Georgia Southwestern State University

Continuity of Educational Services Plan

Roles and Responsibilities

The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs leads academic continuity; the President makes institution-level decisions in consultation with the USG.

Role	Responsibilities during a disruption
President	Declares Level 3 or Level 4 disruptions (Section 4); approves refunds or credits under BOR Policy 7.3.5; consults the USG Chancellor's office.
Provost and VP for Academic Affairs	Activates this plan; directs deans on instructional continuity; approves course substitutions, teach-out plans, and academic calendar changes.
Deans and department chairs	Reassign instructors, consolidate sections, and confirm every affected course has a continuity path.
Faculty	Keep course materials, syllabi, and gradebooks current in GeorgiaVIEW; communicate with students; follow approved alternate delivery.
VP for Business and Finance and Office of Student Accounts	Calculate and issue refunds or credits; coordinate with Financial Aid on aid adjustments.
Office of Financial Aid	Handles Title IV and state aid adjustments, including reimbursement to state agencies required by BOR Policy 7.3.5.
Registrar	Protects and provides access to academic records; processes enrollment, grade, and calendar changes; issues transcripts.
Chief Information Officer (CIO)	Restores GSW systems; coordinates with USG Information Technology Services on GeorgiaVIEW and other shared systems.
VP for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management	Coordinates student support and evacuation of resident halls (as needed) for affected students.
Department of University Relations	Issues student and public communications; handles media inquiries.
SARA institutional liaison and Office of Institutional Effectiveness	Notify the Georgia SARA portal entity and The Commission on Colleges and Universities (SACSCOC) when required; maintain this plan.
eCore and eMajor liaisons	Coordinate with USG eCampus for courses GSW students take through eCore and eMajor.

Unit Continuity Plans

Each office listed below maintains a continuity plan, reviewed each August and filed with the Office of Academic Affairs. Every unit plan names a primary and alternate contact, lists the unit's critical functions, and states how the unit will perform them for short (under 1 week) and long (over 1 week) interruptions.

Unit	Plan must include
Each academic department offers online courses	Backup instructor for each online course; chair access to all course sites; plan to reschedule or consolidate sections; procedure to contact and account for faculty.
Office of Academic Affairs	Procedures to adjust the academic calendar; approval process for course substitutions and teach-out plans; list of USG and eCampus contacts.
Registrar	Remote processing of transcripts, enrollment changes, and grades; access to records if the Americus campus is closed.
Office of Student Accounts and Business and Finance	Remote processing of refunds and credits; emergency spending authority; record keeping for emergency decisions.

Unit	Plan must include
Office of Financial Aid	Remote processing of aid adjustments, Title IV return of funds, and state aid reimbursement.
Chief Information Officer (CIO)	Backup and redundancy for GSW-hosted systems; procedures to run critical applications from an alternate site; contacts at USG Information Technology Services for GeorgiaVIEW and shared systems.
Department of University Relations	Pre-approved message templates for students; procedures for posting updates to the website and social media when campus is closed.
Student Affairs and Enrollment Management	Remote student support for affected students.

Levels of Disruption

GSW classifies disruptions into four levels; the level sets who decides and which student protections apply. Durations are guidelines, and the President (or designated appointee) may raise the level at any time.

Level	Examples	Typical duration	Decision authority	Primary response
1. Course interruption	Instructor illness; short GeorgiaVIEW or email outage	Under 1 week	Department Chair and/or Dean; approved by the Provost.	Extend deadlines; substitute instructor; resume course.
2. Program or campus disruption	Americus campus closed by severe weather; loss of several faculty in one program; extended outage of a GSW system	1 to 4 weeks	President and Provost, with the USG	Move instruction to alternate tools; adjust schedules; regular student updates.
3. Extended institutional disruption	Pandemic; USG-wide system outage; major damage to GSW facilities	More than 4 weeks or affects term completion	President, the USG, and the Board of Regents	Activate full plan; adjust academic calendar; offer Incompletes grades, transfers, or credits.
4. Inability to deliver	A course or program cannot be completed as planned; program deactivation; institutional closure or consolidation	Rest of term or permanent	President, the USG, and the Board of Regents	Teach-out, alternate arrangements, or refunds and credits.

