Faculty Responses (n=25 as of 1/6/09)

**From your perspective, what is the greatest strength of the undergraduate student learning experience at UGA?**

- The presence of other talented individuals on campus.
- The diversity of opportunities for learning.
- The variety of opportunities available
- A strong faculty and the breadth of the curriculum
- Ability to interact with good faculty, very good educational facilities.
- Opportunities for small classes, freshman seminars, etc
- Presence of great faculty, staff and resources.
- Study abroad
- Relatively small class sizes in my department (English); fine library resources available; students can select from a wide range of courses, programs, learning opportunities.
- Comprehensive curriculum
- I already filled out one of these, but thought of a few things to add. For this space: the greatest strength of the undergraduate experience is (mostly) small classes and low (but growing) student-to-teacher ratio.
- Small classes. We need to fight to reduce class size. Every study shows that small classes are the key to real education. While student numbers have grown, the number of faculty has stayed static for the past twenty years or so. We need to stop hiring administrators from inside UGA at inflated salaries they could never command in the market and start hiring faculty!
- The contact with tenure-track research-active faculty
- In small depts and colleges, students are advised by faculty and are able to develop relationships over time
- The opportunities for hour-and-fifteen-minute, discussion-based seminars and respectable writing loads at the upper levels in the Arts and Sciences.
- I like the variety of interdisciplinary courses offered at UGA. I also like the Multicultural requirement; I believe it helps increase our students’ awareness of a global world.
- Of the MANY strengths UGA offers its undergraduates, the best, I feel, is the scholarly depth that comes from advanced classes taught by serious scholars and researchers. The wealth of resources offered by the UGA libraries is a part of this strength.
- The quality of the faculty.
- The quality of the faculty and the majority of the students.
- There is an extraordinary range of opportunities for learning in varied ways, ranging from reacting-to-the-past courses, to independent studies, to study abroad and shorter-term study travel.
From your perspective, what is the greatest weakness of the undergraduate student learning experience at UGA?

- The core is too extensive. It does not allow undergraduates to gain enough experience in their major. It causes students to be disengaged in their learning.
- Lack of personalization in many lower-division courses.
- Students can complete four years at UGA without developing good written and verbal communication skills.
- The SACS reports from the last couple of iterations took UGA to task for insufficient oral communication opportunities. I (Jerold Hale) offered to meet with the University Council curriculum committee to discuss several models of communication across the curriculum. The meetings were cancelled by them and then not rescheduled.
- Our students need to develop their ability to verbally explain and debate issues related to the learning objectives in their courses.
- Too many large lecture courses, not enough of a culture of academic rigor
- Effective access to these resources for the typical student.
- Not enough chances for sustained undergraduate research in the humanities. Need for more sophisticated technology to support teaching and learning (esp. in the humanities.)
- Few opportunities for meaningful interdisciplinary study
- The greatest weakness is they take too many courses. Most universities require only four courses per semester to graduate. Students can’t concentrate on anything when they are spending 15 hours per week just sitting in class. We can ask very little of them in any individual class.
- The semesters at UGA are too long and the students take 5 not 4 courses. Check out Williams and Amherst and other top ranked undergraduate colleges. None of their semesters drag on for 17 weeks; none of them require students to take 5 classes. Our students spend all of their time going to classes rather than reading and writing and interacting in class. By the end of the semester my students are exhausted. They would learn more by taking 4 intensive courses for a shorter period of time. There are classes in the humanities that do not require students to write formal papers. This is a travesty. There are also classes that use only a textbook or two. This is scandalous at the state's flagship university. College courses should require students to read books and write papers!
- Students often do not develop independent research and learning habits, or they realize they need to develop these skills too late into their career.
- Large campus anonymity. This is a recent trend, but some directives from upper admin [for example regarding scheduling of classes with more 50 min sections] leave little room for faculty to properly develop a course with the best approach for student learning
- A steadily growing student-to-faculty ratio. My own department is staffed at about two-thirds the number of faculty that the university itself says we ought to have. Across the board, the numbers have gotten much worse over the last decade—and yet the administration has a master building plan but no master staffing plan. What student-faculty ratio would UGA’s
administration consider too high? We started the decade at rough parity with our peer institutions and are now at the ratio of third-tier schools in Georgia.

