of the hard work to date, by so many committees and individuals, has provided me with a textured sense of what we do well and where we might improve.

The attempt to revise our core is clearly controversial, with some consensus and some areas of great disagreement. That will always be the nature of curricular change in the academy. Given the nature of much of the dialogue, and in order to be responsive to the concerns many of you have expressed about process and involvement, I believe that it is appropriate to take some time out to ponder our options and consider all opinions in a systematic fashion.

The Chancellor and I have decided to halt the current core revision process until later in the year, so that I may have a chance to work with presidents, provosts, our newly-formed USG faculty governing committee, and other faculty groups, to take stock of where we are. We will discuss the nature of our current core, whether extensive change is thought to be needed, and also whether there are additional possibilities for enhancing undergraduate education outside of the curriculum (e.g., through faculty development, leadership programs, or seeding of innovative pilots related to international studies). All options should be considered as we hone our strategy for achieving sustainable and pervasive academic excellence.

While I have long experience with core curricula on campuses, this break will also enable me to begin dialogue with administrators around the nation who are likewise charged with system-level academic leadership.

My thanks to the Core Steering Committee for their leadership, and to so many faculty who have contributed their perspectives, at meetings, and through their letters, emails, and blogs. The fine ideas and insightful critiques from this state-wide conversation will not be lost. Far from it, the debate has added depth and complexity to the conundrum of general education, and in this way, represents the very best of free academic discourse.

Regardless of the course we determine next fall, I assure you that, within the context of Board-led strategy, learning and curricular changes are -- and always will be -- the domain of our

faculty. Faculty are responsible for the nature of education in this system, and it is faculty talent and compassion that change lives. The Chancellor and I will do all we can to support excellence in the classroom and beyond, and I thank you for your patience as we map the best way to move forward.

Sincerely,

Susan Herbst
Chief Academic Officer and
Executive Vice Chancellor
University System of Georgia