



March 24, 2012

Provost Jere Morehead
The University of Georgia
Administration Building
CAMPUS

Dear Provost Morehead,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the University of Georgia's (UGA's) 2012 Academic Affairs Faculty Symposium held at Unicoi, Georgia on March 23 - 24. Our group was charged with exploring issues related to innovative learning environments (Note that we quickly changed the name of the group from Non-Traditional Learning Environments to Innovative Learning Environments to better reflect the group members' perspectives). Below are several recommendations for how the administration might enhance support for the research-teaching nexus at UGA related to innovative learning environments.

- **Doable, Low-cost**
 - **Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) Resources:** Provide a list of publication venues for the scholarship of teaching (e.g., online journal for undergraduates sponsored by UGA's CURO, *North American College Teaching in Agriculture* (NACTA), *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*).
- **Doable, Mid-cost**
 - **Host an Academic Affairs Faculty Symposium series on campus throughout the academic year.**
 - **Participants:** Include faculty, post docs, and graduate students.
 - **Topics**
 - Interdisciplinary Research and Teaching
 - Critical Thinking
 - Assessing Learning
 - **Activity:** Have participants give 2-minute overviews of their research and teaching interests to stimulate collaboration across disciplines.
 - **Hire a CTL professional with assessment expertise** to assist faculty members with measuring the effectiveness of teaching and learning innovations.

- **Provide centralized support for summer research opportunity programs (REUs) for undergraduates** (e.g., staff person to assist with coordinating UGA's REUs housing, transportation, risk management and facilitation of development of new programs.)
- **Designate school/college liaison to the CTL.** This person would
 - have interest and expertise in teaching and learning;
 - would attend workshops similar to the current Maymester curricular innovation program with the responsibility of then presenting these concepts in their home unit;
 - help early career and new-to-UGA faculty members on issues related to teaching and learning; and
 - help with the flow of information from the CTL to the schools/colleges.
- **Long-term institutional culture change, High-cost**
 - **Provide department-level incentives for and evaluation of effectiveness of innovative learning environments.**
 - **Support development of interdisciplinary courses (team teaching courses)**
 - Provide incentives.
 - Remove impediments (e.g., what unit gets credit for the course).
 - **Provide support for faculty that change their instructional methodology by transitioning instruction out of the typical learning environment into a more critical thinking model and demonstrate impact of this shift on student performance.**
 - Modification of state or institutional formula funding may be utilized to support this type of change.
 - In addition to traditional metrics, innovative metrics of impact may include
 - The focus and duration of undergraduate education processes, and
 - post-graduation assessment of alumni through employer satisfaction surveys, and alumni career path surveys.

Other issues that the group members suggest that the university explore include

- **Faculty formative and summative evaluation processes.**
 - Could UGA change its faculty reward structure to value results, outcomes and impact of instruction rather basing this only on credit hours taught?
 - Could UGA implement a campus-wide faculty teaching portfolio system that could be used for a variety of purposes including promotion and tenure review?

- **Strategies for “scaling up” to large class settings critical thinking instructional techniques that are effective in small class settings.**

We would be happy to discuss and/or assist with the exploration and implementation of these recommendations.

Again, thank you for supporting the Academic Affairs Symposium.

Sincerely,

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and Design

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