

# **A Campus Partnership to Provide Effective Technology Training**

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## **Abstract**

The University of Georgia (UGA) in Athens, Georgia, has more than 17,000 employees. The HR Training and Development Department (T&D) plans, develops, and implements professional and personal development programs for more than 10,000 participants annually. Enterprise Information Technology Services (EITS) ensures the campus community has access to the information technology resources to best serve the institution's mission. A major challenge for both departments is providing ongoing, cost-effective technology training. More than a decade ago, EITS and T&D formed a collaboration to provide effective information technology training, with both departments maximizing resources by capitalizing on the strengths of each. T&D handles administrative tasks (facilities, scheduling, marketing, registration, evaluation, lab support, planning) and EITS provides lab software (when upgrades are needed) and instructors with expertise unique to UGA. Through this collaboration, T&D can offer expert campus trainers and outstanding computer training at minimal cost. By sharing expertise in the classroom vs. individual consulting, EITS saves time and expenses equivalent to the cost of two consultants annually. The true beneficiaries of this longstanding partnership are UGA's employees, who are able to find all technology training in one catalog, attend at one dedicated training facility, and benefit from the expertise of both departments.

# **Introduction to The University of Georgia**

**President:** Michael F. Adams

**Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration:** Henry M. Huckaby

**Associate Vice President for Human Resources:** Anthony G. Brantley

**Associate Provost, Enterprise Information Technology Services:** Kirk D. Bertram

The University of Georgia (UGA) was founded in 1785 and is America's oldest state-chartered university. UGA is located in Athens-Clarke County, Georgia, about 70 miles northeast of downtown Atlanta. Clarke County is one of the 23 contiguous metropolitan counties of North Georgia.

The University of Georgia is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award Associate, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctor's degrees. In addition, a number of the individual University departments, degree programs, and service functions are accredited by appropriate professional organizations.

UGA offers 20 Baccalaureate degrees in 176 major fields, 27 Master's degrees in 149 fields, 22 Educational Specialist degrees, 4 Doctoral degrees in 109 areas, and Professional degrees in law, pharmacy, and veterinary medicine. UGA is comprised of 14 schools and colleges: Arts & Sciences, Law, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Pharmacy, Forest Resources, Education, Business, Journalism and Mass Communication, Family and Consumer Sciences, Veterinary Medicine, Social Work, Environment and Design, Graduate School, and Public and International Affairs.

The UGA library has more than 3.7 million volumes and houses one of the nation's largest map collections. The main campus includes 338 buildings located on 605 acres. Total acreage in 31 Georgia counties is 42,064 acres. Student enrollment exceeds 32,000. UGA's annual budget exceeds \$1.1 billion. UGA employs over 9,600 benefit-eligible faculty and staff and another 7,600 student and temporary employees.

*U.S. News and World Report* magazine's 2000 "Best Colleges" edition ranks UGA 18<sup>th</sup> among national public research universities. Kiplinger's magazine ranks UGA 15<sup>th</sup> on its list of 100 public institutions that provide the best "bang for the buck." The ranking is based on such factors as total costs, average amount of student debt at graduation, in-state tuition, graduation and retention rates, and average standardized testing.

Sources: UGA Fact Sheet, [http://www.uga.edu/uga/facts\\_figures.html](http://www.uga.edu/uga/facts_figures.html) and UGA By the Numbers <http://www.uga.edu/news/bynumbers/index.html>

## **Statement of the problem/initiative**

The rapid transition in the late 1980's and early 1990's to a technology-driven environment required the University of Georgia—like most other employers—to find cost-effective ways to provide necessary computer training for its large, diverse, and distributed workforce. Two departments at UGA—Enterprise Information Technology Services (EITS) and Human Resources Training and Development (T&D)—share a similar mission. Both departments are charged with preparing UGA faculty and staff to more effectively use available technology to meet institutional goals.

EITS provides leadership in information technology planning for its application to teaching and learning, research, service, and administration. EITS strives to ensure that UGA benefits optimally from its substantial investments in information technology, and provides technical expertise to strengthen and enhance the quality, effectiveness, and value of information technology activities throughout the University. EITS provides a robust and adaptable shared infrastructure of network computing and public access resources.

Training and Development provides professional development programs to improve individual and organizational performance and help the University achieve its overall institutional goals. Training programs not only help employees increase their effectiveness by building and refining job skills, but greatly enhance the level of service provided by the University. Technology training represents over 30% of the training programs offered by T&D.

As the demand for technology training grew at UGA, EITS and T&D faced costly solutions to training challenges. To effectively accomplish technology training, computer labs must be equipped and maintained, software purchased and routinely upgraded, and instructors located, scheduled, and paid. Programs must be effectively marketed and evaluated and participants registered. And, when the training is complete, extensive record keeping is required.

