Five Pump-Priming Ideas
for New ways to Deliver a Georgetown Education and Experience

A Discussion Draft to Identify Boundary-Pushing Experiments
Examples could include:

Flexible Curricular and Teaching Structures

Competency-Based Learning

Expanding Mentored Research

New Work/Learn Models

Four-year Combination BA/MA
Why This Initiative? Why Now?

These are draft ideas, not proposals. They are intended to prime the pump, to stimulate discussion and imagination. A faculty task force that met in Summer, 2013, to discuss a visioning process that has became the Designing the Future(s) Initiative, urged that some concrete ideas be forwarded, to stimulate thought and discussion, to avoid pure “blue sky” abstractions, and to focus attention of faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

Although each idea emphasizes a different innovation dimension (time to degree, competency-based learning), they overlap each other in many ways and might draw on the same building blocks. We don’t expect that these ideas will seem widely applicable now for most programs or most students. Instead we are trying to ask:

- What could we learn on a small scale, by experimenting with new educational packages?

- Are there innovative and cost-effective ways to rethink the boundaries of a Georgetown education that can be worked out through a series of experiments and implementations?

- Could innovations in these new models help reshape or expand current practices in ways that could be incorporated into current forms of delivering degrees?

Our interest in these experiments does not replace our commitment to focusing on faculty excellence, improved facilities, and a continually enhanced research and teaching environment. They build on these commitments. Indeed we hope that these experiments will eventually serve and enhance those priorities. They acknowledge that although we have a spectacularly successful model, there are large societal and macroeconomic forces acting on universities in the United States and at a global level. We really believe that every university is going to be affected by these forces. Some will determine their own future. And some will have their futures determined by forces outside. We want to be in that first group. We want to determine our own future.

And we, together, hopefully, will do that with the wisdom that’s required to make sure the Georgetown of the future is even better than it is now.

Robert Groves
Provost
New Ways to Deliver a Georgetown Education and Experience: The Design Questions

The Georgetown Landscape of Innovation

The Georgetown community is engaged in innovation and improvement all the time, whether in improving curricula, innovating with pedagogy or mounting new online degree programs. Last year we launched the Initiative for Technology-enhanced Learning (ITED) in order to accelerate the ways that we make use of new online technologies to improve student learning. Since that time almost 200 faculty have engaged in one or more innovation projects.

The ITED effort built on many years of faculty engagement to employ new technologies, active pedagogies and new digital resources—from virtual simulations to community-based fieldwork to mentored research—to rethink the ways we prepare men and women for lifetimes of leadership. Similarly, programs across all the schools have been active in exploring the ways that new online learning platforms can extend signature Georgetown programs to new audiences—including enlarging Georgetown’s footprint and partnerships around the world.

All of these efforts are critical to shaping our future. Missing in this landscape are research and development efforts at thinking about the entire package—the boundaries—of a Georgetown degree and the implications of such changes on the ways we deliver the curriculum. The purpose of this initiative is not only to accelerate innovation but to enlarge the space of experimentation and imagination.

With ITED, we promote broad faculty participation. In this Initiative we are looking only for a few select projects to emerge from faculty and programs—ways to enlarge plans already underway—that will help us explore new models for delivery, to explore what is possible, based on our values and strengths, and to be responsive to a shifting landscape in higher education.

Rethinking the Formal Boundaries of our Model

We have entered a time when digital technology and information availability make it possible to experiment with new structures and delivery platforms, including online and blended learning, self-paced and adaptive learning, and new ways to create communities of learners. Some of these boundary-breaking methods have been evolving for decades and some are new. What’s important at Georgetown is that we shape this change according to our values and mission. In discussing these ideas we want faculty and students to think freely and creatively, outside our traditional constraints.
What if we could design our educational programs in ways that rethink:

- time and pace to degree
- the 15-week semester, the 9-month calendar, the credit hour and 3 or 4-credit courses
- the traditional boundaries among high school, undergraduate, and graduate degrees
- the boundaries between the classroom, work life and student life, between the co-curricular and the curricular?

And we want to ask how playing with these boundaries has impact on our core practices:

**Continuing to invent what it means to be a global university**

Georgetown already has partnerships and engagements all over the world, including of course the campus in Doha. As we think about the boundaries of the campus and Georgetown degrees we need to think globally in new ways. How can we imagine this next phase of Georgetown’s history as a university developed on a global platform? How might we conceive of the connections between Washington, D.C. as a global city and Georgetown as a global university? How might the ideas suggested in the pages that follow—around reconceiving experiential and immersive learning and flexible curricular structures—be shaped by global opportunities?

