

Affordability Subcommittee Report

In Florida, most state universities have a strategy for the implementation and ongoing operation of online learning. While some institutions make significant investments and are studying new ways to support students online, whether it is collapsing fees,

- a) **In response to statutory requirements, The Florida Virtual Campus has convened a group Open Access Textbook and Educational Resources Task Force (OATER) comprised of state college and university library and distance learning experts.**

process workflow, student experience and faculty responsibility. To re-imagine a teaching and learning environment requires opportunities to pilot ideas, get waivers for work processes and in some cases, as with competency-based learning, it may require approval from the Federal Department of Education and SACSCOC.

Objective 1: Develop shared programs in areas of high demand while maintaining quality and increasing efficiencies through an innovative, shared model.

Each SUS institution was asked to submit the complete listing of fully online programs to the Board of Governors. It is recommended that this list be updated annually and will be compared to the Florida Virtual Campus Degree and Course Catalog to ensure consistency. Based on the annual review, possibly CAVP should consider areas where programs and courses could be shared across the system. Programs with high demand that cannot be quickly fulfilled by a single institution could be candidate. In Georgia, sharing of courses (eCore) has been a longstanding practice. Sharing of degree programs (eMajor) is a newer initiative, but quite successful to date.

Georgia eCore. Georgia has been operating a core set of general studies courses for 15 years and has refined the process to the point that it is a significant cost savings for the student at a rate of \$169 per credit hour. Student's select general studies online courses among a set of 14 affiliate institutions. eCore <https://ecore.usg.edu/prospective/> is led by the Georgia Board of Regents and engages its affiliate institutions for development, maintenance and instructional delivery of the courses. The cost savings come through non-duplication, shared efforts among faculty to build high quality courses and instructional delivery by faculty from affiliate institutions usually on an overload basis. It is a different business model that does not require full institutional infrastructure and costs to support the program. Revenue from courses is shared among affiliate institutions and the institution that was selected to lead the affiliate program. Revenue earned is used to pay the lead institution costs, faculty costs, additional course development costs, marketing and ongoing maintenance. It is operated on a cost recovery basis. It should be noted this is an opt-in model for institutions to become affiliates and participate in eCore. It is not a requirement of the full system.

Georgia eMajor. Georgia also manages an eMajor program <https://emajor.usg.edu>. Affiliate institutions work collaboratively to develop full bachelors and masters degree programs by co-development and sharing faculty across the affiliates. The eMajor program also provides an avenue to offer Prior Learning Assessment to students to assist in reducing the time to degree. Currently, undergraduate eMajor programs include Bachelors in Office Administration and Technology, Organizational Leadership and Legal Assistant Studies with four affiliate institutional partners. At graduate, there are eMajor programs as well.

As a way to leverage state dollars, develop and expand distance education program offerings, foster collaboration between SUS institutions and ultimately reduce the cost to students, shared programs should be considered. These shared programs will provide cost savings to both the student and the institution as well as help create opportunities for shared resources and enhanced relationships among the SUS institutions. Considerations for sharing courses/programs would be reducing time and cost to degree and ultimately career placement. This collaboration would achieve a more sustainable distance education infrastructure for the State.

In order to initiate discussions on shared programs, it would be recommended that a statewide market research incubator be created to assist in identifying programs that could be delivered across or developed by SUS institutions. Conducting this research will help institutions make data driven decisions about meeting the needs of the state or region. For instance, the shared programming concept could be a way to meet the various student, economic and workforce needs across the state.

Various levels of shared programs could be designed and implemented. These collaborations could be in the form of shared marketing, shared use of courses or dual programs. The ultimate goal is to provide access to affordable quality online programs.

Objective 2: Develop competency-based and adaptive learning programs in appropriate areas of high demand primarily around adults and workforce needs while maintaining quality and increasing efficiencies through an innovative, shared model.

A promising model will be to take next steps toward flat fixed rates for competency-based education. Competency-based programs require a unique set of cost components as the role of the instructor and support staff is very different. It is recommended that a fixed cost be set for competency-based programs in line with other states and

students selecting this option. The cost option should be the choice of the student so that the student can decide to (a) pay regular tuition and fees by term or (b) use the subscription model for students to take as many competency-based modules and courses as possible during a six month period.

Currently, the Lumina Foundation is working with the Florida Board of Governors, Florida College System Office and the Florida Virtual Campus (through the Complete Florida Initiative) to determine policy barriers to

and required through SACSCOC to provide equivalent services to all students regardless of instructional delivery methodology. This study should be replicated and implemented across the SUS to identify the current use of the distance learning fee and other institutional resources to support distance learning as a major strategy for the state.

a) Develop a protocol to expressly define distance learning fee expenditures aligned to statutory language.

Working together to encompass individual campus needs as they relate to the distance learning fee expenditures, we need to develop a protocol that is aligned with and directly related to the BOG statute listing permissible fees. This protocol should include the development of a research methodology that involves data analysis to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to the design, development and delivery of distance education courses.

Distance Learning fees are regulated by Florida Statute(s) and University Policies and are closely audited. According to Florida Statutes 1009.23 (16) and 1009.24 (17), a state university may assess a student who enrolls in a distance learning course a per-credit-hour distance learning course fee. A distance learning course is defined as one in which at least 80 percent of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time or space, or both. Distance learning fees cannot exceed the additional costs of services provided which are directly attributable to the development and delivery of the distance learning course. A framework for describing these additional costs, which are attributable to the development and delivery of distance learning courses, has been developed by the Florida Distance Learning Task Force and provides the basis for evaluating the acceptable use of distance learning fees.

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