- 50 minute classes on a MWF schedule is an outdated pedagogical model. 50 minute class periods only work effectively with strictly lecture classes. However, now that numerous studies have shown the significant benefits of active student learning--through class discussion, class debates, student oral presentations, group work, etc.--many professors require longer class periods to incorporate these new learning strategies alongside their lecture material. Research universities across the country recognize the benefits of longer class periods, and have changed all class meetings to twice a week, offering MW, TH, and WF classes. I urge UGA to consider revising their class schedule to ensure that all classes meet twice a week for a longer period of time.

- The short class periods of the MWF schedule may be appropriate for classes built on the lecture model, but for classes that require active student participation (presentations, class-wide discussion, small-group work), the time slot is simply too short. There are an increasing number of classes built on newer, more active models of teaching and learning--and they are very much needed for this generation of undergraduates--and I think that both professors and students will be more productive on a two-day model (MW, TTh, or WF).

- Class sizes are too large.

- The affluence of the students and the attitude that many of them have that they are "customers," not students: that what they have bought is a commodity, and that having paid for it they are entitled to what they want. UGA is undervalued by a great many (not all, or even most, but many) students. The commodity culture extends to free time, with many students spending lots of time eating out, shopping, etc. --doing things to keep them from studying. It's a paradox: some very well prepared and bright students, but the pressure to do too many other things besides attend class and do the homework.

- Not enough tenure and tenure track faculty.

- There is in some quarters a culture of low expectations. Students feel more-or-less entitled to a B, and they expect courses to be entertaining rather than engaging. Too many also feel that the pursuit of a degree, even as full-time students, is not a full-time occupation.

If you could make one campus-wide change to enhance undergraduate student learning at UGA, what would it be?

- Fix the core requirements so that fewer courses are required.

- A greater push for student engagement, for instance, through academic service-learning creating meaningful opportunities to apply classroom learning to the broader community.

- Provide multiple opportunities for the student to (1) learn new material, then (2) prove that he understands it sufficiently well to translate it into intelligible form for others through (3) being interviewed by a reporter who has no background in the material, (4) giving an oral presentation that demonstrates language facility and comprehension of the topic, and (5) write an article that demonstrates familiarity with the topic as well as skill in grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and other basic elements of language and writing.
• A speaking enhancement center where students could come to get assistance for class presentations (regardless of class or major). Several universities have implemented such centers (most recently Southern Mississippi). SACS appreciates them, as do the students whom the centers serve.
• The American College of Sports Medicine is having good luck promoting 'quiz bowls' as a way of getting students to show their learning verbally. We might include more debate and discussion of issues related to learning objectives in courses. This could be as semi-separate lab sections featuring presentations and debates. For example, a presentation on 'what is the best way of determining if someone is weak (or lacks adequate strength).
• I'd love to see us consider the possibility of implementing a "shared book" that the whole university community would read over the summer and discuss in classes. EVERYONE - -not just freshmen. I also would like to see REAL compensation for faculty to teach freshman seminars.
• Building a Community of Learning and Engagement. Some Rough Ideas: Through a coordinated variety of initiatives and approaches, create a campus environment where students, faculty, and staff can connect with one another around research, issues, ideas, and initiatives more effectively and efficiently. Currently, there are islands of learning on the campus separated by discipline to some extent, by position within the campus structure (students, faculty, staff), but most critically by a lack of integrated organizational and technological structures. These barriers often impede broad and rich collaborations between and among students, faculty and staff. The invisible college of word of mouth and informal knowledge is too often the technique by which members of the campus community find one another to work on research, projects, and concerns. Students, and faculty and staff to a lesser extent, have turned elsewhere for mechanisms to buttress and build on their existing contacts. They use Facebook and other social networking sites to find new partners and build new communities around affinities or causes. Undergraduate students lucky enough to participate in the Honors program or the CURO program benefit from rich interaction with faculty and staff across campus, but the general population of students often find it difficult to connect with their professors beyond receiving a grade or a few comments on a paper. As a member of the Libraries Faculty, which is always looking for ways to collaborate with faculty and students across the campus, I often encounter these roadblocks to collaboration myself. How within the current University structure does one find partners for campus wide projects? How does one connect the resources of his or her department with students, faculty, and staff? Searching the University Web site can be a drawn-out process and yield only possible collaborators who are faculty, staff, and sometimes, graduate students or amazing undergraduate students. The Faculty Research and Expertise Database is not broadly populated and excludes staff and students from entering information and searching the database. Informal contacts are great, but they do not extend one’s reach as far as a more integrated system might. Here are some suggestions for building a more integrated community-learning environment: Expand FRED to include access for students and staff; Enrich FRED with more social networking components such as Facebook; Set new expectations for faculty to share their research interests on FRED; Develop a marketing or communication strategy across campus to encourage all to collaborate more with one another.
Require UGARF and other campus funding entities to ask that proposals before them demonstrate integrated collaboration including undergraduates. Strategies for evidence based assessment; Track percentage of proposals with undergraduate participants; Track registration of students on FRED; Develop and assessment tool that measures undergraduate students’ experiences of new more integrated learning models

