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Blazing New Trails

Welcome to fall 2015 and our first newsletter of the new school year! This newsletter is jammed-packed with useful information. I hope you can find the time to give it a quick read. This newsletter isn’t just for those teaching online; it is for anyone interested in engaging students with modern pedagogy and technology-enhanced teaching and learning.

You may not know this, but as of this fall, UWG has almost 2000 exclusively online full-time students. This means that almost one out of every six students on this campus (well, not actually “on” this campus) is taking only online classes.

We have also seen a dramatic uptick in enrollment for joint/dual credit students, the opening of the new-and-improved Newnan Center, efforts to cater to adult and military learners, and we are beginning to get our feet wet exploring competency-based approaches to program delivery. We continue to hear from traditional students that they want more flexible delivery options and better-integrated technology in their face-to-face classes as well.

If we are to continue to grow and to meet the benchmarks of our strategic plan, we will need to take advantage of opportunities that allow us to make educational delivery more accessible, flexible, and affordable for learners of all ages, locations, and circumstances.

So, with this in mind, give the newsletter a read and learn about how your faculty and staff colleagues are leading the charge to make UWG the best place to work, learn, and succeed.

Enjoy your semester and, as always, we are here to help—so don’t be shy about asking!

Cheers,

Dr. Jason Huett

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**Innovation Through Digital Strategies**

*UWG|Online can help you enhance your face-to-face, hybrid, and online courses with digital options to increase flexibility, student engagement, learning, and RPG, as well as ease classroom management responsibilities.*
The Best & Brightest

Our staff is dedicated to helping students succeed in online courses and enabling distance faculty to focus on teaching rather than technology. In addition to responsive helplines and personal assistance, our staff constantly seeks ways to improve our online programs and to develop innovative ways to promote quality in online teaching and research.

Recognitions

Janet Gubbins, Director of UWG|Online was recognized in October 2014 and March 2015 as a Divisional Award Winner for 2014-2015.

Team members, Jessica, David, Michael, and Wendy were each recognized for their commitment to make UWG the best comprehensive university in America — sought after to work, learn, and succeed!

Engage West! Presentations, Partnerships, Training, Workshops

We had the opportunity to present at a several conferences this year! At this year’s 2nd Annual Innovations in Pedagogy conference, UWG|Online shared great tips for faculty interested in digital options for their courses. This year, the inaugural Meaningful Living in a Digital World conference was held in historic downtown Savannah, Georgia. Presenters included Beth René Roepnack, Associate Director of Online Faculty Development and David Lloyd. We wrapped up the year at the 16th Annual Distance Learning Administration Conference (DLA) in beautiful Jekyll Island, Georgia.

In a partnership with the English Department, Wendy Grisham assisted in the creation and implementation of the new Writing OnLine for Freshman (WOLF) course. WOLF is an online mini-class designed to help freshmen make an easier transition from high school to UWG. It originated as part of UWG’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), which focuses on improving undergraduate writing in the core curriculum.

The Engage West! Faculty Edition New Faculty Orientation series offered new faculty the opportunity to meet UWG|Online. This year, we held afternoon workshops which introduced faculty to CourseDen basics to get them started for the new year. We’ll be offering a series of workshops in basic and advanced topics throughout the semester, details to come soon!

Staff News

Our staff is growing and changing! In addition to her responsibilities as the UWG eCore Liaison, Nakita Hogans recently accepted the position of Academic Instructional Support Specialist. Jessica Loiacono officially adds Instructional Designer to her title. We’re also very happy to welcome Meggie Miller, who joined the team as our Online Student Success Advisor, providing assistance to current and prospective online students. Meggie collaborates with campus partners to ensure student enrolled in online programs receive the highest level of student services. She also supports UWG|Online as one of the UWG’s eCore Liaisons.
We asked Dr. Byrd to tell us about his experience developing a fully online course for the first time and what advice he has for future faculty course developers.

My name is Josh Byrd and I’m the Director of Bands and an Assistant Professor here at West Georgia. I conduct the Wind Ensemble each semester and teach a number of Music Education courses at UWG, one of which is Music Technology (MUSC 3230).

Why did I go online?
Our Department went fully online with our Masters in Music Education degree a few years back and we had been talking about the possibility of me teaching a summer elective class for quite some time. We decided that an advanced Music Tech class (Technology in Music Education, MUSC 5230) was the best fit and this is the first summer (Session III) that I’m teaching the class.

I knew that it would take a lot of work to prepare, so I got in touch with UWG|Online to start two separate elements: course design and Quality Matters.

My expectations were wide open as I had never taught online. I knew that there were many positives and negatives but I had no personal experience to give me any bias either way. I did, however, start Quality Matters pretty early on in the school year. These three classes (I went all the way through the Peer Reviewer Course) did much more than just help out in terms of what to look for in an online course. These classes provided me many of the frustrations that students experience with online learning, hopefully showing me what to avoid with the class I’m currently teaching.

