

General Information

eCore Mission

The mission of eCore is to enable University System of Georgia students the opportunity to successfully and affordably complete the first two years of their collegiate careers in an online environment. eCore Administrative Services provides effective and efficient overall program management, including support for student success; faculty recruitment, support and training; course development; evaluation, and marketing.

eCore: History

In 1999, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia (USG), in collaboration with its institutions, began developing a fully online set of courses that would allow a student to complete core curriculum courses in Areas A-E for science and non-science majors. eCore became an award-winning, high quality, accessible set of interactive online courses that meet defined learning outcomes. eCore courses may be offered by any USG institution, taken by any USG student, and taught by any USG faculty member. (From 2000-2006 Factbook).

Accreditation

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC)

In 2001, the initial five eCore affiliate institutions (Georgia Highlands College, University of West Georgia, Valdosta State University, Columbus State University, Clayton State University) participated in a distance education substantive change visit by SACS. As a result of the visit, those institutions were considered compliant with SACS regulations for the delivery of online courses for the eCore program. To date, several affiliate partners have successfully undergone reaffirmation visits from SACS-COC.

University System of Georgia Resolution

On September 9, 2014, the University System of Georgia Board of Regents issued a resolution supporting an expansion that would make eCore's online general education offerings available to students at all USG comprehensive universities, state universities, and state colleges. The eCore administrative team took immediate action to plan for scalability while maintaining the quality of course delivery and student support. eCore, as a catalyst for increased statewide access to affordable and flexible education, will help the college and university partners retain and graduate existing students as well as appeal to new and underserved populations.

Why Collaboration?

eCore serves as a successful example for collaboratively delivering education in the online environment. It has evolved from being a small, early start-up collaboration (the first in the USG) to a growing model studied carefully by other systems. In FY 2010, it became a fully scalable, self-sustaining program marked by high student retention and satisfaction, proven course quality and outcomes, and renewed interest. In FY 2015, eCore continued on this trajectory.

The hallmarks of its present and future operation are:

Providing increased institutional capacities for fully online programs.

While most USG institutions provide quality online courses, many are limited or unable (due to finite resources or institutional focus) to offer all areas of the core courses online each semester. Without the full core online, institutions cannot offer full undergraduate degree programs online, and thus lose students to more expensive, proprietary institutions. Also, institutions that do offer online core courses often require at least one face-to-face meeting in these courses, whereas eCore courses do not.

Efficient Funding and Model Operations

eCore is one of only a few collaborative programs across the United States that is self-sustaining.

While rising tuition is a reality at most institutions, effective Fall 2014, eCore lowered the per credit-hour tuition rate from \$189 to \$169 – a more than 10% decrease resulting in a tuition cost savings of \$745,340 based on 37,267 credit hours taken in Fall and Spring. Additionally, since Spring 2013, implementation of open educational resources has resulted in a textbook cost savings of \$1,074,693 as of Spring 2015.

Institutions offering eCore courses receive \$42 per credit hour of eCore tuition dollars and have no faculty or course development and revision costs.

eCore relies on centralized administrative services (unduplicated at institutions). These include course development and revisions, faculty development and support, identification and follow-up of student intervention, student success initiatives, student orientations, non-technical call center, tutoring services, data analysis, bookstore, and marketing.

Enrollment Management

eCore course sections are analyzed on a daily basis during the registration periods to provide for the optimum number of course sections. Almost all sections of eCore are managed so that enrollments are sufficient to cover instructional costs. Institutions delivering eCore courses ensure just-in-time capacity for students' unrestricted progression through the core curriculum.

Ongoing Affiliate Support

As eCore continues to add affiliate institutions, there is greater need to streamline processes while successfully offering diligent and consistent support. Beginning with the initial stakeholder meetings, eCore Administration strives to create open and ongoing communication channels. Each institution is part of the planning and scheduling to secure necessary collaborative systems and platforms such as INGRESS and GoView. eCore staff help to identify the responsible campus staff, set task lists for onboarding, and schedule specific trainings for each of the functional areas.

Face-to-face visits for affiliate training assist in securing a sound knowledge base and allow for professional associations to develop. Relationships with key campus staff and partners are essential to successful eCore implementation on each institution's campus.

eCore Administration personnel work daily with all affiliates, securing quality service for students via the following necessary functional areas: Registrar, ITS, Banner, Testing, Bookstore, Budget/ Financials, Advising, Drop / Add, campus Marketing, and general Student Support.

Professional Faculty Development

eCore Administrative Services provides eCore instructors with a certification process before they teach online. Certification includes participation as a student in an online course, as well as comprehensive learning experiences relating to technology, online teaching, faculty expectations, community building, and the role of the instructor in student support. Ongoing support includes mentoring programs, an online community, an annual meeting, and webinars.

Many instructors who teach through eCore take their skills back to their home institutions, where they develop and teach higher-level online courses and mentor other faculty.

Consistent Quality Courses

All eCore courses meet and exceed the rigorous requirements for a 5-Star Online Course or Quality Matters.

All eCore courses are evaluated and substantially revised by teams of eCore faculty every three years. Smaller revisions take place on an ongoing basis.

All eCore faculty agree to engage in specific practices that enhance student learning and success, including: high visibility in courses, timely responsiveness and grading, quality feedback, and identification of students for intervention.

KEY BENEFITS

- Efficient, scalable and consistent student services, course design, and teaching
- Increased institutional capacity and student opportunity: accessible, affordable, and flexible

High Student Course Completion

eCore Administrative Services is staffed with individuals who are highly trained and have experience with the needs of online students, which are usually markedly different than those of on-campus students.

eCore course completion rate has progressively increased, with a reported 88 percent for FY 2015.

There are several influences impacting the student course completion which include:

1. A gated registration system which requires demonstrated understanding of the nature of the courses
2. Streamlined, preemptive calling cycles
3. Identification of students reported for intervention with faculty and eCore administration utilizing the SEADS (Student Engagement and Advancement Data System) platform
4. Faculty training regarding the role of instructor with student success
5. Highly intensive follow up with eCore advisors/administrators
6. Student-friendly navigation within courses and a "connections" tutorial course available prior to semester start
7. Embedded tutors in math, science, and foreign language discipline areas
8. Ongoing evaluation of student withdrawal request and course evaluation data

Growth and Scalability

The improved financial model provides incentives for institutions to become affiliates and provide faculty.

Standardized and streamlined processes support the increasing student enrollment each term. There is continued focus on personalized effective student engagement and quality support.

Through ongoing data collection and analysis, eCore Administrative Services aggressively identifies the changing needs of both member institutions and student populations, and evolves accordingly.

Administrative support for the program has been provided by the University of West Georgia since June 2009.

Course Completion Rate

