



# The University of Georgia

Teaching Academy

March 23, 2013

Provost Jere Morehead  
Administration Building  
University of Georgia

Dear Provost Morehead:

Our working group sought to identify opportunities to enhance **student learning in lab, studio and seminar settings** at the University of Georgia. For the purposes of these discussions, we define lab, studio and seminar courses as follows:

**Lab/Studio:** Low student-faculty ratio courses where students work hands-on on a research topic or general concept with the tools of their discipline for the generation, creation, and/or analysis of data, designs, objects or performance.

**Seminar:** Small classes (usually 15 or less) where faculty guide student interactions with primary content of the discipline. Unlike lecture courses student participation with discussion and presentations is normally a significant component.

Laboratory, studio, and seminar instruction may use virtual or physical spaces depending on the discipline and course design. One thing they have in common is active, experiential learning as opposed to passive learning which often characterizes lecture courses.

## Benefits

In our view, lab, studio and seminar courses offer substantial benefits to student's learning, their course and degree completion, and their future professional achievement by:

1. Providing an interactive learning format for student engagement.
2. Offering hands-on training with tools of the discipline (particularly lab and studio formats).
3. Introducing problem solving and learning experiences with greater real world relevance.

## Obstacles

Given the value of the lab, studio and seminar courses, we seek solutions to overcome current obstacles that limit these learning formats:

1. Student access to lab- and studio-format courses is limited to a few disciplines. For

example, laboratory research courses are common experiences in the biological and physical sciences, but the concept of a lab doesn't exist for many disciplines in the humanities.

2. The primary tools, specimens/physical objects, and experiences of many disciplines are, by their very nature, not available to students on the Athens campus. For example, experiencing an objet d'art in its museum exhibit or experiencing a three-dimensional rendering of an archeological dig is far superior to studying a photograph in the classroom. That kind of learning space isn't now available.

#### Goals of the Working Group

1. Improve current lab, studio, and seminar course resources and design.
2. Expand lab, studio and seminar course opportunities across more disciplines to increase student access to hands-on learning experiences.

#### WORKING GROUP MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

We propose the following actions to address our goals. Recommendations are listed according to anticipated ease of implementation and increasing resource requirements.

Recommendation 1: Building retrofits for active learning spaces. We recommend incorporating the Center for Teaching and Learning and architectural design expertise in all major departmental applications for remodeling of lab spaces, studio spaces, seminar rooms, and faculty offices to promote best learning practices. Retrofits should focus on creating multi-functional and adaptable spaces.

Timeline: Immediate.

Cost/Resources: Funds already budgeted for Major Remodeling, plus the addition of a new staff person to be the primary consultant contact for learning spaces design.

Recommendation 2: Expansion of UGA bus system. At present, UGA offers a number of courses at Athens sites that are not served by the UGA bus system. In particular, there is no bus access to south Milledge facilities, the livestock instructional arena, the Whitehall forest, or the botanical garden despite the fact that experiences at these sites are critical to the course objectives. In keeping with the UGA promotion of a sustainable campus and the rights of students to access learning sites, transportation needs to be provided to relevant learning spaces.

Timeline: Fall semester.

Cost/Resources: Increase campus transportation budget for additional bus line or develop course-specific van/shuttle service for student transport.

Recommendation 3: Small grant programs for course field trips or bringing in outside speakers. We propose introducing a program for upper level undergraduate courses to increase hands-on experiences. In this program, faculty could apply for \$300-\$500 grants to take students to outside sites relative to their discipline (e.g. museums, Georgia Aquarium). Funding could assist with transportation, admission fees, etc.

Timeline: 1 – 2 years

Cost/Resources: Model after Freshman Odyssey field trip funding program.

Recommendation 4: Exit Odyssey Seminar program. We recommend introducing a 1 credit seminar program for exiting seniors to focus students on the concept of lifelong learning and professional development. The program would not be required, nor restricted to the student's major. Because it would be an elective, it would not add to the time of completion or add hours required to the degree. Instead, it would add opportunities for students and faculty alike to think outside of the discipline box in the offering and taking of stimulating courses just prior to graduation.

Timeline: 2-3 years

Cost/Resources: Estimate 50-60% of the cost of the freshman odyssey seminar program.

Recommendation 5: Create a UGA Center for Visualization and Experiential Learning. We propose a transformative center of technological innovation to advance learning and scholarship using state of the art visualization experiences. The goals of this center would be to provide an interdisciplinary core facility and learning spaces that would give students and faculty access to, and the ability to create, three-dimensional and digital virtual content. We envision a center with virtual lab spaces; Geographic Information System (GIS) learning facilities (already present in Geography); a three-dimensional printing center and lab; avatar studios; and virtual reality laboratories. Such a facility would truly be transformative to the UGA community. Imagine the possibilities for visualization of past, present and future:

1. Recreate an excavation site of the ancient world (project currently in development at the University of California Los Angeles, Center for Digital Humanities)
2. Experience a virtual museum exhibit
3. Train teachers using a program like TeachME with computer generated student avatars (currently in use at the University of Central Florida)
4. Use 3-D printing to understand complex geometry
5. Use GIS to map census data for social science studies
6. Take mechanical engineering students on a virtual tour of a manufacturing plant
7. Understand historical events by mapping complex data sets with GIS
8. Forecast changes in landscapes under different climate change scenarios
9. Allow undergraduate students to present their research findings at a virtual conference hosted in Second Life

Timeline: 5-10 years. Initial phase – consult with department heads to identify current related efforts (e.g. digital history project) and faculty experts. Develop a task force to assess current

UGA expertise and needs; use UGA experts, technology consultants and/or an industry partners to assess technology, feasibility and cost. Phase 2 – appoint internal/interim director, Capital campaign, site identification and planning. Phase 3 – facility development, technology installation, hiring. Phase 4 – implementation.

Cost/Resources: Capital campaign. Faculty lines, academic professionals, graduate assistantships, technologists, computer support; endowment to support center.

Benefits: Student experiential learning; real world applications across many disciplines; state-of the art research opportunities; and outreach.

#### Additional Items for Consideration

1. The current credit hour reimbursement model is disadvantageous to Colleges offering smaller classes such as research study labs, studios, and seminars. As fewer students take the class, Colleges receive fewer resources; however, faculty preparation time is usually similar for small and large classes, and lab courses generally require substantially more faculty contact hours. We propose that consideration of faculty teaching contributions and College reimbursement may be better represented by a model that incorporates a combination of credit hours and contact hours.
2. Course designations in CAPA require designation of a “primary delivery mechanism” (lecture, seminar, internship, practicum, directed study, student teaching, thesis/dissertation, supervised laboratory, or unsupervised laboratory). Faculty felt that some of these distinctions limit or inadequately describe course content that may be much more progressive.

We believe that operationalization of these recommendations will significantly improve access to and learning experiences in lab, studio, and seminar format courses.

Sincerely,

#### UGA Faculty Symposium

##### Lab, Studio, Seminar Working Group

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