Continuity of Instruction

Course instruction at GSW (including online courses) is not solely dependent on the Americus campus; all GSW courses are available in the Learning Management System (GeorgiaVIEW) regardless of course modality. The LMS, Brightspace by D2L, is hosted centrally by the University System of Georgia for all USG institutions. GSW students and faculty also have 24/7 GeorgiaVIEW support through the USG D2L Help Center. GSW has used this resource when face-to-face classes were suspended in March 2020. GSW's online, eMajor, and eCore courses continued, and GSW moved its face-to-face courses to an online modality.

Readiness (Before Any Disruption)

- Every course, regardless of modality, has an online presence through GeorgiaVIEW, with the syllabus, course schedule, course materials, calendar, announcements, and gradebook kept current throughout the term.
- Department chairs have access to their department's course sites to allow easy transition in the event a different instructor is needed.
- Each program identifies at least one qualified backup instructor for each required course.

Response Steps

1. **Assess (within 24 hours):** The chair or dean identifies affected courses, students, and the expected duration, and recommends a disruption level (approval of Dean and Provost).
2. **Notify students (within 24 hours):** Instructors or the department post a GeorgiaVIEW announcement and send an email describing what is changing and what students should do.
3. **Restore delivery:** If the instructor is unavailable, the chair assigns a backup instructor using the existing course site. If GeorgiaVIEW is unavailable, faculty use GSW email and Microsoft 365 tools until the USG restores service.
4. **Adjust academic requirements:** Faculty extend due dates; the Provost may approve calendar extensions, alternate assessments, or Incomplete grades so students can finish without penalty.
5. **Offer alternatives if the course cannot resume:** The academic Dean, with approval from the Provost, moves students to another GSW section or to an equivalent course at GSW or another USG institution, or offers other alternatives (e.g., refund).

eCore and eMajor Courses

USG eCampus continuity arrangements cover courses GSW courses delivered through eCore and eMajor. GSW's eCore and eMajor liaisons coordinate with eCampus, so these students receive the same communication and protection as students in GSW-delivered courses.

Programs with Required In-Person Components

For clinical placements, student teaching, practicums, and proctored exams, the dean works with placement sites and licensing or accrediting bodies to arrange alternate placements, approved simulations, or schedule changes.

Communication with Students

GSW will contact affected distance education students within 24 hours of a disruption and update them at least weekly until normal operations resume. Because many students live outside Americus or outside Georgia (online), academic communication relies on channels that reach students wherever they are.

Channel	Use
GeorgiaVIEW announcements, GeorgiaVIEW email, and student Radar email	Primary channel for course-level changes, deadlines, and instructor contact.
GSW student email	Program-wide and institution-wide updates, decisions on refunds, credits, and teach-out options.
Blackboard Connect	Urgent notices and campus closures (listed in the GSW Emergency Procedures Quick Reference Guide).
myGSW	Urgent notifications and closures (listed in the GSW Emergency Procedures Quick Reference Guide).
Alertus mobile app	Urgent notifications to students who have installed the app.
GSW website and social media	Public status updates and links to detailed guidance.
Direct contact by advisors	Individual outreach to students facing teach-out, transfer, or financial decisions.

Every communication to students concerning an extended disruption will include:

- What has changed and how long the change is expected to last.
- What the student needs to do, and by when.
- The student's options, including any refund, credit, or teach-out choice.
- Whom to contact, and how SARA students with unresolved concerns can use the GSW Student Problem Resolution process.

Media inquiries go to the Department of University Relations, as directed by the GSW Emergency Procedures Quick Reference Guide.

Access to Student Records

Students maintain access to their academic records during any disruption and after any program or institutional closure. GSW follows the USG Records Retention Schedules for student records, which require GSW to keep transcripts permanently.

