



The University of Georgia

University Council
Athens, Georgia 30602

August 23, 2016

UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE – 2016-2017

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Dear Colleagues:

The attached proposal for a new Georgia Center for Assessment will be an agenda item for the August 26, 2016, Full University Curriculum Committee meeting.

Sincerely,

William K. Vencill, Chair
University Curriculum Committee

cc: Provost Pamela S. Whitten
Dr. Rahul Shrivastav

Proposal for Change in Status of The Georgia Center for Assessment

August 25, 2016

Background and Request for Change in Status

The Georgia Center for Assessment (GCA) has operated for over 30 years as an informal center housed in the College of Education (COE). This is a proposal to change the status of GCA and to establish it as a formal center within the University of Georgia. In 2004, the center changed its name from Test Scoring and Reporting Services to the Georgia Center for Assessment.

Purpose and Mission of GCA

GCA's mission is one of conducting and disseminating leading edge research on assessment and evaluation methods, models and procedures and on providing and supporting implementation of state-of-the-art assessments to educational agencies in the state of Georgia and beyond. An important aspect of the work by GCA is the provision of opportunities for researchers to study operational assessment methods in situ. GCA also has an extensive outreach program, providing professional development opportunities for educators in the state. In this way, GCA encourages research on assessment and implementation of research in operational testing programs. GCA has an active program of outreach to educators and users of assessments in the creation, use, and analysis of assessments serving respective stakeholders for informing decision-making, guiding instructional practice, and improving student learning and achievement.

- **The primary mission of GCA is to conduct and disseminate research and services on assessment, particularly in operational settings, and to provide state-of-the-art assessments and assessment-related services to education agencies in the state of Georgia and beyond.**

In addition to supporting the research and service missions of UGA, GCA supports the instructional mission of UGA. GCA provides graduate research assistantships and internship opportunities for students studying and working on problems in assessment as well as travel funding for faculty and students to attend conferences to present their research. GCA faculty also teach graduate courses in the COE primarily in the Quantitative Methodologies program, supervise theses and dissertations, serve on student committees, and mentor students in conducting and disseminating their research. GCA serves as an agent of change by developing, studying, and leading students, teachers, schools, and districts in the state of Georgia and across the nation to investigate and implement innovative approaches to assessment, instruction, and data analysis that impact student learning and achievement as well as professional growth for educators.

GCA faculty and staff engage in an active program of seeking grants and contracts to support its work on assessment. Although the focus of that program is primarily on assessment-

related projects, GCA faculty also work with other scholars to seek grants in their respective areas, as active psychometric researchers as well as quantitative methodologists. In this latter regard, GCA faculty have studied methods for investigating problems such as analysis of the impact of interventions as well as detection of response to intervention.

Goals and Aims of the Center

The primary goal of GCA is to increase the impact, quality, and visibility of work at UGA regarding assessment with a focus on improving the quality of assessment both in the state as well as beyond. Much of the research and development in assessment is interdisciplinary, requiring the expertise of a diverse group of scholars and specialists. GCA provides a permanent staff of these specialists and many of the scholars in order to support this effort.

Specific aims in this regard include the following:

- Facilitating and supporting the work of researchers and scholars to secure external funding for interdisciplinary work requiring expertise in assessment.
- Mentoring for developing scholars for the purpose of helping them secure external funding for their interdisciplinary research.
- Developing training opportunities that support graduate and post-graduate education and serving as a site for internships focused on operational testing programs.
- Providing leadership for educators in improving the quality and use of assessments.
- Increasing the visibility of the COE and its researchers in the community of scholars both at UGA as well as in the rest of the scholarly community.

