

Georgia State University

Complete College Georgia

2013 Status Report



Overview

Ten years ago, Georgia State's institutional graduation rate stood at 32%, and underserved populations were foundering. Graduation rates were 22% for Latinos, 29% for African Americans, and 18% for African American males. Pell students were graduating at rates barely half those of non-Pell students.

In 2013, as a result of a campus-wide commitment to student success and more than a dozen innovative programs implemented over the past several years, Georgia State's achievement gap is gone. The institutional graduation rate has improved 21 points since 2003. This past two years alone, it has climbed 5.1 points—reaching a new record of 53.1%—and it is on pace to increase another 2 to 3 points next fall. (See *Chart 1*.) In the past decade, graduation rates are up 28 points for African Americans (to 57% in 2013), 41 points for African-American males (to 59%), and 44 points for Latinos (to 66%) (*Chart 2*). All of these numbers set all-time highs for Georgia State. Pell students now are as successful as non-Pell students. The total number of degrees conferred annually increased in the past year from 6,901 to 7,365 (up 7%), setting another institutional record. Just four years ago, the number of conferrals stood at 5,857, meaning that Georgia State is now graduating 1,500 more students per year than it was in 2008 (*Chart 3*).

Significantly, Georgia State did not accomplish this dramatic turnaround through exclusion. Over the past decade, the student population has become larger (growing from 27,000 to 32,000), more diverse (moving from 46% to 61% non-white), and more economically disadvantaged (with the Pell population climbing from 31% to a record 56% in 2013) (*Chart 4*). In fact, Georgia State also set records this past year for the number of students enrolled in each of the following categories: Pell (with the number now topping 14,000 students), African-Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, first generation, and military learners. Georgia State's success with diverse student populations is of growing national significance. In September 2012, the Education Trust released a report ranking Georgia State 1st in the nation in success with Latino students and 5th in the nation in success of African American students relative to other student populations. Over the past year, Georgia State was named one of the Top 100 Hispanic Serving Universities in the U.S., ranked among the top 50 universities in the nation for the number of bachelor's degrees conferred to Asian Americans, and, with a 17% once-year increase, ranked 1st in the nation among all non-profit universities in bachelor's degrees conferred to African Americans (*Chart 5*).

Updates and Progress with Specific Initiatives

We believe that this impressive progress has come from a commitment to the systematic use of data in identifying problems that impact students across multiple racial, ethnic, and economic groups; the piloting of innovative, low-cost interventions; and the subsequent scaling up of the successful programs to maximize their impacts. This last point is of particular significance. It is by no means easy to develop

effective programs, but it is also not enough. The institution must also be willing and able to scale the programs so that they impact large numbers of students.

This year, Georgia State will welcome 300 at-risk freshmen into its Summer Success Academy; serve 2,500 students in Freshman Learning Communities; teach more than 7,500 pre-calculus students in a hybrid, adaptive learning format; tutor 9,600 students in peer-led Supplemental Instruction; reverse 2,600 students from being dropped for non-payment through its Panther Retention Grant program; and track the academic progress of 25,000 students daily through its web-based GPS advisement system. Not one of these programs existed ten years ago; indeed, all but two were implemented over the past 3 years.

What follows are updates on some of the major initiatives mapped out in our 2012 plan:

Double the number and amount of need- and merit-based scholarships. Led by President Mark Becker and the GSU Foundation, the University has raised over \$10 million in new scholarship monies over the past twelve months. In 2010, GSU opened a fully staffed Scholarship Resource Center and created a searchable data base of scholarship opportunities for students. Outcome: Disbursements to students from institutional scholarships and grants increased 63% over the past year. In its first year of operation, the new scholarship data base was used by more than 9,000 students.

Reduce the negative impacts of unmet need. With a large increase in the number of GSU students dropped for non-payment in recent terms, we initiated the Panther Retention Grants program in 2011. Within hours of the fee drop, personnel in enrollment services proactively reach out to hundreds of students who have just been dropped, offering small grants. In some cases, the difference between a student staying enrolled or not hinges on as little as \$300—a surprising claim until one realizes that 40% of Georgia State students come from households with annual incomes of \$30,000 or less. Outcome: Over the past year, 2,600 students were returned to classes after having been dropped as a result of this program. The grant recipients meet with financial aid counselors, and more than 90% have re-enrolled for subsequent semesters without requiring additional grants. 70% of the students who were within two semesters of graduating when the grant was awarded have since graduated.

