



The University of Georgia®

Teaching Academy

Date: April 2, 2013

To: Professor Jere W. Morehead
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

Re: Recommendations for Experiential Learning
Teaching Academy Symposium

Dear Provost Morehead,

We truly appreciate the opportunity to participate in the 2013 Teaching Academy Faculty Symposium, an activity we consider to be essential for effective faculty development. Our group consisted of Grace Ahn, Michelle Ballif, Jeff Berejikian, Linda Fox, Brian Hopkinson, Paula Mellom, Jason Peake, CathyWhite and Sonia M. Hernandez.

We were charged with exploring the advantages and limitations of **“experiential learning”** and examine these across the Symposium’s cross-cutting themes. Because experiential learning can take on many meanings depending on the context and is utilized across disciplines in a variety of ways (e.g. study abroad, service-learning, virtual learning and/or games), we provide our working definition to provide or recommendations some context. We defined experiential learning as one that occurs when the *learner is actively immersed in an experience to do more “authentic” work in the discipline that includes reflecting, analyzing, and problem-solving in order to apply new ideas gained from the experience*

We consider that the University should foster opportunities for experiential learning at all levels because it allows students to truly connect with material, increases student confidence, promotes holistic learning, encourages students to visualize the application of material, fosters high-level thinking and assimilation of material and provides opportunities that are more akin to real-world situations. However, we recognize that there are major limitations and obstacles that prevent faculty from developing experiential learning opportunities OR students from taking advantage of those already present.

To address some of these obstacles we provide the following recommendations:

1. Currently students cannot clearly identify courses that provide experiential learning opportunities. In addition, because experiential courses are not readily identifiable, faculty cannot learn proven techniques from other faculty. Thus, we recommend creating an encompassing designation (e.g. adding the designation “X” to such courses) and one-stop shop (e.g. website) where students and faculty can easily find out what classes have

experiential component.

- a. Cost: minimal, in future, could be required as part of new course registration and for courses already in existence could ask all faculty to identify their courses as experiential and forward information to Office of Registrar to update
 - b. Timeline: 1 yr
2. The packed curricula of most majors limit students from reaching out to courses that contain experiential learning opportunities. Thus we consider it a priority for the Office of Online Learning, in collaboration with each School and College to encourage the departments to offer core courses online in order increase flexibility in the program of study (e.g. semester-long study abroad courses). We recognize that there is resistance to Online courses, but feel that through supporting the Office of Online learning, they can provide faculty the reassurance that some core courses can be easily and efficiently offered to large groups of students. We aim for each Department to choose 1 core course that can be delivered Online.
- a. Cost: minimal as this translates to the same support currently offered to the Office of Online Learning; this would require the Office of Online Learning promoting an additional reason for courses to be offered. Perhaps Provost could offer incentive for new online course development to faculty to develop a critical mass of core courses for ~\$2,000
 - b. Timeline: 1-2 yrs
3. One major obstacle to offering real-life experiences in the classroom is the disconnect between faculty and the larger Athens community. Some area businesses and organizations might be eager to provide students with experiential learning opportunities, but the faculty are not always able to identify these. We considered that identifying an existing person or supporting a one person point of contact that would allow faculty to connect with community and businesses would allow faculty to have an immediate contact.
- a. Cost: minimal as we believe there are already public relations and other personnel that foster these relationships, yet the information collected is typically utilized to further other University goals. Perhaps a work-study student that assists this person would collect relevant information and provide it annually to faculty.
 - b. Timeline: 2yrs
4. Finally, we know that faculty WANT to offer more experiential content in their courses. They recognize the benefits and know that courses that consists of >50% experiential material engages students best. However, they are limited by ideas to overcome obstacles (e.g. logistical constraints of large groups in the field). In some cases faculty are afraid that these logistical constraints create uncertainty and unpredictability. Thus we propose

that the Center for Teaching and Learning could create a support network for experiential learning, which would include identifying faculty that are most successful with these techniques and could mentor other faculty, orchestrating an annual workshop, and posting materials on the website of the tenets of experiential learning” that faculty could utilize.

- a. Cost: minimal if only offering Brown bag seminars or workshops; ~\$40,000-\$60,000 if hiring an additional member to develop Experiential Learning goals.
- b. Timeline: For workshop-1 yr; for materials online-2 yrs; 3 yrs for hiring additional CLT personnel.

We appreciate your consideration of these suggestions and look forward to a response.

Respectfully submitted,

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Cc: Ms. Stefani K. Hilley, Dr. J. Broder