Strategic Planning Committee Report
Undergraduate Committee

Introduction
The undergraduate committee for the strategic planning process was asked to review academic programs relating to majors, minors, accreditation, and the core.

Members of the Committee: Tanya Goette (Chair), Jamie Addy, Kristina Dandy, Debbie Greene, Steven Jones, Holley Roberts, Brandon Samples, and Cara Smith

State, Regional, or National/International Trends
The committee identified the following state, regional, and national trends that could affect undergraduate education at Georgia College:
State-level trends

- In addition to monitoring and improving our retention and time to graduation rates, we will also need to be attentive to how Move On When Ready, Fifteen to Finish, dual-enrollments, the needs of transfer students, and Go Back Move Ahead affect demand for undergraduate courses, particularly in the core and the liberal arts.
- Competency-based Education and Prior Learning Assessment will require us to consider how to translate our liberal arts-focused learning outcomes into competencies that can be demonstrated through mechanisms beyond course completion, e.g., through portfolios.
- Affordable Learning Georgia requires us to consider the costs of a Georgia College education beyond tuition, room and board, and other fees. As a public institution, we should consider whether we are adequately taking advantage of open education resources and other open access initiatives that help reduce the financial burden on our students and their families.
- We must consider performance-based budgeting, which is related to the broader issue of declining public financing of higher education at the state and national levels and is tied to the complete College Georgia agenda.
- Potential reductions in the funding for HOPE, or a tightening of the eligibility requirements, could have consequences for our undergraduate enrollment.

National-level trends

- Given that 70% of adult Americans do not have a college degree, there is a perceived need to spread access and affordability to a wider range of students, including non-traditional aged students. We need to consider how to respond to that need while remaining committed to our core identity and mission.
- Regional and national debates over the value of majoring in the liberal arts and a broad liberal arts education are a concern.
- Increasing importance of digital technology in the delivery of higher education courses, e.g., MOOCs, distance learning, and online degree programs. Although our mission focuses on face-to-face instruction in undergraduate education, we need to consider how to best integrate technology to enhance teaching and learning.
- Emphasis on identifying student learning, particularly with respect to specific skills and competencies desired by employers, is essential.

- Value-added of a college degree in terms of graduates' earnings related to the cost of the degree is often in the news. We need to consider how to best address this with our graduates.
- There is tension between reduced public funding for higher education at state and national levels and state and national demands to make higher education more affordable which contributes to:
  - Competition among colleges and universities for other sources of funding and
  - Increased competition from non-traditional providers, e.g., for-profits, MOOCs, and foreign colleges and universities.

Committee's Area of Focus, Institutional Data

1. From NSSE. Upon graduation, 25% of students reported that they SD or D that they were able to get the courses they needed to graduate in a timely manner. (Supports threat 2 below.)

100. Courses at this college are offered in such a way that I can take them in the recommended sequence and still complete my degree in a timely manner.
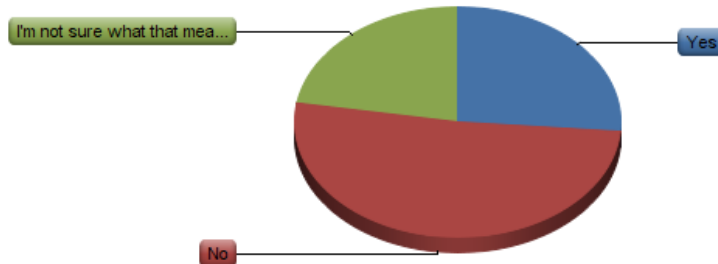
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	N
First-year	COAS	1.0	11.5	69.2	18.3	104
	COB	2.7	5.7	75.7	16.2	37
	COE	0.0	0.0	64.7	35.3	17
	COHS	0.0	9.8	66.7	23.5	51
	GCSU	.9	9.8	69.2	20.1	214
Senior	COAS	6.0	18.0	60.9	15.0	133
	COB	2.2	22.2	51.1	24.4	45
	COE	0.0	0.0	83.3	16.7	12
	COHS	6.9	24.1	39.7	29.3	58
	GCSU	5.2	19.7	55.0	20.1	249

2. Number of Core courses/ semester. We have close to 400 sections of core courses each semester. (Supports Threat 1 below)

TERM	Sections of Core Courses
Fall 2013	388
Spring 2014	356
Summer 2014	125
Fall 2014	390
Spring 2015	379
Summer 2015	134
Fall 2015	383

3. From the State of the Core faculty survey. Over 70% of respondents either believe that our Core is not distinctive or they don't know what it would mean to have a distinctive, liberal arts core curriculum. (Supports threats 2 and 3 below)

1. In your opinion, is our Core curriculum a distinctive liberal arts curriculum?

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Yes		20	26%
2	No		39	51%
3	I'm not sure what that means		17	22%
	Total		76	

Environment and Desired Outcomes
Strengths
- Distinction as Georgia's Public Liberal Arts University
- The support for and evidence of the implementation of High Impact Practices (HIPs) across campus (also a weakness, see below)
- Faculty cite GC1Y and GC2Y (Area B) as strengths and points of distinction in our core
- Commitment to Learning Beyond the Classroom, especially in GC2Y (also an opportunity)
- Faculty commitment and love/loyalty to GC and students. Our faculty are very strong and caring mentors. Students cite this often.
- Liberal Arts Renewal Project

Weaknesses
- In the core faculty survey, faculty most often cited that GC students do not demonstrate writing skills that meet the expectations of the faculty
- Although it is agreed that we use HIPs somewhat extensively across campus, we can't quantify the practices or really even speak to the overall quality across practices
- Often cited is that students lack the ability to transfer/integrate/amalgamate knowledge and skills across experiences (curricular and co-curricular)
- Lack of consistency/uniformity/rigor across GC1Y and GC2Y courses
- Cited often is the lack of diversity in the core. One commenter referred to it as a "hodgepodge of unrelated courses"
- Students have limited experience with diversity