Decrease the negative effects of the loss of the Hope scholarship. At Georgia State, 74% of freshmen come into the University supported by the Hope Scholarship. In 2008, 51% of Hope freshmen lost the scholarship by the end of their first year due to their GPA dropping below 3.0. Of these students, only 9% ever gained the scholarship back again. For the others, their likelihood of graduating dropped 40 points, from 61% to 21%. Sadly, the vast majority of students who dropped out after losing Hope left Georgia State in good academic standing; they were on the path to graduating, they just lacked a 3.0 GPA. In 2009 we piloted a program, Keep Hope Alive, offering students \$500 a semester for the first two semesters after they had lost Hope. In return for the funds, they signed a contract agreeing to attend a series of academic skills and financial literacy workshops and to meet with their academic advisors regularly during the year. Outcome: Last year, 62% of the students in the program recovered Hope by their next check point. The program has helped to raise Hope retention rates on campus from 49% in 2008 to 75% last year and has proven so effective that the Goizueta and the Coca-Cola Foundations both directed funds to the initiative as part of recent gifts to GSU (Chart 6).

Overhaul academic advising. Georgia State had an academic advising system that had developed piece-meal over time. The University and its colleges maintained six different advising offices with little coordination between them, no

common record keeping, and no common training. As prescribed by the 2011 Georgia State Strategic Plan, Georgia State has hired 42 additional academic advisors to bring our student-advisor ratio to the national standard of 300-to-1. We have established a common record system, common training, and a campus-wide University Advising Council. In 2013, we opened a central University Advisement Center, housing almost 70 advisors who serve every college and major, in a location in the heart of campus. In August 2012, we went live with a cutting-edge, web-based GPS Advising system based on 7 years of RPG data and over 2 million GSU grades. The system, which monitors 25,000 students with nightly updates from Banner, uses 700 markers to track when students go off path academically and offers predictive analytics for how each student will do for every major and every course in the curriculum. *Outcome:* In its first year of operation, the GPS system was used in 15,800 advisement sessions. 2,452 students were converted from off path to on path for graduation, and 900 had their schedules corrected during registration when markers were triggered indicating that they had signed up for wrong or inappropriate courses. According to our analytics, the net impact of the first-year of our advising initiative will be a 1.1 point increase in the institutional graduation rate. In the coming academic year, with the help of an Incubator Grant from the USG, we will become the first school in the nation to integrate a nuanced set of financial analytics into a web-based advising platform.

Redesign courses with high DFW rates. Five years ago, the mathematics requirement constituted an insurmountable progression roadblock for many students and was the cause of thousands of students losing the Hope scholarship. The DFW rate in College Algebra, for instance, was 43%. In some sections, the number topped 60%. The university piloted a hybrid model in which students attend a one-hour lecture each week and spend two hours in a math lab with their class, working online with adaptive-learning exercises while the instructor monitors results and answers questions. *Outcome:* This past academic year, 7,500 students took their mathematics requirement in this hybrid format, including every student who enrolled in College Algebra. The DFW rate for the course has dropped from 43% to 21%. This means that 1,650 more students are passing the course in their first attempt than was the case five years ago. Our newly founded Center for Instructional Innovation is helping to expand such pedagogical innovation across the curriculum with seed grants to departments and faculty to explore new approaches in the classroom.

Expand Supplemental Instruction. With many other courses with high DFW rates and limited resources, we decided to tap into one of our competitive advantages: large numbers of federal Work Study students. We scoured the rosters of courses with high failure rates for Work Study students who had done well. Rather than assign these students to work in the library or cafeteria, we hired them to go through training, attend the course again, and offer tutoring sessions to students currently in the course. *Outcome:* The average course grade for those students who attend at least five SI sessions is almost half a letter grade higher than for those who do not attend, and the program now supports 9,600 students every year. A side benefit of the program has been that the graduation rates of the tutors, now teaching rather than working in the cafeteria or shelving books in the library, have also climbed by 10 points.

Institute a Summer Success Academy for at-risk freshmen. Our data show that there are identifiable characteristics of admitted students that correlate highly to academic struggles and attrition. Rather than defer admission for the weakest students until spring, Georgia State piloted a Summer Success Academy in 2012. Students were admitted for the fall on the condition that they attend the Academy—a 7-week long, 7-credit-hour program in which all students are enrolled in Freshman Learning Communities (that extend into fall and spring) and are exposed to intensive academic support, including Supplemental Instruction, our early alert system, one-on-one advisement, and financial literacy workshops. *Outcome:* The 135 students

in the 2012 Summer Academy (representing the 4% of the fall freshman class with the highest risk factors) not only all completed the Summer Academy; the group went on to achieve a 2.95 average GPA during the fall semester—a higher average GPA than that earned by the remaining 96% of the freshman class. For 2013, the Academy has more than doubled in size and the students completed the 7-credit-hour summer term with an impressive average GPA of 3.29.

