THE EVOLUTION OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM A SMALL LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

Presented by:
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Dr. Cynthia A. Clem – Executive Director, Center for Academic and Student Success
Dr. Alicia Simon – General Education Curriculum Faculty Coordinator
ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

Clark Atlanta University Profile

Comprehensive, Private, Urban, Coeducational, Historically Black College/University (HBCU)

Atlanta, GA
Accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (2016 to 2026)

• CAU is a consolidation of two institutions: Clark College, founded in 1869, the nation’s first four-year liberal arts college to serve primarily African Americans, and Atlanta University, founded in 1865, the nation’s first African American graduate institution. The institutions were consolidated in 1988 to become Clark Atlanta University.
• CAU is the largest of the four autonomous institutions (CAU, Morehouse College, Spelman College, and Morehouse School of Medicine) in the Atlanta University Center Consortium (AUCC), which boasts one of the largest concentrations of African American students and faculty of color in the United States.
• CAU is the only historically black college/university in the Georgia Research Alliance, an alliance of research institutions in the state.
• CAU is a United Methodist Church-affiliated institution.
• CAU is home to National Public Radio-affiliated only jazz station in Atlanta, WCLK.
In each undergraduate degree program, the institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that:

1. serves as a substantial component of each undergraduate degree,
2. ensures breadth of knowledge, and
3. is based on a coherent rationale.

- For baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: **humanities/fine arts; social/behavioral sciences; and natural science/mathematics. (120 credit hours for a bachelors degree)**
- The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession.
Executive Director, Center for Academic and Student Success (CASS)
THE ACADEMIC REDESIGN CHARGE

General Education Requirements; CAU 2014-16 Undergraduate Catalogue 54-58 credit hours.

- For many students this led to 60 – 64 credit hours devoted to general education. Undergraduate programs of study ranged from 123 – 135 credit hours depending on the major.
- Based on the assumption that students were ready to start at FLX 201 level, and STEM majors were ready to start at CMAT 111 (Calculus I).
- Students had almost no free electives in their degree plans.
- To meet “deficiencies” such as FLX 101 and 102 required students to take an additional 3 – 6 credit hours beyond the 123 – 135 credit hours in the degree plan.
- Add to this high DFW rates in key courses and you can see the burden on students.
- The general education requirements made it almost impossible for a transfer student with an AA degree to graduate from CAU in less than 6 semesters due to the need to catch up on CAU’s general education requirements.
History of General Education

- 1995 Core Curriculum Implementation
- 2010 – 2012 ~ Task Force
  Dean’s Retreat
- 2013 Committee
- 2015 – 2016 Initial Implementation
Academic advisement at Clark Atlanta University is designed to assist students in making appropriate and timely decisions about the course of study in General Education and in the major.

We strive to promote “a coherent course of study” among first-year students and sophomores and to guide students in general when selecting General Education courses as prescribed in the student’s curriculum plan, based on the major.
ACADEMIC ADVISING FRAMEWORK:
ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS TO PROMOTE HOLISTIC SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1. COORDINATION/ACCOUNTABILITY
   - Goals, Outcomes, and Evaluation
   - Professional Development
   - Tactical Operations
   - Periodic Meetings

Retention and Graduation Specialists (RGS)
- Strategically dedicated to support different clusters of students
- Mandatory use of technology to be proactive
- Mandatory advising at multiple levels (e.g., 58-87 credit hours)
- Centrally trained and managed, but locally embedded
- Liaison to Major Advisors

2. SSC CAMPUS PLATFORM
   - Progress Reports
   - Campaigns (Registration, Enrollment, Advisement, FAFSA, etc.)

3. ADVISING PORTAL
   - DegreeWorks
   - Identify RGS
   - Major Advisors
CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
ADVISING STRUCTURE

RETENTION AND GRADUATION SPECIALISTS (RGS)

Freshman
- RGS
  - Mass Media Arts
- RGS
  - Education Psychology Social Work
- RGS
  - Business Administration

Sophomore Year to Senior Year
- RGS
  - Special Populations (e.g., Student-Athletes)
- RGS
  - Accounting Arts Economics Humanities
- RGS
  - STEM
- RGS
  - Criminal Justice Political Science Sociology Theatre and Communication Studies
UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION AT CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY: ADVANCING INNOVATION, MOTIVATION, AND SUCCESS (AIMS)

Goal: To produce graduates who are independent thinkers and who seek to make a difference in their world through actions and ideas that matter.

Continual Improvements
- Assessment of Student Learning
- Evaluation of Program Activities
- Review of Academic Programs
- Student Achievement (Course Completions, Capstone Passing Rates; Student Portfolios and Recitals; Licensure Examinations)
- Evaluation of Success Metrics (retention, progression, graduation, placement, and alumni giving)

Innovation for Success
- Learn > Skills
- Think > Ideas
- Create > Innovation or Intellectual Property
- Lead > Careers & Post – Bac.