Opportunities

3

- With the phasing out of overlays at the state level (USG), we have an opportunity to use overlays in a way that works best for us on campus
- Learning Beyond the Classroom is strong in Area B, but we could benefit from defining this further and identifying where and how it occurs across academic programs
- We could benefit from a writing across the curriculum (WAC) initiative
- Areas C & E present unexplored opportunities for distinction through creation of innovative courses
- Area B is an area in which many additional opportunities could be explored. In order to accomplish this, however, we must have centralized and dedicated oversight of the core.
- Explore options to the USG mandated core: provide evidence of why we should have a more distinctive core (as GPLAU)
- Strengthening relationships with the local school system and the broader community
- Liberal Arts Renewal Project, including new initiatives (e.g, Pathways model)

Immediate threats
- Sustainability and improvement of the core (given lack of oversight)
- Students most often cite inability to get into needed classes as a threat to their education and completion (faculty support this notion)
- Faculty and students cite the lack of flexibility in the core
- Lack of shared understanding and 'ownership' of what it means to be a public liberal arts university and what a distinctive liberal arts education looks like

How might these affect our committee's area of focus?

Having evidence of these SWOTs is very helpful for our committee. Due to several recent endeavors to gather both qualitative and quantitative information from students, faculty, and staff, we have a strong indication of what we collectively feel we do very well in the area of undergraduate education, as well as our challenges. Confirmed knowledge of these SWOTs allow us to work directly towards what we desire in a distinctive and preeminent liberal arts experience for our GC students. The Liberal Arts Renewal Project is spearheading this initiative and hopefully their work and the work of this committee will share a common focus that includes identifying priorities and designing a distinguished liberal arts experience that is a model for the state and region (at least). Also, and critical to the success of the strategic planning process, these identified strengths and challenges will help our subcommittee to establish realistic, appropriate, measureable goals that will move us further towards distinction and preeminence.

Given this information, what are our area's specific requirements for success?

We desperately need a Core director or coordinator. This is a critical priority. We are a substantial enough size as a university that we are remiss in not having such a position in place. There are many facets of the core that critically need attention from a knowledgeable, dedicated, and consistent person in a permanent position.

Another requirement for success will be a plan, structure, and mechanism(s) by which we assess our 'new' liberal arts general education program. This will include the ability to track, map, and assess our use of high impact practices, the ability and resources to pilot and then possibly incorporate new ideas that will be hallmarks of a distinctive liberal arts experience at GC. Some examples are the pathways model, an alternative 'study away' model, portfolios, a student achievement system (which we already have but needs much more in terms of resources), etc.

Finally, we must work more closely with our current students to identify their needs, wants, desires, and satisfaction. We collected limited feedback from the students (at the

university level for university-wide use) but we don't even really 'use' the data we collect. For example, the NSSE open ended responses are rich with feedback, suggestions, concerns, and also points of pride as identified by our students. We need to move more towards practices that will provide us the opportunity to collect, analyze, and use student feedback. They should be invaluable in helping to shape our beliefs, values, shared visions, practices, processes, and in recognizing additional problems that need addressing.

Goals and Objectives:

Goal # 1: Provide more oversight and support for GC's Core		
Objective	**Notes**	**Main Request/Deliverable**
i. Secure a full time Core director or coordinator	Duties would include managing core assessment (including developing policies), managing new course proposal submissions to USG, and oversight of Area B (GC1Y and GC2Y). Oversight of Area B would include oversight of new section proposals, oversight of faculty credentials, support for faculty creating new sections, and collaborating with Faculty Development office to create development opportunities for faculty desiring to create new sections. We also need a core website which could be supported by this position.	**Full time Core Director or Coordinator**
ii. Reconsider if current committee structure is the most efficient to support the continued development and assessment practices in the core.	SoCC's duties are very limited due to time constraints and provide little oversight of the core other than approving new sections for Area B. SoCC's duies could be expanded under the supervision of a Core Director, and this committee could also offer support to that position.	**Reconsideration of committee structure (especially SoCC) under the supervision of a core director.**
Goal #2: Finalize redesign of GC's Liberal Arts General Education Program		
Objective	**Notes**	**Main Request/Deliverable**
i. Finalize GC attributes (mapped to AACU outcomes) and Vision Statement	These are complete and ready for Senate approval.	
ii. Develop a system to accurately measure the count of high impact practices (annually).	Examples: Undergraduate research, community-based engagement, study abroad, capstone experiences, activities in FYAS, service learning experiences, diversity experiences Future goals will include assessing the quality of these experiences, but an early goal must include simple counts of how much, how often, and where high impact practices are occurring on campus.	**System for coding and counting HIPs occurring each semester.**

iii. Working with the LARP team, investigate and develop criteria for two new (to Georgia College) HIPs/hallmarks of a premier liberal arts education.	Examples: -Pathways Model -Study Away Model	No initial requests as this is already underway with the LARP committee.
iv. Investigate a portfolio system and models of implementation for university-wide adoption, including accessibility, cost, and functionality.	Portfolios would represent an evidence-based practice that would be instrumental in documenting student outcomes of our new Liberal Arts General Education Program. -Will require development of a taskforce to oversee implementation, chaired by a core director/coordinator -Will be a collaborative effort with the Center for Student Success and the Career Center -Will include benchmarks for students (first year to graduation) -Assessed via blind review -Will require funding for pilot	This will need very few initial resources during the early stages (investigation). Support will be needed if GC decided to implement a university-wide portfolio system.

Sources: GC 2014 NSSE, 2105 State of the Core Survey and Report, AAC&U, GC OIRE