Vision for the Center

GCA will continue to provide support for research and development on state-of-the-art testing programs and psychometric methodology to support current and new programs. It will marshal the significant intellectual resources of UGA to help build and support graduate education in quantitative methodologies, to develop new methodologies and forms of assessment that can measure increasingly complex skills, and to develop new delivery mechanisms to support those new forms of assessment. In this regard, for over three decades, GCA faculty have been securing external funding to support interdisciplinary work on new forms of assessments that utilize the latest in technology for individualizing assessments that can measure students' learning with far greater precision and accuracy than is possible with existing forms of assessment. Our vision is that the Center will enhance the efforts of faculty to study and implement these new forms of assessments and will increase the impact and visibility of research at UGA.

Justification of the Need to Change the Status of GCA

Central to its land grant mission, UGA has experienced an ever increasing emphasis on research and scholarly productivity. Within the COE, there has been ongoing success at generating independent lines of research all focused on improving the education of students in the state as well as beyond. Much of the work on improving education is interdisciplinary. Teams of faculty working in multiple disciplines have all been engaged

in working together on different aspects of the general problem of improving education for our students and our nation. The focus on interdisciplinary research in education and in assessment in particular is consistent with the nature of advanced scholarly research in other areas of science. This focus arises from the increasingly complex kinds of problems that our scientist are able to study and the increasing priority on studying complex problems at funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the Institute for Education Science. Each of these agencies has focused substantial resources on solving the most complex problems. The capacity and support needed to pursue these problems is enhanced by establishing support within UGA. This enables researchers to work formally to develop and submit proposals and then to support their funded work. A center like GCA has been doing this kind of work for over 30 years. It has been successfully bringing together teams of researchers to study complex problems in educational assessment and to secure external funding to support that work.

GCA will continue to serve as a coordinating unit to integrate the strengths of faculty across UGA and beyond in their pursuit of research on educational assessment. GCA faculty have helped establish and coordinate teams of researchers with converging research interests. For example, significant collaborations already exist within UGA and include GCA, the Departments of Educational Psychology, of Mathematics and Science Education, and of Educational Theory and Practice. The primary need that GCA will fulfill is to help enhance the development and success of these interdisciplinary project teams at securing grants and contracts, thereby supporting the ongoing work on addressing some of the very complex problems facing our society. GCA also will provide resources for helping work with schools in the state, sophisticated instrumentation and methodological procedures for assessing educational interventions and instructional innovations, and for enhancing the visibility of UGA faculty in the larger education research community. As part of its outreach mission, GCA will continue to provide professional development opportunities for faculty and educators in the state, help to enrich the preparation of future researchers to engage in interdisciplinary collaborative research on significant and complex problems, and to augment the efforts to attract the most talented faculty to come to UGA.

Advantages of GCA

An important benefit of GCA is the increased potential it provides for external funding for interdisciplinary faculty research on significant problems in education. Interdisciplinary research is a critical class of activities that brings together scholars and researchers from across UGA and the world to address complex problems in educational research. Most of the research and development work in assessment is both collaborative and interdisciplinary. GCA faculty have been successful in securing external funding for research and development in educational assessment. For over three decades, GCA faculty have secured significant levels of funding from education agencies in Georgia, including the Georgia Department of Education and the Gwinnett County Schools.

- **An important benefit of GCA is the support and expertise it provides for increasing the potential for securing external funding for interdisciplinary research on significant problems in education.**

The expertise in quantitative methodologies at GCA is a critical component of research on many of the complex problems in education. GCA faculty have made significant contributions and have been recognized nationally and internationally for development of new quantitative methodologies for addressing these problems. In addition, GCA faculty have been fundamental contributors to forming project teams of UGA and other researchers for securing external funding for research in areas requiring expertise in quantitative methodologies. These contributions have already resulted in securing significant levels of funding for over a decade from major federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and the Institute for Education Sciences.

Services offered by GCA

Research: GCA faculty have been successful at developing and disseminating cutting-edge research on a range of topics in educational assessment. The productivity of GCA faculty stems in large part because of the availability of operational testing programs that GCA supports. These programs provide the test bed for much of the development work that has led to GCA innovations in areas such as standard setting, test equating, research and development of new psychometric models, and research and development of new quantitative methodologies for educational and psychological research.