What would I take away from the entire development experience?
Starting early was the best decision I could have ever made. I was constantly updating a list of “things to add” to MUSC 5230 before it even existed. I was able to talk to my colleagues teaching online to see what their opinions might be. I was also able to start working with UWG’s Online Learning staff, particularly Jessica Loiacono, early enough to send them ideas and start creating the course mentally. She was incredibly helpful in person, but it was her remote assistance that I appreciated as the first day of class approached. Online Learning provided me with a “sandbox” class to tweak and edit. Jessica was able to view my course, fix embedding errors, suggest adding/removing modules or course elements. She used her experience to help me see the class through the eyes of the student.

What advice would I give myself 4 months ago when I started developing the online class?
Probably “creating an online demo video
through QuickTime isn’t time consuming, but adding captions through YouTube takes FOREVER.” I am very happy that students can at least listen to me teach as I take them through a "screen cast" of my computer but the captions really take an incredible amount of time.

**What advice do I have for another faculty member just getting started?**

First, take the QM (Quality Matters) series if you’ve never taken an online class. There are certain elements that will drive you crazy. Next (and I know I’m repeating myself), START EARLY, especially if you are teaching within a short time frame. You can’t give the students 10% of the class and create as you go. Some students will expect to plow through in quick bursts; if you’re not fully prepared it will be a bad experience for the both of you, I think. Lastly, contact Online Learning as soon as possible and start working with their templates. It was comforting to know that as long as I stuck to their plan/format I was creating an effective setup for my class. All in all, UWG|Online was great, QM was frustrating, and I’m glad to finally be teaching what’s taken several months to prepare!

**UWG|Online is working hard to bring you the latest in online course design and will offer free alternatives, which are developed with your and our students needs at the forefront.**

**UWG | Music**

Josh Byrd is Director of Bands and Assistant Professor of Music at the University of West Georgia. Dr. Byrd received the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Conducting from the University of Georgia and a Master of Music degree and Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the University of Georgia, respectively.

After graduating from UGA in 2000, Dr. Byrd taught for three years in the Atlanta area at Norcross High School and Lanier Middle School. Following his masters studies he served as the Director of Bands at Arrowhead High School in Hartland, Wisconsin from 2005 -2008.

Dr. Byrd remains active in the southeast as a clinician, adjudicator and arranger. His professional affiliations include the College Band Directors National Association, the National Band Association, Pi Kappa Lambda, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia and Kappa Kappa Psi.

http://www.westga.edu/show_bio.php?emp_id=31921
Recently the UWG College Deans reviewed a *Quality Assurance in Online Courses* plan. The Quality Assurance document clarifies faculty training and course standards for online courses based on requirements outlined by SACSCOC, the USG, and other accrediting bodies. This plan provides departments with the knowledge they need to maximize student success in their online courses, achieve UWG’s strategic goals, and reach UWG’s underserved populations. A well-designed online course can increase student engagement, increase student learning, and assist in supporting RPG rates.

**Quality Assurance in Online Courses**

The plan proposes faculty training guidelines and course standards. For those without any online teaching experience, three courses, including one Quality Matters course, are suggested for faculty training. For those who have been teaching online for three semesters or more, the plan suggests annual refresher courses. To meet this need for more training, UWG|Online Faculty Development Center is developing an introduction to teaching online course, that will cover online pedagogy and course design. UWG|Online is also creating more
advanced courses for experienced online instructors: A Best Practices in Online Education workshop, which focuses on the process of teaching online, will be offered November 3 and 4.

**Best Practices In Online Courses**

The second part of the document focuses on best practices in course standards. Extensive research shows that providing students with a consistent and familiar experience in the online environment with sound communication from the instructor increases retention and engagement. To that end, the courses standards in the plan support unambiguous course structure and clear communication of course information, expectations of students and faculty, and assignment instructions.

The plan closes with suggestions for closing the loop with online student evaluations and ways to increase online evaluation response rates.

The Quality Assurance document is a tool that can be individualized by each department to create a positive educational experience for students taking online courses. We encourage you to explore it.

*Questions? Comments? Contact Dr. Beth René Roepnack in the Faculty Development Center.*

**UWGO Tip**

**Emergency e-Kit**

Even if your class is an on-campus/face-to-face class, you can use CourseDen/D2L as an emergency backup in the event of a campus closure. This plan could include things like emailing your students or utilizing CourseDen/D2L in order to communicate, to share assignments, and to give class quizzes.

With resources such as CourseDen at your fingertips, you can easily maintain an "emergency teaching and learning area" just for your class.
It’s been an exciting year for distance faculty and online courses and degree programs!