- service-learning
- Train and fund faculty to set up undergraduate research communities in a variety of disciplines (esp. in the humanities)
- Facilitate interdisciplinary studies, courses, and projects
- Allow MW and WF classes. 50-minute classes are pedagogically TERRIBLE. It is not enough time to cover a topic in depth, assign group work or hear presentations with discussion. My students complain about this all the time. Most research universities allow MW or WF courses, and the best part is it wouldn’t cost a penny.
- Other than reducing their course load, which is probably impractical, this would be introducing MW and WF classes, as I mentioned.
- Allow MW and WF courses to allow for more effective seminar-style upper division courses.
- Create 1 hour 15 minute classes on W, W, F.
- I am writing to disagree with some of my colleagues who are writing in support of 75 minute MW or WF classes. I find these longer classes to be very problematic from a pedagogical standpoint. It’s too long to lecture and keep either the professor’s energy or the students' attention. However, asking students to do reading assignments for every class, so that there can be a mix of lecture and discussion each time, is also impractical, as the students simply will not do the work. While only coming in 2 days a week is attractive to many faculty, I find that students (and I) get much more out of 50-minute MWF classes. I have no opposition to letting some professors schedule MW or WF classes, but I feel strongly that the university should not be forced onto such a schedule. To my mind, 50-minute MWF classes are the best.
- We need to offer students the option of M/W and W/F classes. Fifty-minute classes are too short to include discussion and small group work. And MWF classes undermine many professors research agendas. This change would cost the university nothing and would enhance education and research.
- We desperately need more class time-slots that are longer than 50 minutes. MW or WF classes would be a BRILLIANT addition to the schedule, wouldn't cost the university a dime, and would alleviate the space crunch on T/Th time slots. There are many things that should be happening in undergraduate classes, especially upper-division classes, that are difficult to do in 50 minutes. For those of us in the more far-flung corners of campus, those 50 minutes can easily be whittled down to 45, as students dependent on the bus system often don’t make it across campus on time. Factor in announcements and fielding of general questions, and the amount of time available to delve DEEPLY into a subject is very small. As a teacher who believes in incorporating writing into the classroom experience, the time constraints are almost impossible with a MWF class.
• One option (in regard to pt 2) is to allow more 75 min sections to be offered, either M/W or W/F. As a faculty member, especially in teaching upper level courses, the 75 minute block is a much better format for allowing detailed lectures with sufficient time for discussion and questioning. By opening up M/W and W/F (or even M/F) to the 75 min format, schedules could be better balanced over the course of the week. I recognize that developing a master schedule using both 50 and 75 min class periods on the same day is a challenge. I suggest that you look at other universities that have successfully used this approach. For example, University of South Florida has implemented the following pattern "Three credit hour undergraduate classes will be scheduled for three 50 minute periods on Monday, Wednesday and Friday prior to 3:00 pm, for two 75 minute periods on Monday and Wednesday after 3:00 pm, or for two 75 minute periods on Tuesday and Thursday"

• Hire faculty and increase the number of 75-minute classes by allowing for a M/w or W/F schedule.

• Offer all classes on a twice a week meeting schedule (MW, TH, WF).

• To change all classes (with the possible exception of very large lecture classes) to a two-day schedule.

• The humanities could use M-W classes. 50 minutes is too short to accomplish much and the current system results in a log-jam on T-TR.

• more flexibility with the class schedule. Many classes work best in 75-minute blocks, but the current system (TR being the only days for these classes) puts too much pressure on the schedule. A MW or WF schedule would be a great help.

• teach classes on Monday, Wednesday for 75 minutes as well as Tues. Thursday

• I would want to see a campus conversation about grade inflation that takes into account students' high school experience, the practices of graduate admissions committees (including UGA's), and the disparities between the sciences and the humanities. I would also welcome a change in our schedule to allow 75 min. class meetings on MW or WF. Besides offering advantages to instructors of upper-level courses, this change would cut down on the pressures on TTR classes. The latter are often over-subscribed; they attract students who are more committed to the schedule than the topic; and they encourage some students to think that it is possible to complete a degree studying only two days per week.

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