Student Development and Coaching
- Advising
- Mentoring
- Coaching
- Tutoring
- Advocating
- Professional Development

Program Alignment for Students
- Academic Roadmaps
- Course Rotation Plans
- Cross-departmental Curricular Review
- Student-centered Teaching Approach
- Educational Objectives
- Major & Career Pathway Exploration
- Finish – in – Four Initiative
- Learning Programs (e.g., in class, co-curricular, experiential)

GOAL

1. The New Curriculum (122 credit hours)
   - New Degree Plans (51 credit hours)
   - New General Education Core (30-36 credit hours)
   - Stackable Credentials (9-12 credit hours)
   - Minor (18-24 credit hours)
   - First-Year Seminar (2 credit hours)

2. Program Alignment for Students
3. Student Development and Coaching
4. Continual Improvements
5. Innovation for Success
DR. CALVIN L. BROWN

Associate Provost for Academic Affairs
CORE REQUIREMENT 8.2b - STUDENT OUTCOMES: GENERAL EDUCATION

The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provide evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of results:

8.2b – Student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs. (Student outcomes: general education)
The core and discipline specific Student Learning Outcomes must produce a graduate that is ready for a career or advanced study (Graduate or Professional School).

Outcomes:

- Proficient in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and nonverbal communication
- Competent in financial, quantitative, technological, and scientific literacy
- Skilled in integrative and collaborative learning
- Competent in critical and creative thinking
- Competent in multicultural and global interactions
- Appreciative of humanities/fine arts
- Comprehension of personal and professional ethics, human values, and holistic wellness
THE 6-STEP PROCESS

CAU DEVISED A 6-STEP INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT & IMPROVEMENT PROCESS
## GE Assessment of Critical Thinking AY 2018 - 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>SLO(s)</th>
<th>Relevant Core Learning Areas</th>
<th>Course Requirements</th>
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| Critical Thinking Skills | Independently demonstrate competency in utilizing critical thinking processes and problem-solving techniques to evaluate arguments or conclusions, to explore causal questions and explanations, and to evaluate data for consistency with facts or hypotheses. | • Science Requirement  
• Mathematics Requirement  
• History Requirement  
• Humanities Requirement  
• Religion/Philosophy Requirement | 1. CBIO 101: Biological Sciences  
2. CCHE 112 General Chemistry  
3. CCIS 100: Information Technology & Computer Application  
4. CPHY 112/L: General and Modern Physics & Lab  
5. CMAT 104: Pre-Calculus I  
6. CMAT 105: Algebra II  
7. CMAT 111: Calculus I  
10. CHIS 212: United States History Since 1877  
11. CHUM 228: Interdisciplinary Humanities I  
12. CPHI 105: Logic and Critical Thinking  
13. CREL 101: The Biblical Heritage  
14. CREL 211: Comparative Religion |
DR. ALICIA SIMON

General Education Curriculum
Faculty Coordinator &
Assistant Professor,
Department of Sociology and
Criminal Justice
You don’t know what you don’t know, until you sit with your peers.

We had done the work of redesign, now we have to refine...reaching “outside for insight.”

Using our new skill sets to work smarter, broader and more strategically.

Peer interaction proved immeasurable, sharing new strategies to assist with our evolution.

We realized that many of the challenges we faced in our evolution process are common and there are tested solutions at the ready.

We re-affirmed the immense value in “Telling Our GE Story.”

Were reminded to remain “fearless” in our GE pursuits and evolution.
The 1st Year of GE at CAU Our Proposal to Participate in the GE Institute was Accepted – Summer 2018

University of Utah

• Learned Strategic Assessment Strategies
• Examined New Faculty Engagement Techniques
• Reviewed Core Competency Best Practices and Innovations
• Shared Our Journey of Academic Plan Redesign
• Assisted Other Institutions with Redesign Strategies Implemented at CAU
• Completed a Comprehensive Action Plan for the AY 18-19
• Returned to CAU and Implemented our Action Plan to Complete Several CAU GE Initiatives
• CAU GE Team was accepted for the 2nd year in a row for the IGEA Summer 2019 in Burlington, VT
We aspire to the New CAU Scholar’s Goals

5 Core Competencies and Student Learning Outcomes redesigned to prepare competitive graduates based on current market skillsets.

5 General Education Core Curriculum Universal Areas of Study that expose our scholars to a broad spectrum of liberal arts disciplines.

5 University Learning Goals created to seamlessly thread competitive competencies throughout the undergraduate and graduate experience at CAU.
CAU Scholar’s Goals (Pending Final Approval)

Faculty Scholars
What Faculty Scholars Teach
- Computer & Information Technology Proficiency
- Critical and Ethical Thinking
- Financial and Quantitative Literacy
- Communication Skills
- Globalization and Humanities Awareness
- CAU General Education

Clark Atlanta University
Scholar’s Goals
- Core Competencies
- Student Learning Outcomes
- Assessment Methods
- University Learning Goals

Student Scholars
What Student Scholars Know
- Proficient in Academic and Professional Software
- Proficient in the aspects of Bloom’s Taxonomy
- Proficient in Mathematical skills and Problem Solving
- Demonstrate Oral and Written Proficiency
- Demonstrate an Understanding of Global Issues and a Culture for Service
- CAU General Education

