

eCore RAC Meeting Notes
April 13, 2017
University of West Georgia Newnan Campus

Attendees

Jon Sizemore, USG	Melinda Spencer, Georgia Gwinnett College
Jason Huett, eCampus	Renva Watterson, Georgia Highlands College
Melanie Clay, eCampus	Jeffrey Linek, Georgia Highlands College
Nihal Gunay, eCampus	Sandra Parker, Georgia Southern Univ
Stephanie Hollenbeck, eCampus	Bryan Davis, Georgia Southwestern State University
Andy Meyer, Dalton State College	Richard Baskin, Gordon State College
Renita Luck, Albany State Univ	Elke Leeds, Kennesaw State University
Becky da Cruz, Armstrong State Univ	Robert Page, South Georgia State College
Kokila Ravi, Atlanta Metropolitan	William Vencill, Univ of Georgia
Kevin Demmitt, Clayton State University	Mike Rogers, University of North Georgia
Ellen Roberts, Columbus State University	Irene Kokkala, University of North Georgia
Tina Butcher, Columbus State University	Cher Hendricks, University of West Georgia
Kathy Whitaker, East Georgia State College	Philip Bishop, Valdosta State University
Mary Barnard, Fort Valley State Univ	

The Spring 2017 meeting of the eCore Regents Advisory Committee was convened at 10:06 am, April 13, 2017.

Welcome, Introduction, and Approval of Old Minutes by Dr. Andy Meyer:

Committee Chair, Dr. Andy Meyer, made introductory comments and members introduced themselves. Copies of the Fall 2016 meeting minutes were distributed to each member. Dr. Elke Leeds motioned to approve, Dr. Richard Baskin seconded, and approval was unanimous.

Ecore Updates by eCampus Staff:

Enrollment and general update by Melanie Clay—

Dr. Clay provided an update on eCore and eMajor with compliments to Andy Meyer and Sarah Kuck for their instrumental roles in the success of eMajor. eCore enrollment reports show growth has somewhat stabilized since the rapid growth following eCore Expansion. Enrollment growth is projected to stay within a 10-15% barring unforeseen circumstances. eCore is now focusing on quality measures; there is less emphasis on goals for PLA and CBE.

eCampus welcomes new staff member Nihal Gunay. She is working on the implementation of Xitracs to enhance tracking and documentation of eCore faculty appointments. Several institutions have expressed concern over the workflow for the approval process. The new system will assist institutions in managing campus teaching assignments. Xitracs will replace paper approvals with electronic signatures and electronic paperwork. The system will go live by Summer 2017 for new faculty, but there will be a

process of adding the hard copies we already have into the system. Faculty can submit their own documents into the system. When faculty are approved, notifications can be sent to Provost and Academic Affairs Office, business office, and others. Some institutions requested an opportunity to review eCore teaching assignments of their faculty before final approval of the schedule because of potential conflict with campus teaching assignments and concerns about issues with 33 ⅓ pay rules. Melanie confirmed that this workflow can be accommodated if necessary but will require cooperation of institutions to expedite final review and approval. Institutions have a responsibility to review faculty eligibility on a timely basis.

eCore has been looking at the enrollment patterns and may have more information about it at the next meeting. About 28% of students reply that they enroll in a certain course because they could not find another course they could take.

Approval process for new eCore courses by Jason Huett—

There is now a smooth process with the General Education Council for course approval (See Policies and Procedures manual). Four (4) new eCore courses are now approved for development.

Academic honesty policy changes were suggested from the floor, and a final appeals stage with the Provost at the home institution was added to eCore Policies and Procedures. If students' appeals through the eCore process are denied, they will be given instructions on how to escalate their appeal to the Provost at their home institution.

The new Xitracs system can be set to allow chairs to have direct access to SEI by request, which was an action item from previous meetings. SEI results can inform faculty teaching assignments; however, under the Affiliate Agreement, eCore SEI is not to be factored into institutional tenure or promotion.

eCore has reviewed the ETEC course with regard to institutional equivalency. Some institutions have opted out of offering this course since they have no direct equivalency, but it may still be appropriate for some students to qualify for financial aid.

All institutions were requested to review and confirm their course equivalency tables.