In 2015, students interested in completing a Bachelor of Science with a Major in Sociology, can do so entirely online! The Sociology BS program provides students with mastery of basic academic subject matter along with the skills necessary for enrichment and continued success in academic and workplace environments following graduation.

Exciting things are happening just around the corner in Newnan, Georgia. Doors opened for fall courses in August 2015 in the newly renovated old historic Newnan Hospital at 80 Jackson Street. Dual Enrollment, Educational Opportunities Up in Coweta County. The number of
students participating in dual enrollment at the University of West Georgia Newnan campus has quadrupled since last year!

**Online Programs Among the Best**

We all know UWG is the best place to work, learn, and succeed — and the rest of the world knows it too!

**UWG’s Online MBA Ranks Among the Most Affordable.** The degree program rounded out the top 3 most affordable AACSB Online MBA Program in the U.S.!

Our Ed.D. in School Improvement was just named as 5th best non-profit program for putting "Students Before Profits." Ed.D. in School Improvement offers a unique opportunity for educators looking for an interdisciplinary, inquiry-based doctoral program that prepares graduates to become the next generation of change agents.

**Quality Matters at UWG**

A total of 8 courses from the University of West Georgia were submitted for a formal, external Quality Matters Peer Course Review. We are happy to announce all 8 courses met QM review expectations!

Dr. David Jenks holds the distinction of being the first faculty course developer at UWG to submit a course for the formal review. Dr. Patricia Riley and Dr. Elizabeth Stupi, of Criminology developed 5 of the courses which met QM review expectations. This was Dr. Stupi’s first course to be reviewed by QM and Dr. Riley’s 4th—all of which met review standards! Dr. Frank Stonier of Teaching and Learning, submitted the first course from the College of Education to meet review standards.

Each of these of these courses are now eligible to carry the QM Certification Mark and are listed on the 2015 QM Recognized Courses database.

In addition to our QM course reviews, 51 faculty and staff members completed the UWG QM Training sequence since our last newsletter!

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**Student Spotlight**

Jessica Ainsworth was recently recognized for her School Improvement Efforts. Jessica is currently completing her Doctorate of Education in School Improvement fully online! Read more about Jessica and her accomplishments at UWG Perspective

What does this mean for students who are attending UWG? Instructors who have completed this sequence are recognized as UWG|Online Course Instructor Certified. They are given the tools to create successful online courses. Congratulations to the following instructors who have recently been certified:

For a complete list of faculty and staff, visit our website uwgonline.westga.edu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UWG</th>
<th>Online Course Certified Instructors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rita Tekippe</td>
<td>Viviene Wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacey Morin</td>
<td>Susan Boes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meg Pearson</td>
<td>Crill Head</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nadya Williams</td>
<td>Dawn Putney</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Kramer</td>
<td>Yan Yang</td>
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<td>Josh Byrd</td>
<td>Kim Huett</td>
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<td>Douglas Stuart</td>
<td>Robert Voelkel, Jr.</td>
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<td>Farooq Khan</td>
<td>Jennifer Edelman</td>
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<tr>
<td>S. Swamy-Mruthinti</td>
<td>Christie Johnson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Li Yang</td>
<td>Tami Ogletree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeong Seong</td>
<td>Jill Drake</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mai Naito</td>
<td>Jessica Bucholz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gavin Lee</td>
<td>Sandra Robbins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynn Pazzani</td>
<td>Nickey Johnson</td>
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<td>Bradford Yates</td>
<td>Donna Harkins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heather Mbaye</td>
<td>Elaine Roberts</td>
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<td>Sheikh Drammeh</td>
<td>Joan Deng</td>
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**UWG | CourseDen**

**Not Using CourseDen Yet?**

We'll give you 4 reasons that will make it worth it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNICATION</th>
<th>Email</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conversations are archived</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emails are associated with the course and the classlist</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Easily link to course materials</td>
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<tr>
<th>FEEDBACK</th>
<th>Grades</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assign/enter grades for assignments and tests.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enter individual student grades, as well as see class averages and provide feedback</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Associate grade items with other tools like Dropbox or Quizzes</td>
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<th>ENGAGEMENT</th>
<th>Upload Content</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grant students early access to the course syllabus</td>
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<td>24/7 access to digital course content</td>
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<tr>
<th>CONNECTION</th>
<th>Announcements</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicate course updates, changes, and new information to your students quickly and effectively!</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Students can sign up to receive notifications when you post or edit a News item</td>
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Each semester, UWG|Online administers the Distance Education Survey, an evaluation of our services to students participating in online courses.

Students tell us a little bit about themselves, rate services across campus, and provide comments regarding their experience during the semester. In turn, UWG|Online reviews these reports at the end of each semester to make data-driven decisions regarding our training and programs. Summer 2015 results were complied to give us a snapshot of our students.