- **During a disruption:** Students continue to view grades, schedules, and account information through RAIN and myGSW, and course records through GeorgiaVIEW. The Registrar and Chief Information Officer (CIO) coordinate with USG Information Technology Services to restore shared systems under USG IT disaster recovery plans.
- **Transcripts and enrollment verification:** The Registrar continues to issue official transcripts and verifications; if GSW offices are closed, it processes requests remotely.
- **Program discontinuation:** Records for students in a discontinued program remain with the GSW Registrar, and students receive written confirmation of completed coursework and remaining requirements.

- **Institutional closure or consolidation:** GSW records would transfer to a successor USG institution or another custodian designated by the USG, and GSW will communicate, in writing, how to obtain transcripts.
- **Privacy:** GSW handles all records during a disruption in accordance with FERPA and USG data security requirements.

Course or Program Discontinuation and Teach-Out

A Single Course Cannot Be Completed

In order of preference, the Dean, with approval from the Provost, offers the student:

1. Completion of the same course with a substitute instructor.
2. Transfer to another section of the same course at GSW.
3. An approved equivalent or substitute course at GSW, or at another USG institution through eCore, eMajor, or USG collaborative online programs.
4. An Incomplete grade with a defined plan and deadline for completing missing assignments.
5. If none of these are reasonable, a refund or credit may be issued.

A Program Is Deactivated or Terminated

GSW follows the USG Program Deactivation and Termination process, which requires a teach-out plan that explains how current students will continue to progress. USG Academic Affairs reviews the plan before approving it. Under BOR Policy 3.6.2 and Academic & Student Affairs Handbook 2.3.3, GSW cannot terminate a program until it has advised remaining students on their degree options and students are no longer in the program. Each GSW teach-out plan will:

- Stop new admissions while letting every enrolled student, including SARA students in other states, finish the program.
- Name the final term in which courses will be offered and the projected final graduation term.
- Keep required courses available online so that online students do not have to relocate.
- State whether students will incur additional costs and how GSW will cover them.
- Provide each student with an individual degree plan and an assigned advisor.
- Offer transfer assistance to a comparable program at another USG or accredited institution for students who prefer it.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will notify The Commission on Colleges and Universities (SACSCOC) as required by its Substantive Change Policy, and the SARA liaison will notify the Georgia SARA portal entity.

GSW Closes or Consolidates

In closure or consolidation, GSW will work with the USG Board of Regents to arrange a teach-out within the USG, typically through a successor or partner USG institution, and would provide the records and financial protection as required.

Refunds, Credits, and Other Compensation

When GSW, rather than the student, causes instruction to stop, GSW does not charge students for education they do not receive. These protections are separate from the GSW Refund Policy, which covers only student-initiated withdrawals. The President's authority comes from BOR Policy 7.3.5, which lets the Chancellor delegate to institution presidents any further action needed to carry out the refund policy.

Situation	Student protection
GSW cancels a course before it begins	Full refund of tuition and course fees or enrollment in an alternate course at no added cost; the student may choose.
A course is interrupted but can be completed (Levels 1 to 3)	No refund owed; GSW provides the course through the previously described steps, including deadline extensions or Incomplete grades.
GSW cannot complete a course after it begins and no reasonable alternative exists	Full refund or account credit of tuition and course fees for that course, at the student's choice, without penalty on the transcript.
A program is discontinued and the student declines or cannot use the teach-out	Refund or credit of tuition and fees for any term the student paid for but could not complete; transfer assistance.
Teach-out creates added costs (travel, extra terms, higher tuition elsewhere)	GSW covers or offsets the added costs as stated in the teach-out plan.
Institutional closure	Refunds for the unfinished term, teach-out within the USG, and permanent access to transcripts.

How Refunds and Credits Are Processed

- The Office of Student Accounts calculates, and issues refunds through GSW's normal refund process. Students may choose a refund or a credit toward a future term.
- The Office of Financial Aid handles federal financial aid under Title IV return-of-funds rules.
- As BOR Policy 7.3.5 requires, the office of Financial Aid reimburses state scholarship or grant funds to the state agency that provided them.
- Students who believe a decision is unfair may appeal through the GSW Student Problem Resolution process, and SARA students may escalate an unresolved complaint to the Georgia SARA portal entity.