**Integrating our scholarly and educational missions**

One of the themes highlighted in the 2012 Georgetown Middle States self-study was to explore ways to integrate the educational and scholarly missions. As we continue to pursue our twin ambitions of excellence in education and research, we must continue to find ways to think creatively around both: how might we engage more students (perhaps all students) in original research? How might we forge better connections between graduate and undergraduate education? How could new forms of flexible structures advance research and deepen the kind of experience that students have with knowledge-creation?

**Responding to the evolving demands on the curriculum and the institution**

The demands on being an educated person, a leader, and global citizen have significantly expanded. The capacity to work with information and data, collaborate and network on a global scale, increased interdisciplinarity, and changing contexts for integrating theory and practice are all changing in different ways across the spectrum of fields. New educational structures may help us be responsive to the rising demands of education, as well as new ways for the University to be in service to others and to extend its role as an active agent for social justice in the world.

We won’t come up with all of the answers or details to imagine new configurations at any kind of scale. That’s not what is needed right now. What we hope is that a few promising and targeted places in the curriculum will emerge as good candidates for experimentation—places where evolving plans may find a bigger space to develop with
permission to rethink traditional structures. It may also turn out that discussing these particular ideas about new ways to imagine degrees also stimulates approaches to improving and innovating in our current practice.

Five Pump-Priming Ideas: New Ways to Deliver Georgetown Degrees

The purpose of this document is to stimulate new ideas by presenting sketches of new educational programs. We want others to invent their own ideas, catalyzed by their deep experience in their own field and motivated by the same assumption-challenging spirit as the five below. [NOTE: See Appendix for definitions of key terms.]

1. **Flexible Curricular and Teaching Structures.** Ways of making teaching and learning structures more flexible by redesigning around the 15-week semester, typical 3-credit course and 9-month calendar.

2. **Competency-based Learning.** Programs of study designed to be partially or entirely competency-based, with certification based on demonstrated skills and knowledge not courses and seat time.

3. **Expanding Mentored Research and Immersive Learning.** Programs of study that shift from predominantly formal coursework to a substantially different balance of coursework and credit bearing mentored immersive learning through independent or collaborative projects.

4. **New Work/Learn Models.** Programs of study that maintain or expand years to degree but include a substantial experiential component (e.g. workplace Co-op), dependent on Georgetown placement (in DC and globally), and guarantee both degree certification and intensive work experience on graduation.

5. **Four-year Combination BA/MA.** Four-year combination BA/MA built around new configurations of online and self-paced learning, coursework and experiential learning.

Criteria for Experiments

Projects that emerge must at least have the promise of achieving these objectives:

- Reshape some boundary of the Georgetown educational degree experiences experimenting with new hybrid combinations of online learning, face-to-face learning and immersive experience (e.g., workplace, research).
- Address and test alternative models for cost and value.¹

¹ Recognizing that cost and value questions are complicated, the Provost Office will work closely with any faculty and programs on proposals to create an overall cost model for any pilot experiment.
• Experiment with ways to assess learning and outcomes, further personalize learning and customize curricular pathways.

The proposals - the result of program-level initiatives - must explore these new ideas while maintaining and building on our distinctive academic excellence, values and mission, including focusing on the whole person (formation, community, and integrative approaches to intellectual and moral development).

Once initial expressions of intent have emerged, the process for developing these projects will be tailored to each initiative. We will co-develop each experiment, responding to and providing resources for each project individually. Ideas will be advanced and built from concept to proposal through campus-wide dialogue and focused design process. These efforts will be led by Randy Bass, Vice Provost for Education.
Five Pump-Priming Ideas and Design Sketches

#1: Flexible Curricular and Teaching Structures

Ways of making teaching and learning structures more flexible by redesigning around the 15-week semester, typical 3-credit course and 9-month calendar.

Why this?

Creative innovation at the degree level is constrained by the relatively uniform structure of 15-week semester, 3-credit courses (typically) and normative 9-month calendar. Therefore, one important dimension of degree-level experiments might involve flexible curricular and teaching structures. Flexible structures could include moving some parts of the curriculum into modular format (6-7 weeks learning terms). These modules might be intensive (a semester’s worth of learning and teaching in 6-7 weeks at double the amount of invested time) or the equivalent of a half semester of work, potentially combinable with another module.

Other flexible curricular structures could involve unbundling credits into individual units to be combined in ways that fit students’ variable pacing through a program or interest in smaller sub-units of curriculum (a series of one or two-unit courses that might be combined or taken separately).