The majority of students reported living within the state of Georgia (71%) and were between the ages of 25-44 (46%).

We asked students, if they had ever taken an online course before and would they take another at UWG. Eighty-three percent said they have taken an online course before, while 96% said they would take another online course!

The flexibility online courses offered was commented most often by students for their decision to take an online course. Most students felt online learning fit better with their work or class schedule (40%) while other students reported they lived too far from campus (20%).
Additionally, in order to assess the goals outlined in our strategic plan, we asked students to rate CourseDen’s ease of use, if they received information regarding available student services for online learners, and if they received the necessary information regarding what to expect in their courses prior to starting.

Students were offered the chance to provide comments. They had plenty to say! Students enjoyed the flexibility of their online courses and the convenience to take complete work at their own pace. They felt their learning most directed and purposeful when provide with clear and measurable objectives. Students loved it when instructors interacted with them online in their discussions, provided timely feedback on assignments and assessments, and posted weekly updates in the News tool. For more tips on how to address students needs, contact us!

By the end of the semester, 89% of students reported a positive attitude toward online learning.

Check out the full infographic online [here](#). Aggregate results are made available online at: [DE Evaluation Documents](#)

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**THE CONVENIENCE OF LEARNING**

The Distance and Distributed Education Center makes higher education a possibility for those who face obstacles to taking undergraduate or graduate courses in a traditional face-to-face classroom setting. UWG|Online’s goal is not to use technology for its own sake, rather to enhance the educational experience at UWG.
What We’re Reading

Teaching & Learning

How Not to Lose Control of a Class
It might be every professor’s worst nightmare: losing control of a class with no hope of getting it back on track. insidehighed.com

5 Tips From Successful Online Students
Here’s a short list for your students wondering if online learning is right for them. edudemic.com

Take Note
Can college students text and tweet their way to a better grade? insidehighered.com

How can universities stop students cheating online?
From keyboards that recognize your typing style to university honor codes—course providers are finding new ways to stop plagiarism among students. theguardian.com

Social Media

Advice—Why Your Department Needs Social Media
And why Twitter and Facebook accounts should be as free as possible from institutional interference. chronicle.com
Social Media Gains Momentum in Online Education
Social media tools allow online students to share information and build a sense of community, experts say. usnews.com

Making an Impact

Georgia Southern Implements Mandatory Alcohol and Sexual Assault Classes
Starting September 1, Georgia Southern will be requiring all students currently enrolled to complete mandatory online training courses, which will educate students with issues regarding sexual assault and alcohol awareness, and must be completed by October 26. thegeorgeanne.com

New app lets friends virtually walk you home
The Companion app was created by five University of Michigan students but it’s now being used on college campuses across the county. The app serves as a personal safety feature, allowing friends to virtually walk you home.

How an App Helps Low-Income Students by Turning College Life Into a Game
Ball State University is in its second year of offering a mobile application called “Ball State Achievements,” designed for students who come to Ball State on federal Pell grants. The app gamifies their college experience; they earn points for engaging in specific aspects of campus life, which can then be cased in. chronicle.com

Just for Fun

18 Cool Things You Didn't Know You Could Do With Google buzzfeed.com
Who know you could use Google to play LEGO?

Listen to Wikipedia
"produces a soothing aleatory succession of chimes and sonorous strings, each of which stands for a Wikipedia edit being made in real-time"

Google 'Fun Facts,' And Reduce Your Productivity Immediately
Procrastination just got a whole lot more informative. Recently, Google rolled out an entertaining new feature that feeds users with random tidbits of knowledge. All you need to do is Google the words “fun facts” or “I’m feeling curious,” and prepare to get sucked into a rabbit hole of information.

Questions & Submissions
For questions, suggestions, or items to include in the next newsletter such as:

- Upcoming Events, Workshops, & Training
- Publications & Other Achievements
- Online Teaching/Learning News & Insights

Please contact Beth René Roepnack, broepnac@westga.edu

We look forward to learning about and sharing your experiences and achievements. Thank you for your contributions!
UPCOMING EVENTS

September 2015

16 CourseDen Training: Grades
29/30 The Flipped Classroom: Best Practices
16-18 USG Georgia Summit

October 2015

21 CourseDen Training: Instructional Tools
21-23 USG Annual Computing Conference at Rock Eagle

November 2015

3/4 Online Best Practices
9-13 National Distance Learning Week
18 Using Virtual Classrooms

Contact Us

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1803 Maple Street, Carrollton, GA 30118

UWG|Online Faculty & Student Services
Honors House

Faculty Development Center
Old Auditorium
678-839-6248
Email: online@westga.edu
uwgonline.westga.edu

24-Hour Help
CourseDen (D2L)
1-855-772-0423
Access by searching
https://D2Lhelp.view.usg.edu

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