Before 1990, EITS and T&D separately attempted to meet the diverse technology training needs of UGA faculty and staff, with mixed results. Classes held in student labs often resulted in ineffective training environments, while those held off campus for a fee often prevented many faculty and staff from attending. Over time, the financial and staffing resources of both departments were significantly drained by the ever-growing need for more technology training. Faculty and staff were confused by multiple listings of classes offered by two different campus departments held in various locations. The need for a more organized and cost-effective approach to providing technology training was unquestionably needed.

## **Design**

By early 1990, both EITS and T&D recognized and appreciated the strengths and challenges of the other. EITS consultants are outstanding instructors with expertise in many network, software, and mainframe applications. From the beginning of computer training on campus, their familiarity with the UGA campus computing environment provided class participants with a unique perspective and resources not available from outside trainers. For EITS, a classroom training session minimized the need for more time consuming one-on-one consulting. Training and Development had a well-maintained computer lab dedicated to faculty and staff training and a reputation for effectively marketing training programs to the dispersed campus. Additionally, T&D had efficient registration, instructor support, program evaluation, and record keeping processes in place.

## **Implementation**

To more effectively use the strengths and resources of each department, EITS and T&D entered into a partnership in 1990 to jointly provide technology training to campus users. In exchange for extremely capable instructors, expert advice on campus computing trends, and financial assistance with hardware and software upgrades, T&D offers EITS first choice of training dates and times so scheduling is easier for their busy consultants. Additionally, T&D provides lab maintenance and support for all EITS classes, including trainer assistants during class when needed. To better accommodate the need to frequently adjust technology training offerings to match campus trends, T&D markets all EITS classes in quarterly (vs. annual) publications. T&D handles all participant registration and provides timely reports to EITS for internal reporting needs. T&D evaluates classes conducted by EITS and works with instructors to modify classes when evaluations indicate a change is needed. T&D and EITS jointly plan software and hardware upgrades and curriculum changes.

In 1994 and again in 1998, the Training and Development Center was expanded and remodeled. It now includes three state-of-the-art computer labs. Networking certification and training classes have been conducted on site as well as multiple level/multiple platform desktop application trainings. Although neither department could afford to provide these specialized trainings independently, they were possible through the partnership.

As technology and workforce demographics change, the demand for instructor-led classes has also begun to shift. As a continuation of its solid partnership over the years, EITS and T&D recently partnered to make Element K online learning available to UGA faculty and staff at reduced rates. T&D will promote the venture on a regular basis, both online and in printed publications, and EITS will manage the sales and account maintenance.

## **Benefits**

University employees are the primary beneficiaries of this collaboration. They can learn about all computer offerings from one source, attend training classes in a familiar and well-maintained facility dedicated to faculty and staff training, and receive information and instruction specific to UGA.

In the past two years, as a result of this partnership, EITS consultants have provided over 4,000 training contact hours to their UGA clients. Because EITS instructors provide the majority of instructor-led computer training at no cost, T&D has been able to dedicate scarce departmental funds to providing and enhancing other professional development programs. Together last year, T&D and EITS provided over 22,5000 contact hours of campus wide training (including conservatively estimated online participation).

Through their visibility in the classroom, EITS instructors are recognized as experts in their fields, enhancing their other consulting endeavors with campus departments, while T&D is seen as the “one stop shop” for campus training needs. Both EITS and T&D

accomplish their missions at tremendous cost savings because services are not duplicated and both departments contribute their expertise toward the common goal.

## **Retrospect**

Over the past 12 years, University of Georgia computer training needs have increased both in number and complexity. In the beginning, one computer lab served the need for single platform information systems and limited desktop applications training. As the use of technology on campus grew, so did the training needs. In 1994 and again in 1998, resources were allocated by UGA's central administration to expand the Training & Development Center. Training and Development and EITS provided resources to furnish and equip two additional training labs. The current facility has three modern computer labs with up-to-date software. Yet, despite this ongoing effort and commitment to provide technology training for UGA faculty and staff, long waiting lists still exist for some high demand classes—a sign that the training is needed and desired! Although funding has been made available when essential, in retrospect, an ongoing allocation of resources to fund this initiative should have been sought. Finding funding when needed, especially in tight budget years, unnecessarily places the program in jeopardy.

A bonus T&D did not anticipate when the partnership with EITS began was the development of similar collaborations with other campus departments wanting to take advantage of T&D's expertise in coordinating, marketing, conducting, and evaluating training programs. T&D now partners with virtually all UGA Finance and Administration departments to provide training related to University administrative procedures.

Additionally, T&D partners with the Environmental Safety Division to offer a comprehensive lab safety series, and with the Office of the Vice President for Research and the Contracts and Grants Department to provide an extensive grants and sponsored projects administration series. Other collaborations have developed over the years, making centralized training for faculty and staff at UGA a reality.