Another dimension of flexibility could engage a year-round calendar. Are there ways to engage a combination of modular learning units and year-round calendar—particularly in the context of certain graduate programs (such as 18-24 month masters programs)?

Finally, experimenting with flexible curricular structures might be particularly facilitative of expansion of Georgetown’s global collaborations around teaching and research, where differences in calendars and the difficulties of semester-long travel and residencies could be meliorated by more modular teaching structures. Flexible curricular structures could potentially also make it possible...
for students (undergraduate and graduate) to progress through their studies while at the same time have a far more diverse, global experience than simply a single term studying abroad or summer research opportunities.

Experimentation with flexible course structures has to be consistent with the pedagogical and curricular goals of the program, where innovation both enriches the student experience (inside and outside the classroom) and provides flexibility for faculty time and load—while balancing the overall needs of a program.

What’s at stake?

- Flexible curricular structure experiments have to start with a rigorous look at learning goals for courses and programs.
- Any experimentation with flexible structures would have to engage a high standard of assessment, carefully and rigorously tracking the impact on learning.
- Flexible curricular and teaching experiments would have to take place in a pilot context that would not have a negative impact on related programmatic dimensions nor create inequalities among faculty.

Which Programs or areas are the best places to pilot this? How might we begin?

- Where could such a program model what’s possible? Where could curricular flexibility be particularly fruitful for programmatic needs?
- Where are there current and new opportunities for global engagement that could be enhanced by these kinds of flexibility?
- Some graduate programs (e.g. MBA) already are modeling 7-week modular courses and 1-week intensives. Are there ways to build on these models in other areas?
- What internal support structure could we create to streamline policies and ensure success for these new models?
Five Pump-Primming Ideas and Design Sketches

#2: Competency-Based Learning

*Programs of study designed to be partially or entirely competency-based, with certification based on demonstrated skills and knowledge not courses and seat time.*

**Why this?**

Competency-based learning refers to any educational program that allows students to progress as they demonstrate mastery of academic content, regardless of time, place, or pace of learning. Competency-based strategies provide flexibility in the way that credit can be earned or awarded, and provide students with personalized learning opportunities. National interest in competency-based learning is part of a long-term shift in higher education that gives increased emphasis to learning outcomes and is gradually moving away from the credit hour as the standard for recording academic achievement.

Competency-based learning has a wide range of meanings as it is used now. Typically it means one or more of these elements:

- Explicit learning outcomes with respect to the required skills and proficiencies
- A flexible time frame to master these skills
- A variety of instructional activities to facilitate learning
- Certification and assessment based on learning outcomes
- Adaptable programs to ensure optimum learner guidance

Overall, competency-based learning implies a shift toward what students know and can do, not merely what they have taken. We know that learning deeply takes time and involves both an unfolding process and a sense of community. But it may be that allowing students to move through programs at more variable pace, allowing for a greater variety of ways to meet expectations, is possible in ways as never before. With
new capabilities around adaptive learning systems and online learning, we now have the opportunity to experiment with different ways of delivering learning environments and measuring progress and achievement.

What’s at stake?

- Which fields, or parts of fields, seem best suited to competency-based learning? Are there programs where the competencies are already well defined, understood and applied to courses by faculty?
- What would be the impact on faculty resources and student time if a program were largely competency-based? What kinds of flexibility would such a system afford faculty?
- How might such a system deepen learning and afford flexibility for students?

Which Programs or areas are the best places to pilot this? How might we begin?

Would it make sense to pilot in a graduate level program? Would it work to pilot in both a professional program and a liberal arts-based program to measure their respective success? Would the idea apply to an undergraduate major? Where might competency-based approaches combine with other experimental directions (e.g. Workplace Co-op or mentored research)?
Five Pump-Priming Ideas and Design Sketches

#3: Expanding Mentored Research and Immersive Learning

Programs of study that can be scaled that shift from predominantly formal coursework to a substantially different balance of coursework and credit bearing mentored immersive learning through independent or collaborative projects.

Why this?

We have long known the power of guided research and mentored experience. Although research and work experience have long been parts of university education they have grown in even greater importance as undergraduate research and other kinds of experiential learning have all demonstrated their power as “high-impact learning experiences,” especially when combined with guided opportunities for reflection, integration, and feedback. Mentored education will continue to be one of the truly distinctive features of a University education.

Historically, of course, mentored learning is among the most expensive kind of instruction and often stands outside the credit-bearing structure. However, ubiquity of technology, the explosion of communication tools that enable collaboration at a distance, and the rise of adaptive learning environments all make it possible to revisit the conditions for mentored learning and research over time and distance.

