

## F. Facilities/Technical Infrastructure

### **How does the size, type, and/or quality of the Unit's current physical space affect the Unit's ability to fulfill its current mission and offer its current programs?**

Department facilities include office space in Dawson Hall, Hoke Smith Annex, and two buildings known as the Housing Research Center and the Consumer Research Center (aka the Houses). The departmental offices are in Dawson Hall. Faculty offices are in Dawson Hall, Hoke Smith Annex, and the Houses. Graduate students have offices in Dawson Hall and the Houses. Office support staff are located in three of the four buildings on the Athens campus, and the Stuckey Building on the Griffin campus.

HACE faculty members generally have adequate office space, although there is variability in the quantity and quality of the space. The size of offices is specified on the floor plans (See Appendix G). Faculty members with offices in the "Houses" generally have larger offices than those in Dawson Hall or Hoke Smith Annex. The trade off is, however, distance from Dawson Hall where many of the classes are taught and intermittent problems typically associated with older buildings, such as excessive moisture, termites, peeling or flaking paint, and windows that will not open and loss of computer connectivity.

Each staff member has an office that often is in the same room that is accessed frequently for copy machines, storage equipment, and office supplies. Each graduate student on an assistantship has a desk in a shared space, sometimes five or six students per office. At the present time, two graduate students are sharing office space with staff members. All graduate student offices have at least one computer with internet access and a printer, as well as a telephone. It is not always possible to place graduate assistants in the same building as their faculty supervisor.

There is a serious lack of storage, in particular for resources and publications for outreach activities and for short-term and long-term research records. In addition, upstairs offices in the Houses and Hoke Smith Annex are not accessible to the physically handicapped.

An increasing amount of HACE courses over the past seven years have grown to a size that they can no longer be accommodated in Dawson Hall. Those classes are taught in a variety of buildings/classrooms all over the campus. Dawson classrooms are assigned by the College.

Adequate space in contiguous areas would increase departmental communication and regular interaction among faculty and graduate students. Especially critical needs for space include designated areas for research and public service/outreach projects, graduate student offices with privacy for teaching assistants and work space conducive to analysis and writing for research projects, seminar rooms, and support staff offices conducive to a productive work environment.

### **How does the amount, type, and/or quality of information technology/equipment available to the Unit affect the Unit's ability to fulfill its current mission and offer its current programs?**

Faculty members regularly teach in classrooms with state of the art computer, projection, and video play-back equipment as well as Internet access. However, with the addition of the Griffin program, we have needed to find ways to use conferencing equipment in order to teach online. This has been a problem because it adds additional planning time to courses in order to deliver quality instruction. As new technologies have been developed (i.e., clickers, Wimba, etc.), we have actively embraced and included them in classroom instruction.

Several faculty members periodically reserve one of the College's Computer Service laboratories in Dawson Hall for specific classroom activities and classes that require state of the art software programs, such as HACE 3260 and 5320. The instructional space in Dawson Hall is limited for large classes. One of the two classrooms designed for over 100 students is dark and the seating has many drawbacks. For example, the high seat backs create obstacles for smaller students' sight lines, and the absence of aisles by the windows means that students leaving early disrupt other students.

**How does the amount, type, and/or quality library holdings and resources in the Unit's discipline affect the Unit's ability to fulfill its current mission and offer its current programs?**

While the library provides a basic level of research resources anticipated at a research university, several cutbacks on journal subscriptions have directly impacted the ability of some faculty members to conduct research in Housing and Consumer Economics.

For example, while the Department offers a graduate level course in "Housing and the Elderly," the library's subscription to the "Journal of Housing for the Elderly" was canceled in 2006, leaving students and faculty without the leading journal dedicated to this field. Further, HACE faculty members have and continue to publish in the journal, although the lack of institutional subscription makes it even more challenging to cite to recent articles.

More recently journals such as "Applied Economics" and "Applied Economics Letters," both ISI ranked journals, have been dropped. Again, HACE faculty members publish in these journals, but the recent removal of institutional subscriptions makes such publication more challenging as citing to recent articles becomes problematic.