GCA support includes technical expertise, space for professional staff and students to work on contracts and grants, equipment to support work of faculty and staff, and assistance in developing collaborative teams of researchers and staff to seek out and secure external funding. This includes development of database programming, development of secure web-based testing applications, and support for maintenance of operational testing programs.

Instruction: As is the case for all UGA centers, GCA does not provide course credit. GCA faculty do teach courses, advise students, and supervise theses and dissertations primarily in the Department of Educational Psychology. GCA faculty and professional staff also work with graduate students mentoring them on conducting psychometric research and developing and maintaining operational testing programs.

Service and Outreach: GCA has a long history of providing services and outreach to the educational community in Georgia. GCA faculty and staff provide substantial hours of onsite professional development on assessment for educators around the state. These services are funded by cost-recovery fees charged to schools and districts.

Resources

Physical Space and Equipment. GCA is currently housed in a facility with approximately 12,500 square feet. All support for GCA space, staff, and equipment is provided from external funding. Current contracts are listed in Appendix A. In addition to contracts, GCA is also estimating \$1,600,000 for fiscal year 2017 from cost-recovery services provided to schools in Georgia.

GCA conducts research and services on assessment, particularly in operational settings. GCA also provides state-of-the-art assessments and assessment-related services to education agencies, primarily in the state of Georgia. GCA is beginning to expand the kinds of research and development in which faculty and staff are engaged. As an example, we are transitioning from paper-and-pencil testing to online interactive high-tech testing solutions. The Georgia Milestones testing program is an example of a large scale statewide testing program that is seeking to transition to this kind of testing solution. The Georgia Milestones testing program is also seeking to work with GCA to support this testing program. In addition, GCA has also developed an online testing program that is provided to schools in Georgia to help prepare students for new forms of assessment, such as those that are included in the Georgia Milestones. Furthermore, psychometric statisticians at GCA are currently working on developing statistical models that can provide better information about students' online testing performances to help better inform teachers, parents, and students. Work in this area requires additional space to house the IT infrastructure, the staff to develop and maintain that infrastructure, staff to develop the statistical infrastructure to support the testing solutions, staff to develop the content for the examinations, and staff to support the online assessments at the individual school and classroom levels.

GCA is also increasing its involvement with educational testing organizations outside the State. This includes working on a new contract with a major international testing company to develop and test out new forms of readiness tests for early childhood education. As GCA continues to grow and expand the research and development contract and grant work, additional permanent professional staff will be needed. The space GCA currently occupies no longer supports the development of new areas of its core research and development activities such as transitioning from a paper-based testing to online high tech testing solutions.

Plan to move to new facility. The current facility cannot support any future development of GCA research or development. As a result, GCA is seeking to move into new facilities that will have greater space for offices and conference rooms in addition to supporting the existing research and development efforts.

Proposed New Facility. GCA has located a building with sufficient office space that would enable it to expand its capacity in order to handle the added staffing and infrastructure required to support testing programs such as the Georgia Milestones

testing program. This facility is located at 300 Research Drive in Athens. A flyer and floor plan for the building is provided in Appendix D. It has about 25 to 30 offices on two floors with adequate free parking for staff. The building has approximately 10,500 square feet and is being quoted at an annual rental of \$11.25 per square foot for an annual rental of \$118,125. This rent is in line with current commercial rental figures in the Athens area and would be a **reduction of approximately \$97,000 from the current \$216,260 rent GCA is now paying**. In addition, GCA would have approximately the same costs as now for internet and networking maintenance support. **As noted above, all expenses for facilities, maintenance, and staffing are covered by current contracts and income from services.**

Faculty and Staff. GCA is directed by a faculty member. All staff at GCA except the director are supported from external sources. Currently, there are about 25 full-time staff. Professional staff are hired by GCA and supported by external contracts, grants, or income accounts. Accounting and administrative support is provided by GCA for all projects within the center. In addition, GCA hires between 100 and 150 temporary staff to provide hand scoring of examinations for the external contracts, services, and grants it has secured.