Do online learning and collaboration tools provide ways to structure mentoring for some fields that were not possible before? Could collaborative projects help us reimagine and restructure portions of the curriculum around research streams? Such a shift, even in targeted areas, could even more closely tie the formation of students to the scholarly and research missions of the University.
What’s at stake?

- Is it possible to remap some “courses” onto mentored experience? What implications would that have for faculty time? Is it possible to create mentoring communities or mentoring networks in some areas of the University, with tiers of mentorship among advanced undergraduates, graduate students, post-docs and full-time non-tenure line faculty, as in many areas of the sciences?
- Might we experiment with new structures whereby courses are turned into studios or tiered research communities, including undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, potentially alumni and other members of the community?
- Could learning, assessment and competency be integrated into collaborative projects that unfold outside the Georgetown community, connected to Georgetown faculty but in partnership with community-based mentors?
- How could we reconfigure faculty load to account for current and new mentoring structures so as not to pile mentoring on top of other faculty responsibilities?
- How could we create faculty incentives to affiliate with such programs?

Which Programs or areas are the best places to pilot this? How might we begin?

Would this experiment be well suited to portions of certain kinds of degrees and research? Could we start by reimagining the upper-division of a segment of undergraduate degrees that might accelerate and deepen into authentic experience? Can we create a new model for guided study that allows for individual interaction and still makes sense from a cost perspective, taking advantage of competency based assessment and online learning tools? Are there ways to reframe credit-bearing experiences so that the cost-model and a mentorship model are more aligned?

Is this a model well suited to some research-based fields more than others? Are there corporate partners interested in such an idea? Is this an area where NGO’s in DC and globally would be interested? How could we create quality control mechanisms to ensure the highest quality learning, mentoring and assessment experiences?
Five Pump- Priming Ideas and Design Sketches

#4: New Work/Learn Models

Programs of study that maintain or expand years to degree but include a substantial experiential component (e.g. workplace Co-op), dependent on Georgetown placement (in DC and globally), and guarantee both degree certification and intensive work experience on graduation.

Why this?

Workplace experience is valued now not just as an end term goal but as a productive component of an educational experience, where theory meets practice, often in diverse settings. Decades of research have shown that students learn best in cycles of practice and content-acquisition. That is, they are often more highly motivated and ready to learn more deeply after understanding the contexts for putting knowledge in action. Both for educational value and the value of an education, work-integrated degree programs have become more common and are one basis on which to imagine reconfiguring the path and pace to degree.

Economic pressure and societal changes also make a work/learning experience attractive, providing learners and graduates with an enriched track to full time employment. Students looking for an immersive learning experience could find a Georgetown education the most compelling model, not just for economic reasons but because the partnerships and opportunities we can create are uniquely valuable. Many of those partnerships exist outside the United States and the work/learn opportunities we develop might particularly evolve with a global signature, integrating practical experience with development as global citizens and leaders.

Many undergraduate and graduate students at Georgetown actively seek work experiences outside their formal education. Further, there are employment sectors that are desperate for trained staff to propel their mission. Combining work and education, exploiting new learning technologies, might be ready for renewed energy and models. Can we create a model whereby the extensive set of private sector,
nonprofit sector, and government organizations around the globe, as well as in Washington, become real partners in an educational program? Could such a program serve to integrate better the work interests of students with the goals of curricular learning? Could such initiatives enable faculty and programs to exercise more intentionality, alignment and coordination between experiential learning and academic goals?

What’s at stake?

• What could make a Georgetown model of work experience distinctive?
• Could we develop a program particularly in the context of Georgetown as a global university, where a work/learn program could deepen Georgetown’s regional collaborations around the world?
• How do we best leverage our DC location for such a program, building on already existing and new affiliations?
• How do we best integrate personalized classroom learning with valuable work experiences within or outside our existing credit system?
• What kinds of resources and integrative structures would be needed to support these kinds of programs and partnerships?
• Who would mentor these experiences? Could mentors be embedded in the work placements? Could our alumni network become involved as leaders and mentors? How do we make business and industry colleagues our teaching and learning partners?
• How could online communities and communication tools enhance the ways we could integrate work experience with a course of study?

Which Programs or areas are the best places to pilot this? How might we begin?

Where do strong work-learning partnerships already exist in the University? Where could we expand our collaboration? How might we build upon already established global partnerships and opportunities?