Xitracs Implementation and eCore Courses by Nihal Gunay—

eCore is currently working with campus SACS liaisons for accreditation and faculty credentialing. eCore can pilot approval and workflow as well as credentialing for Summer 2017. Xitracs will include information regarding faculty rank (FT/PT), resume, and transcript. Faculty can upload their own documentation into Xitracs, and eCore reviews that all necessary credentials have been provided. Faculty information about eCore professional development and service as eCore mentors/mentees is included. Xitracs will include information about each course taught back through Fall 2009, including evaluations. Faculty approvals and approver will be in the system for institutional review. Previously institutions were notified of faculty approvals and credentials by email; passive response by institutions is regarded as affiliate approval of these faculty. However, the quality of this report will change with the use of Xitracs. Institutions will now receive a searchable PDF file containing faculty credentialing data, institutional affiliation, and links to review the documentation in the Xitracs system. eCore will provide tutorials on the Xitracs system. Institutions can request system access for appropriate personnel. Some concerns were expressed about passive approval of faculty by institutions.

Textbooks and OERs by Jason Huett—

Currently, eCore provides textbooks at no cost for all eCore courses. Our lab science courses do require lab kits, but we have managed to negotiate a cheaper price for our students to purchase those. Language courses are financially intensive, and OER options for these courses are inadequate. eCore is covering the costs for purchasing commercial publisher materials, including textbooks and supplemental material, for the eCore Spanish courses. This is a stop gap measure while eCore performs a cost feasibility analysis. eCore should have OER course materials ready to pilot for Spring 2018. The study was based on cost of access codes to the publisher provided web-based resources, which are \$145 per code and came to a total of \$87,600. eCore also paid \$1600 for format of course prototype. eCore met with Instructional Designers and challenged them to design the course. The course development will include numerous SMEs; 4 on the course content, 2 on multimedia, and 2 for peer review.

Knewton and Design Elements by Nihal Gunay—

In its continuous improvement strategy, eCore is piloting the adaptive learning platform Knewton in MATH 1113 as a tool for individual and targeted instruction to improve learning outcomes. Knewton helps to identify challenging concepts for each student. One issue with the pilot implementation is that full integration with D2L has not yet been completed; there are still some gradebook issues to be resolved. Another challenge is faculty training to effectively use the Knewton adaptive engine; Knewton is providing a live webinar and will be on call to assist with any faculty issues that arise. eCore will provide tutorials and help desk support. One affiliate reported a positive experience with institutional implementation of Knewton. The committee viewed a demo video providing an overview of design elements that are either already used in courses or will be implemented soon.

USG Update by Jon Sizemore:

Rob Anderson, USG Interim Chief Academic Officer, was scheduled to attend the meeting but was unable to attend because of a schedule conflict. Dr. Anderson's message of appreciation for the service of the affiliate representatives was conveyed to the committee as well as his charge to the RAC for its new responsibilities.

Summary data and analysis was presented on the final report from the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts on the performance audit concluded in December 2016. All institutions are encouraged to read the complete performance audit, which focuses on undergraduate online education, on the GDAA website. One focus of the report was the examination of the cost and use of online learning. Some of the key findings include:

- eTuition rates across institutions and sectors were found to show significant variance, ranging from 0% to 58% greater than in-state tuition.
- Institutions could not tie the price of online tuition to the costs of offering online courses.
- Since the overwhelming majority of students taking online courses are hybrid students—they take a combination of online and campus courses—the audit found these students actually pay mandatory fees in addition to eTuition, which makes the cost of their education even higher.

In response to the audit, USG has frozen all eTuition rates at their current level, and BOR policy has been revised to require Board approval for eTuition rates going forward. Institutions may still submit requests for reductions in their current eTuition rates.

Committee discussion ensued regarding: contention between different USG policies is detrimental to hybrid students who end up paying the most; institutions hold the faculty lines for the eCore faculty, which helps to subsidize the eTuition rate for eCore; institutions should question the practice of funding faculty lines out of eTuition and should look for other funding to keep those positions open; the BOR has not established restrictions on how institutions use revenue from eTuition; concerns over audit comparisons to other states that may not follow the same online quality standards used by USG institutions; possible negative impact of eTuition policy changes on graduate enrollment in online programs; possible policy changes regarding different eTuition rates for in-state and-out-of state students; need for more information about graduate online programs to inform any policy changes in that area; reductions in eTuition rates may require consideration of online costs in future state budget requests.