Financial: GCA is fully supported by external funding from grants, contracts, and cost-recovery services. The grants received thus far for the current fiscal year are listed in Appendix A. GCA currently has an annual income of approximately \$4 million in external funding from grants and contracts and another approximately \$1,600,000 in its income account for professional development services provided as a part of its outreach efforts. All services of the Center are provided on a cost-recovery basis.

Dr. Melissa Fincher, Associate Superintendent at the Georgia Department of Education, and the Governor's Office have expressed a desire to transition the entire Milestones testing contract to GCA over the next few years. This transition will begin this fiscal year with a contract for scoring of Milestones test questions. That contract is not listed in Appendix A as GCA is still negotiating the work with GA DOE. We expect that this contract will be approximately \$1 million starting next fiscal year. This will include additional scoring and content development and psychometric work on Milestones tests. The current total amount of the Milestones contract is approximately \$16 million annually.

Faculty Affiliation: Faculty in any department at UGA who wish to participate in the activities and services of GCA may apply for affiliation. Current faculty in GCA and their primary departments are given in Appendix B. It is anticipated that faculty from the following colleges and departments at UGA may decide to seek affiliation:

- Department of Educational Psychology
- Department of Statistics
- Department of Biostatistics
- Department of Psychology

Operating Policies and Procedures of GCA

Administrative Unit: GCA is located administratively in the COE dean's office and reports to the associate dean for research.

Appointments in GCA: The director will be appointed by the dean of the COE. The appointment of the director will be reviewed annually by the dean. As part of the Defined Review Process (described below), the Advisory Board (described below) will provide an annual review to the dean of the performance of GCA.

Advisory Board: GCA will have an Advisory Board with the following responsibilities: recommend policies for the Center, provide advice regarding priorities for the Center, provide an annual review of the Center and its director, recommend changes in the strategic plan of the Center, and advise director on faculty membership in the Center. The Advisory Board will include the Center director, the associate director, representatives from educational agencies in Georgia involved with GCA, and faculty researchers involved with the Center for a total of eight members. Board members will serve three-year terms.

Appointments and Affiliations: The director of GCA will be appointed and reviewed annually by the dean of the COE. Faculty interested in affiliation with the Center will apply to the director for membership who will receive advice from the Board. (The current list of faculty working in GCA is given in Appendix B.) Personnel supported on grants or contracts that utilize the Center (e.g., professional staff, graduate students) will be determined by the principal investigator or the program director supervising that funding and the director. Graduate assistants will be selected and supervised by the director.

Review Process: An annual report will be submitted by the Center director to the associate dean for research in the COE. This report will document research, educational and service activities, and summaries of progress toward Center goals. The report will include evidence regarding measured outcomes.

The Center will undergo formal review by the dean's office at the end of the third year from the approval of the changes proposed here. The Center will subsequently be reviewed every five years. This review will evaluate progress toward the stated goals for the Center in research and outreach, a description of changes to resources, commitments regarding operating agreements, and a recommendation for continuation of the Center or not.

Measurable outcomes to be included in the annual report include the following:

- The amount of external funding received
- Number of grant and contract proposals submitted and awarded
- Measures of customer satisfaction
- Number of faculty affiliates
- Revenue generated from service programs
- Number of and revenue generated from professional development programs

Appendix A: Current list of GCA Contracts and Grants

Contracts	Amount	Start Date	End Date
GKIDS	\$216,674	7/1/2016	6/30/2017
Georgia Alternative Assessments	\$149,442	1/1/2016	12/31/2016
Georgia Kindergarten Indicators of Developing Skills	\$1,064,999	12/5/2014	12/31/2016
Georgia Kindergarten Indicators of Developing Skills, continuation	\$206,070		11/30/2017
Georgia Student Growth Modeling	\$307,559	7/1/2016	6/30/2017
IDEA Surveys for Special Needs*	\$ 57,989	9/1/2015	8/31/2016

*Renewal of new contract approved by GA DOE to start 9/1/2016.