Could we start with programs that combine an existing relationship with natural need for work experience? Could our students help us identify the programs where we find the highest interest in co-op experiences? Can our alumni network help us to experiment in this area?
Five Pump-Priming Ideas and Design Sketches

#5: Four-year Combination BA/MA

*Four-year combination BA/MA built around new configurations of online and self-paced learning, coursework and experiential learning.*

**Why this?**

In light of the rising costs of university education, we seek to experiment with ways of delivering more value for a four-year investment with a combination four-year BA/MA or BS/MS degree. This experiment recognizes certain important trends, including increasing volume of occupations that require Master’s level training, the increasing rate of undergraduates graduating after three and a half years and a small but steady increase in the number of part-time eight semester seniors. Innovations in ITEL and our own learning generated by programs experimenting with degrees (especially at Masters level) are showing that students want and need more flexible paths to degree that require a focused approach to combined degree requirements. Online learning options at Georgetown and elsewhere will accelerate this trend.

Some prominent universities already offer accelerated degree options. The 4 and 5 year MA is a familiar model in Europe and is becoming more common in the United States. Most schools and universities experimenting with this structure simply require students to do the same amount of work in less time. What we are suggesting is a step further, to rethink how a course of study unfolds; to rethink the boundaries between high school, undergraduate and graduate study; to combine skills and learning outcomes in new ways. This type of thinking, along with Georgetown’s focus on educating the whole student, is an opportunity to create very forward thinking, and Georgetown-specific, opportunities for our students.
What’s at stake?

- What fields might be advantaged by an integrated combined degree?
- What are the truly signature experiences of the undergraduate core curriculum that we would want to ensure take place in certain ways? What should we be most concerned with in considering such a program?
- What graduate level educational experiences can be integrated into earlier experiences and what must be staged later?
- Could we rethink the boundary between high school and the first year productively? Are there courses that some students might start in high school or the matriculating summer? Could we recruit to Georgetown high-performing students entering such a program?
- What non-coursework experiences that advantage a graduate student in a traditional Masters program (e.g. field work or externship) could be built into the 4-year bachelor’s/master’s program?

Which Programs or areas are the best places to pilot this? How might we begin?

Where would we start to implement such an option? Should we start with an already existing five-year BA/MA (Or BS/MS)? Is this best done in a completely new area?

Are there certain programs or disciplines that are more or less adaptable or where rethinking the boundaries of undergraduate and graduate education would be an advantage? Might new emerging areas of interdisciplinary study be particularly good sites for innovation?
Pump-Priming Ideas and Design Sketches
Definitions of Key Terms and Resources

**Accelerated bachelor's degree:** programs include shortening bachelor's programs, offering combined BA/MA programs and altering scheduling.

**Adaptive learning or adaptive systems:** Drawing on observation to inform tailored educational interventions leading to increased student success, where technology can facilitate personalization at scale

**Alternative credentialing; stackable credentials:** The validation of the completion of a unit of work, including coursework, seminars, workshops, credit or non-credit courses, or professional learning units. Units can be aggregated often leading to advanced professional responsibilities

**Co-curricular learning:** Activities that engage with, contribute to, inform, or enhance curricular learning. Co-curricular learning is marked by learning outcomes in the form of stated goals and metrics.

**Competency-based learning and curricula:** Competency-based learning provides flexible strategies for earning and awarding credit, and allows students to progress at an individualized pace, where demonstration of the mastery of content is disassociated from traditional classroom time and place.

**Co-op program:** An educational experience where classroom learning and workplace opportunities are combined in sequence.

**Credit hour:** a unit of academic credit; one hour a week for an academic semester.

**ePortfolios (Personal learning records):** A digital archive that represents student work over time through a broad range of artifacts that include submitted course papers and projects in a variety of formats, works-in-progress, independent research, reflections on assignments, learning goals, ideas for future scholarship, and links to relevant resources.

**Experiential learning:** Learning through research or workplace opportunities, with guidance or advising, and in some cases in combination with a corresponding credit structure.

**Online learning and blended learning:** Courses that take place both online and in-person.

**Learning analytics:** Data gathering and management which is learner-based and allows an institution to gather facts about groups of learners, facilitating early intervention and supporting success in managing learning outcomes strategies; Capturing data and interpreting trends to assist the students and university in improving performance.

**Mentored immersive learning:** Learning environment where a student works closely in a with a faculty member, individually or in a group setting, often in concert with community or business partners, and usually resulting in a completed project such as a book, report, work of art, play, business plan, strategic plan, or other end product.

**Self-paced learning:** Learning in which the student is engaged at their own pace where there may or may not be a specified timeframe for completion.

**Unbundled credits:** A credit structure where students may aggregate credits from multiple providers or sources. Unbundled credits may refer to credits solely with an institution or across multiple institutions.