While journal subscriptions are a significant institutional expense, the recent cutbacks have made conducting research more challenging. Although individual faculty or the Department may purchase copies, there is no access for students to use these resources unless they borrow them from faculty.

**Have there been significant changes in the Unit's facilities or technical infrastructure since the last review?**

Yes, we were able to purchase video conferencing equipment, a Tandberg, so that we can communicate with the Griffin campus for departmental meetings and classes. We have less space in Dawson Hall due to a recent renovation/reconfiguration. The two offices across from the departmental offices are no longer assigned to the Department.

**What are the Unit's projected needs in facilities, information technology, and equipment over the next seven years and how are these needs related to the goals of the Unit?**

There is a need for larger classrooms to house the larger classes being taught. As our enrollment continues to increase, often HACE classes are taught outside of Dawson Hall in larger classrooms.

Development and implementation of a Center for Financial Planning and Education (CFPE) would serve as the hub for coordinating financial planning research and outreach activities for UGA and the surrounding communities. CFPE could be a leading organization in disseminating research findings regarding financial planning education, and providing interdisciplinary collaboration relating to financial planning, training, and outreach. CFPE would become

nationally recognized and serve as a model to be replicated at other universities across the country.

College students and the population in general, face a complex, challenging, and unfriendly personal finance environment. Many students, who are successful in their academic studies at UGA, are entering the work force with little understanding of the basics of personal finance, including such things as: credit and debt, budgeting and cash-flow management, personal income taxation, basic investing principles, long-term portfolio strategies, personal insurance plans, and employer provided benefits (often worth several thousand dollars if understood). Members of the broader Athens community also struggle with basic financial literacy.

With the exception of personal assistance with student loan management, UGA students seeking additional financial information do not have accessible alternatives to obtain individualized financial education or counseling from knowledgeable and qualified individuals. The development and coordination of a center for financial planning and education would address this need, benefiting students and the university. In addition, low and moderate income individuals in the broader community would also benefit substantially.

The initial phase of the Center would include the following services:

- One-on-one financial education for students, staff, and members of the Athens community,
- Providing financial education in the community, through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program, HABITAT partnerships, employee education seminars for employers, etc.)
- Developing new approaches to financial management and financial behavior modification,
- Researching the efficacy of various financial education, management, planning, and behavior modification strategies,
- Foster and develop favorable attitudes toward pro-bono professional services among financial planning students.

***Benefits of the CFPE to the University of Georgia and Community.*** Some benefits to the University of Georgia and the community that would be realized are:

- Fulfills University mission of outreach, research, and teaching
- Resource for community members struggling with personal finance issues,
- Source of unbiased financial planning information,
- Financial support of the community through expanded and accurate income tax preparation and filing services to reduce unclaimed refundable tax credits,
- Maintains UGA as a focal point for financial education in Athens, Georgia, and expands UGA's national reputation,
- Opportunities to stay abreast of student financial issues.

Benefits to students include:

- Enhanced financial literacy,
- Prevention and reduction of financial problems and stress,
- Improved financial and overall well-being now and post graduation,
- Increased student retention and decreased degree completion time (helps address barriers to completion)
- Improved financial management and reduction of student debt
- Potential increase in alumni contributions

Development of such a center would require financial support for a qualified individual to provide, and supervise students majoring in financial planning to provide individualized financial education to students, staff, and the broader Athens community. Services would be offered through one-on-one, group, and workplace settings. Ongoing funding for various projects and initiatives will be obtained through grants and other funding sources.

***Return on Investment to the community.*** This past year, the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program—that would be coordinated through the center—helped low-income individuals claim over \$100,000 in refundable tax credits and saved them an estimated \$50,000 in tax preparation and filing fees. With the establishment of a center, these numbers would double within one year and continue to increase after that. Using numbers from the prior year, a \$1.5 million investment in the center would conservatively yield an estimated 10% return ***annually*** to the community. We believe that the establishment of the CFPE would more than double the VITA impact alone, yielding at least a 20% return ***annually*** to the community. This estimate does not include other research and services provided by the center that would also yield substantial economic benefit to individuals and the community. This is a tremendous community benefit considering that over one-fourth of Athenians live in poverty.