Grants

<i>Engaging Students In Diabetic Kidney Disease: An Interactive Inquire Approach.</i> National Institutes of Health. Cohen is Co-PI. (Housed in School of Veterinary Medicine)	\$492,757	1/7/2013	12/31/2017
<i>Developing Enhanced Assessment Tools for Capturing Students' Procedural Skills and Conceptual Understanding in Math.</i> Institute of Educational Sciences. Bradshaw, Choi and Cohen are Co-I's. \$1,597,496. Subcontract to University of Kentucky	\$394,206	7/1/2015	6/30/2019

GCA Faculty Grant Collaborations with UGA faculty outside of GCA

<i>Language-Rich Inquiry Science with English Language Learners through Biotechnology (LISELL-B).</i> Cohen is Co-PI. National Science Foundation. (Housed in Educational Theory & Practice).	\$2,648,051	8/1/2013	7/31/2017
<i>Stimulating Young Scientists to Engage, Motivate and Synthesize (SYSTEMS).</i> Cohen is Co-PI. National Institutes of Health (Housed in Math & Science Ed)	\$1,341,173	7/1/2014	6/30/2019
<i>Investigating Proportional Relationships from two Perspectives (InPreP2).</i> Bradshaw is Co-PI. National Science Foundation. (Housed in Math & Science Ed.)	\$1,331,220	1/15/2014	8/12/2018
<i>The Integration of Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education into Family and Children.</i> Choi is Key Personnel. Administration for Children and Families – OFA, HHS-2015-ACF-OFA-FM-0985	\$8,219,213	2015	2020
<i>Problem Solving Skills as Predictors of Success and Persistence in Biology.</i> Choi is Statistical Advisor. National Science Foundation Career Grant.	\$339,538	2014	2019

Appendix B: Faculty in GCA

Name	Primary Department
Jeffrey Barker, Senior Research Scientist	GCA
Dr. Barker is a career-track faculty member and is associate director of GCA. He is evaluated for promotion and salary increases by the director of GCA. He is budgeted 100% on external funding in GCA.	
Laine Bradshaw, Associate Professor	Educational Psychology
Dr. Bradshaw is a tenured faculty member and is a research scientist in GCA. She is evaluated for promotion, tenure and salary increases by Educational Psychology. She is budgeted for the academic year at 56.25% on regular UGA funds in Educational Psychology, 18.75% on regular UGA funds in GCA. She also has external grants through Educational Psychology and Mathematics and Science Education.	
Hye-Jeong Choi, Assistant Research Scientist	GCA
Dr. Choi is a career track faculty member and is evaluated for promotion and salary increases by the director of GCA. She is budgeted 100% on external funding in GCA.	
Allan Cohen, Professor	Educational Psychology
Dr. Cohen is a tenured faculty member and is the director of GCA. He is evaluated for salary increases by Educational Psychology and by the dean of the College of Education. He is budgeted for the academic year at 75% on UGA funds in GCA. He also has external grants through GCA, Mathematics and Science Education, and the School of Veterinary Medicine.	
Amanda Ferster, Assistant Research Scientist	GCA
Dr. Ferster is a career track faculty member and an assistant director of GCA. She is evaluated for promotion and salary increases by the director of GCA. She is budgeted 100% on external funding in GCA.	
Stephanie Lai, Assistant Research Scientist	GCA
Dr. Lai is a career track faculty member and is evaluated for promotion and salary increases by the director of GCA. She is budgeted 100% on external funds in GCA.	
Kevin Raczynski, Assistant Research Scientist	GCA
Dr. Raczynski is a career track faculty member and an assistant director of GCA. He is evaluated for promotion and salary increases by the director of GCA. He is budgeted 100% on external funds in GCA.	