New Business by eCampus Staff:

Reduction in eCore tuition rate by Melanie Clay—

Based on budget projections, eCore has requested an eTuition rate reduction to lower tuition to \$159 per credit hour for FY18. However, this will not change the amount of revenue that institutions receive from eCore affiliation. eCore enrollment growth, while still in double digits, has slowed from the expansion period, so eCore can operate with reduced tuition. This decrease is pending approval. Institutions should refrain from any announcement until the System Office makes an official press release concerning eCore tuition.

Name and number changes for courses by Jason Huett—

eCore has been reviewing course names and numbers for alignment with BOR requirements for common designations for general education courses. USG General Education Council has recommended the following changes:

- Course number number for PHYS 1211K be changed to PHYS 2211K.
- Course number number for PHYS 1212K be changed to PHYS 2212K
- Course number for MATH 1401 be changed to MATH 2000
- Course name for the statistics course to be changed from INTRODUCTION TO STATISTICS to ELEMENTARY STATISTICS

Following motion, second and discussion, the committee voted on each course number change separately and all changes were approved. Course name change for the statistics course was approved pending final approval from the General Education Council. It was noted that the second course in the physics sequence is not currently being offered by eCore; however, it may be offered in the future. There will be no changes in learning objectives for the courses. The changes in course designation will address the BORs concerns about course alignment across institutions and facilitate transferability of courses.

HOPE STEM Weighted Courses by Jason Huett—

The committee reviewed affiliate equivalency charts prepared by eCore regarding inclusion of eCore courses in the HOPE STEM Weighted Course Directory. The courses included in this directory are specific degree-level science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) courses leading to high

demand careers in Georgia. These courses, taken at an eligible postsecondary institution, will have an additional weight of 0.5 added to grades of B, C and D. The charts show the eCore courses and equivalent courses at each affiliate institution which qualify for the STEM bump. These courses will be submitted to STEM Weighted Course Council to be added to the directory list for your institution as a STEM weighted course. USG will administratively add the eCore equivalency course for the STEM bump to the directory on behalf of the institutions. The students' STEM weighted GPA is not used or recorded by institutions but is used by the Georgia Student Finance Commission in calculating state financial aid eligibility, equating to 0.5 points added to the course average for HOPE eligibility.

There was discussion of the inclusion of the eCore Biology course in the directory since it is specifically described as "not for STEM majors." Jason Huett reported that eCore was advised by Rich Loftis, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Enrollment Services, that the course had been approved by the STEM Weighted Course Council as an eligible course for some USG institutions, and that the directory listing should be consistent for all institutions.

Institutions were reminded to review their equivalency charts since oversight of this is a part of the annual Affiliate Agreement, and accuracy is important to ensuring students receive appropriate credit towards their HOPE eligibility.

General eCampus updates by Melanie Clay—

It has been a short while since administration of eMajor was transferred from VSU to UWG. Dr. Clay expressed appreciation to Bryan Davis and GSW for their instrumental work in the redevelopment of courses following the transfer. The collaborative eMajor programs have been redeveloped as well as a new model for single institution eMajor degree programs in High Demand Careers, such as the 4 BBA degrees at GSW, the FinTech program at MGSU, and Cybersecurity at KSU. Institutions interested in partnerships for specific HDCI programs, contact Art Recesso. There is the potential to advance single institution programs to collaboratives in the future. For single institution programs, eMajor only provides select services, such as IDs, course development, and student services, to the institution based on their needs.

Officers and Executive Committee Positions by Jason Huett—

The committee recognized exiting chair Andy Meyer, and Jason Huett presented him with an engraved gavel as a token of the committee's esteem and sincere appreciation of his service. Andy Meyer expressed his thanks to the committee.

Richard Baskin took the podium as eCore RAC Chair for FY18. The Committee reviewed the responsibilities and required qualifications for the Chair Elect under the bylaws. Mendi Spencer nominated Robert Page, and he accepted. With no other names forthcoming, a motion was made to close the nominations, seconded, and approved. Having been approved by unanimous consent, Robert Page is Chair-Elect for FY18.

Cher Hendricks made everyone aware that she would be replaced by David Jenks. Richard called for nominations or self-nominations.

Updates and feedback:

The committee reviewed the location of the next meeting, settling to continue to convene at UWGs Newnan campus. Adjournment followed.