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# The University of Georgia

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Department of Romance Languages

March 5, 2015

Dr. Alan Dorsey  
Dean, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences  
Old College  
University of Georgia  
Athens, GA 30602

Dear Dean Dorsey,

On January 16, 2015, members of the Franklin Curriculum Committee met with Senior Associate Dean Hugh Ruppensburg and Prof. Linda Bachman, Chair of the Franklin College Task Force on Experiential Learning, to discuss the proposed Experiential Learning Requirement currently being reviewed by the University Curriculum Committee. The Franklin Curriculum Committee was tasked with preparing a response on behalf of the Franklin Faculty Senate that would reflect (i) general opinions about the curricular impact of the Experiential Learning Requirement and (ii) comments and concerns about its department-level implementation. In February 2015, Franklin Senators received a call to submit comments on the draft of the Experiential Learning Requirement, a call that consisted of two questions:

1. What do you as a member of the Franklin Faculty Senate believe to be the pedagogical value of the Experiential Learning Requirement? What will be its significance to the undergraduate experience at the University of Georgia?
2. More specifically, how will the Experiential Learning Requirement be implemented in your department? What potential challenges or issues do you foresee?

The six responses received came from different units in Franklin College, ranging from Physical and Mathematical Sciences to the Humanities. In what follows, a summary of the responses from members of the Franklin Faculty Senate will be provided as they pertain to each of the two aforementioned questions. It should be kept in mind that the summaries reflect only those comments that were provided as a response to the call for comment on the Experiential Learning Requirement. Following these summaries, an overview of more general issues raised in the Senators' responses will also be provided. In referring to the specific proposal currently under consideration by the University Curriculum Committee, the term "Experiential Learning Requirement" will be used, as will the terms "experiential learning" and "experience-based learning" as more general references to the broader set of educational practices embodied by this approach.

Concerning Question 1, which focuses more generally on the value of the Experiential Learning Requirement to the experience of undergraduates at the UGA, several of the senators' responses indicated that such a requirement would enhance students' critical thinking and analytical skills. Senators also pointed out the value of experiential learning in encouraging students to pursue interests outside the classroom, noting that these types of offerings provided students with "real world" experience. Some senators noted that experiential learning has been shown to produce positive educational outcomes and that implementation of such a requirement would inevitably have the effect of reaching students who would not have otherwise participated in experience-based learning.

A number of senators pointed to issues concerning the wide-scale implementation of the Experiential Learning Requirement. There is concern that, with other university- and college-level curricular requirements, there is not enough flexibility in different programs of study to accommodate additional requirements. Another concern that emerged in the comments was related to student interest in experiential learning, noting that not all student interests and needs will be served by the set of experiential learning opportunities currently under discussion (e.g., study abroad). Finally, it was noted that, at the college level, there would need to be a sizable staff invested with the task of assuring that this requirement is met. This and similar concerns will be addressed further in the section regarding general comments.

With respect to Question 2, some senators observed that majors in their respective departments would not have any problems fulfilling the Experiential Learning Requirement as these majors already include, and in some cases require, courses that would satisfy the requirement. Among these comments were discussions of different opportunities, such as field schools, study abroad, internships, capstone courses, and service learning, that, according to the most recent guidelines for implementation, would meet the Experiential Learning Requirement. Conversely, there was also concern expressed on behalf of different units for whom implementation of an experiential learning component would not be straightforward. Similarly, senators raised issues, both in terms of quantity and timeliness, about the allocation of resources that would support the implementation of this requirement.

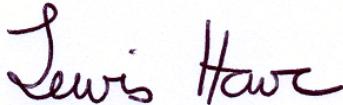
In their responses, the Franklin Senators voiced a variety of different general concerns as well, some of which have already been discussed. In addition to comments about how the Experiential Learning Requirement would be implemented at the departmental level, senators also expressed the need for additional resources for implementation and administration, not only for those courses that are offered in Athens but also for those that are offered at other UGA campuses (e.g., UGA in Oxford) and study abroad locations. Another issue that arose in the discussion concerned the possible diluting of the intended impact of experiential learning given that its large-scale implementation would require accommodating a large number of, and in fact all, UGA students. Furthermore, it was suggested that experiential learning projects be considered for a special "finals day" to accommodate events or exhibitions that may not otherwise occur during the typical school week.

The most widely represented view among the more general responses to the call concerned the manner in which the Experiential Learning Requirement has been and continues to be rolled out for consideration by the various colleges and college-level units at UGA. First, one suggestion

was that the date of implementation of the Experiential Learning Requirement (currently, Fall 2016) be pushed back in order to allow additional time for garnering faculty buy-in. Similarly, more details regarding the curricular impact were requested and would include data (if available) from other institutions with similar experience-based learning requirements and from UGA-internal surveys regarding the availability and effectiveness of offerings that would satisfy this requirement. Finally, there is clear concern on behalf of the Franklin Faculty about the role of faculty governance in the process of developing and implementation of the Experiential Learning Requirement. Specifically, there is a desire among the Franklin faculty to have a discussion of the Experiential Learning Requirement, with this discussion serving as part of a Franklin Faculty Senate vote on whether or not to adopt this requirement.

Once again, the comments summarized here represent only the views of those members of the Franklin Faculty Senate who responded to the call for comments on the proposed Experiential Learning Requirement. On behalf of the Franklin Curriculum Committee, this document is submitted for approval by the general Franklin Senate.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Lewis Howe". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Lewis (Chad) Howe  
On behalf of the Franklin Curriculum Committee