CALL: One Exceptional University
CAU General Education “Moon Shot” Initiatives

- GE Revision and Streamlining of GE Courses
- GE Recommendations of CAU Scholar Goals
- GECC & OPAR create 1st Bi-Annual Assessment of GE Courses
- GECC, CASS & OPAR revise and update the current CAU Undergraduate Catalog
- General Education Vision and Mission Statements were updated
- Creation of GE Newsletter and Website
- Annual General Education Impact Report
- GE Online Course Implementation and CAU tTech Online Certification
- GECC began review of all undergraduate plans of study by major
- Hosted the 2nd Annual GE Faculty Retreat
- CAU GE “Telling Our Story”; Conferences and Presentations
You were asked to: **DREAM BIG** on behalf of Gen Ed
You were told to: **Be Bold** in your goals and initiatives
You were told to: **Think Outside the Box**
You have aspirations to: **Create the HOLY GRAIL, THE DEFINITIVE PROTOCOL THAT WILL FOREVER LIVE IN YOUR NAMES AT YOUR INSTITUTION**
So we the GE Team of Clark Atlanta University, Dedicate this Cautionary Tale to You,
“IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME….BUT”; The story of our GE Challenges and Triumphs
CHALLENGES & TRIUMPHS – DR. BROWN

Create a General Education Faculty Retreat for all CAU Faculty, Deans, Chairs and related Staff……BUT

CHALLENGES

◦ Competing activities at the university, caused a challenge with the selection of a date and facility that would allow for the most Faculty to participate.
◦ Need to increase faculty participation strategies, we have had approximately 50 faculty attend each of the 3 years of the GE Faculty Institute.
◦ Finding effective ways to alleviate the “potholes” (obstructionists who always stand in the way of progress).

TRIUMPHS

◦ We had a successful and informative GE Faculty retreat which allowed the Faculty to engage and share ideas.
◦ We were able to share highlights from the previous GE Institute and input from Faculty from the previous year.
◦ Share the successful implementation GE initiatives from the previous year.
◦ Hosted Dr. John Gardner as our keynote speaker, who assisted us with the framework for the First Year Seminar Redesign.
◦ Faculty were allowed to share their dream/wish list of their recommendations for GE improvement and future initiatives.
◦ The showcasing of the upcoming Co-Curricular Units initiatives for AY 19-20, which impact and assist GE at CAU.
CHALLENGES & TRIUMPHS – DR. SIMON

Create a separate General Education Assessment of all GE Courses (the 3rd rail of Faculty Life)……BUT

CHALLENGES

◦ Faculty are busy and don’t often understand how their data will be utilized.
◦ Faculty think their data will be punitively used against them.
◦ The input process/technology was not designed with the faculty in mind (process confusing and long).
◦ Faculty had to be” introduced” to assessing GE “specifically” for the first time.
◦ The Assessment Office and GE have not collaborated on the best approach to GE Assessment.

TRIUMPHS

◦ The IMPROVE process was designed by and for the Faculty, for effectiveness and speed.
◦ The GE data submitted will be seen by specific persons only, for specific GE purposes only.
◦ Through our GE “visibility” throughout campus, outreach and the GE Faculty Retreat, the Faculty at large now look forward to certain GE activities and initiatives throughout the year.
◦ GE and OPAR work seamlessly to program assessment practices and processes to maximize Faculty data input and preparation related to technology and applications.
CHALLENGES & TRIUMPHS – DR. CLEM

Create a separate General Education Unit and Revitalize the General Education Curriculum Committee……BUT

CHALLENGES

◦ Several iterations of GE fluctuated between Staff oversight and Faculty oversight, the Administration at that time made the decision to place GE in the hands of the faculty.
◦ Construction of the initial GECC, it was important to get to the correct mix of stakeholders from faculty and staff.
◦ Conflict regarding GE course reduction and alignment, while maintaining credit hour requirements.
◦ Inclusivity and understanding of GE recommendations caused us to re-evaluate the understanding each department had of the current GE initiatives and changes.

TRIUMPHS

◦ Core decision-making group led by the Faculty Director and a coordinated effort that includes faculty from all schools/divisions OPAR, Graduate Programs, CASS, SSCL and the Office of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs.
◦ Transparency of communication of all GE initiatives and recommendations via the Impact Report, the GE Faculty Retreat and the Provost Reports.
◦ The Provost and Associate Provost, hosted the CASS Executive Director, Registrar, GE Coordinator and every Dean and Chair for every school at the University to conduct a comprehensive alignment review of all Academic Plans of Study at CAU.
IRON SHARPENS IRON

Share your General Education Challenges and Triumphs
Q&A

We are happy to answer any questions regarding our GE Evolution
BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND – “COMPETING” ...

USING BEST PRACTICES AND DATA TO REACH THE GOAL OF PREPARING 21ST CENTURY “COMPETITIVE” SCHOLARS

Assessing our General Education outcomes, remaining academically agile and providing cutting edge professional development to our GE faculty...will help CAU continue to

REIMAGINE... EVOLVE... COMPETE.
Clark Atlanta University General Education

Reimagine... Evolve... Compete...

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