

Digest

► **March 18, 2009**

A newsletter for North Georgia College & State University

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class sections and adjunct faculty, a costly proposition in the current economic climate. The Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs developed the new guidelines, which took effect this semester, to also address several enrollment management issues.

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The Digest is published weekly by the Office of University Relations for North Georgia's faculty, staff, students and community.

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Minimum enrollment size implemented for core courses

By Joshua Preston

An increase to the minimum enrollment size of core curriculum courses this semester has allowed the university to put more students into the classroom without adding multiple new class sections and adjunct faculty, a costly proposition in the current economic climate.

The Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs developed the new guidelines, which took effect this semester, to also address several enrollment management issues, including filling classrooms that were not at capacity and to meet student course-scheduling needs.



North Georgia will continue to preserve small-classroom dynamics as minimum enrollments increase to 40 students for many courses in the core curriculum. (Photo: Joshua Preston)

Courses within the university's core curriculum must now have a minimum of 40 students in each section. There are exceptions to the new policy, most notably for all writing-intensive classes that continue to enroll only 25 students each and certain science labs that cannot adequately accommodate more students.

Vice President Linda Roberts-Betsch said that the university is retaining its emphasis on keeping small class sizes, but that if students can't get into a class in certain situations, it would hinder the university's commitment to retain and graduate students. Currently, students are part of a tuition program that guarantees those costs for four years, and offering the courses they need to graduate within a reasonable time period is part of the school's responsibility, Roberts-Betsch said.

Wide flexibility has been given to deans and department heads to accommodate the growth in the core areas. Some faculty members, for example, published their available seats at 35 on the spring schedule but allowed students on a case-by-case basis to enroll, until the class size reached the 40 required.

The idea is to allow faculty to adjust to the new policy while not letting it adversely affect instruction, said Dr. Patricia Donat, associate vice president for academic affairs. Space considerations were also an issue, and deans were given the autonomy to decide how to best manage the enrollment increases relative to the space they have available.

There are currently 53 classrooms on campus with the capacity to seat 40 or more students. The university's master plan, expected to be completed this summer, will address how to add more classroom space to the campus through renovation of existing facilities and the addition of new buildings.

Dr. Chris Jespersen, dean over a majority of the university's core course areas, has had to implement the new policy in many departments within the School of Arts & Letters.

"Flexibility is key to responding to the [budget] situation we are facing," Jespersen said. "At the same time we address student needs, we also have to deal with the financial crunch and maintain instructional integrity."

Before standardizing the minimum core course enrollment this semester, the university, across all

sections in the core curriculum, was averaging 30 students per class. But several areas in the core have needed little or no enrollment adjustments, already exceeding the new minimum, according to data collected from the past five years.

Students taking Economics 2105 ranged from 46 to 51 per class during that time period. Chemistry classes routinely enrolled 40 each and, at their smallest, dipped to 36 students per class. Introductory anthropology, psychology, math and history courses all have stayed close to the 40-student mark during the past several years also.

"By and large, you're only adding about five students in each class," Donat said. "This is one way to meet student needs while increasing enrollment in only a fraction of the core courses."

The university, by averaging five additional students in each of its 366 core course sections, would increase the number of students that faculty members can instruct by approximately 1,800 each semester.

USG consolidates human resources and payroll through Shared Services

From University System of Georgia

Beginning in July, most of the University System of Georgia's (USG) 40,000 employee paychecks will be issued through ADP, a national provider of transaction processing and information-based business solutions. Currently each of the system's 35 colleges and universities has separate databases and business processes for human resources and payroll.

This change will be the first of many as the University System moves forward with its Shared Services program, designed to unify and consolidate the system's separate business functions throughout its colleges and universities. Thirty-two campuses, as well as the University System Office, are included in this initial phase of the Shared Services program. The next phase of the Shared Services program is currently in development.

"This is an important step as we seek to create a new operational structure that will enable us to become more efficient and effective in processing data and serving both our employees and the state," said Usha Ramachandran, vice chancellor for Fiscal Affairs for the USG in an update this week to the Board of Regents.

The regents contracted in June 2008 with ADP to consolidate human resources and payroll into a single system that will facilitate paperless processing of time sheets and benefits enrollment for employees, Ramachandran said. The first checks will be issued through the new system on July 17, 2009.

At a recent open forum held at Macon State University, 230 USG employees who handle human resources and payroll functions at the campus level were briefed on the Shared Services Center and the human resources and payroll consolidation, which marks Phase I of the Shared Services program. The presentation and questions and answers from the forum as well as numerous resources about the USG Shared Services Center, have been posted [online](#).

Take note...

Conner named Employee of the Month

Jarad Conner has been named Employee of the Month for March. A Human Resources Generalist at North Georgia for two years, Conner has helped deliver solutions to employees related to insurance, compensation and other personnel issues. In nominating him for the award, colleagues noted his responsiveness to individual employee concerns and information needs and his ability to make complex human resource issues easy to understand.

Conner is responsible for accurate and timely processing of all benefits enrollments and changes, and he

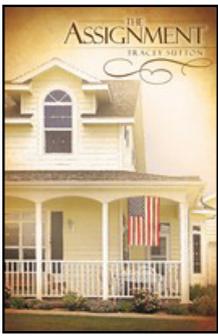
counsels employees on routine benefit programs, including health and dental plans, insurance programs, disability programs, retirement plans and flexible spending. He also collaborates with providers for establishing and changing coverage to employee benefits.

14th Annual Honors Conference is fast approaching

The 14th annual North Georgia College & State University Honors Academic Conference (formerly "Honors Day") is on the afternoons of Tuesday, April 7, and Wednesday, April 8. The Honors conference is a forum to showcase student excellence and achievement. Each department selects student papers or projects to present at their appropriate panel. The panels run from 3 to 7 p.m. each day. The panels will take place on campus, in the Hoag and Gloria Shott auditoriums, the Newton Oakes Center, Dunlap Hall, and the Health and Natural Sciences Building, among other locations. An updated schedule is available at the [Honors Conference Web site](#).

Legislative Update

This week's issue of the USG Legislative Update, which highlights passage of the FY09 amended budget and the bills that survived "crossover day," has been posted and is available for downloading [online](#).



Local author to make bookstore appearance

Tracey Sutton, a local author, has published "The Assignment," featuring the fictional Dahlonega University. She will be available to sign copies of the book at the campus bookstore from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on April 8.

Campus in Action

Henderson presents at conference

Nancy Henderson, assistant professor, learning support programs, presented a demonstration on "Quadratic Equations for Left and Right Brain Learners" at the 33rd Annual Conference of the National Association for Developmental Education in Greensboro, NC, on Feb. 27.

North Georgia faculty and staff are invited to submit news of professional accomplishments for the Campus in Action section to digest@ngcsu.edu.