Increase Enrollments in Freshmen Learning Communities. By breaking down the freshmen class into groups of 25 students and having the students travel to all of their fall semester classes together, Freshmen Learning Communities allow study-partnerships and friendships to form naturally and provide a structure through which the University can direct advisement, Supplemental Instruction, and other forms of academic support to the students. The average one-year retention and six-year graduation rates for students enrolled in FLCs at Georgia State are both 4 points higher than the rates for those who are not. *Outcome:* The 2011 University Strategic Plan pledged to increase the percent of freshmen enrolled in FLCs to 70%. We hit the target for the first time this fall, enrolling almost 2,200 of the incoming 2013 freshmen in FLCs—and increase of 690 students over FLC enrollments in 2012.

Partnerships

As a comprehensive research university with deep ties to metro-Atlanta and the state, Georgia State University has dozens of partnerships that serve the college completion goals not merely of Georgia State but of the entire state of Georgia.

The College of Education, for instance, maintains multiple successful service centers that provide important resources to K-12, including professional development for teachers and administrators, training and support for mental health providers, and literacy resources for children and families. There is a commitment to expanding these thriving centers and clinics, including the Alonzo A. Crim Center for Urban Educational Excellence, the Center for School Safety, the Principals Center, the Center for Reading Recovery, and the Urban Literacy Clinic, in order to more effectively serve the needs of the Georgia.

The University continues to work closely with Atlanta Public Schools on multiple fronts and has recently increased the number of students in its Washington High Early College program, which has brought hundreds of at-risk high-school students to take courses at Georgia State. We also maintain our successful Early College partnership with Carver High. Leadership from the national Woodrow Wilson Foundation recently visited campus and indicated that they would like to partner with Georgia State on several innovative programs for the preparation of K-12 teachers, especially in STEM areas. We also entered a new agreement with the Woodrow Wilson Foundation to educate and to support teachers in STEM fields through a comprehensive program of curricular and financial support. The partnership with this highly prestigious foundation—one of only a handful of such agreements that the Woodrow Wilson Foundation has entered in nationally—seeks to increase both the number and the quality of STEM teachers in Georgia.

Our leadership in partnering with the Education Advisory Board to develop GPS Advising has led to a host of new collaborations. As a result of the 2013 CCG summit, multiple USG campuses sent representatives to campus to visit GSU's new University Advisement Center, observe the advising protocols we have put in place, and see

the web-based advising platform in action. More surprisingly, perhaps, is the fact that Georgia State has now worked with two other groups who saw the demonstration of GPS Advising at the Summit, the TCSG and the Georgia Association of Independent Colleges—with GSU providing webinars and hosting campus visits to the groups. In the past year, Georgia State has also been asked to present on its innovations in the area of advisement at meetings of Complete College America in Chicago, New Orleans, and Orlando; meetings of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities in Mobile and Baltimore; APLU meetings in Miami and Washington; the Aspen Institute’s forum on The Future of Higher education in Colorado; and with dozens of individual universities. The Chancellor of SUNY has asked Georgia State to present on its advising programs and its use of “big data” in October at an annual meeting of the leadership of all SUNY schools, as has the Board of Regents of Ohio and the Indiana Higher Education Commission. We are partnering with the USG and the Education Advisory Board to develop the first-in-the-nation integration of financial analytics into a web-based advising platform.

The coming year will also see a major partnership between Georgia State and the USG in developing principles and procedures for the support and credentialing of innovative means of learning, including MOOCS. Meanwhile, we continue to work with Georgia Perimeter College on a Lumina-funded project to improve transfer success between the two institutions using Lumina’s experimental DQP (Degree Qualifications Profile) as the model.

Key Observations and Lesson Learned

One of the most exciting aspects of the innovative programs that Georgia State has implemented is their potential to provide novel data that can be employed to accelerate rates of college completion, not merely at Georgia State but elsewhere.

The Panther Retention Grant Program—simple in concept, but highly uncommon nationally—was recently featured in an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and in Jeff Selingo’s new book *College (Un)bound* precisely because it has revealed the strong positive impact that micro grants of as little as \$300 can have on college persistence. As we track the data in the semesters ahead, we should be able to provide insights into the effect of such grants on college-completion rates—a study that will have national significance.

Our tracking through the National Student Clearinghouse of all Georgia State students who leave the University has produced data now being cited nationally by Complete College America due to their startling implications. When one tracks Georgia State’s cohorts by race and ethnicity not merely through Georgia State but through all institutions nationally, success rates increase by 20 points for African Americans, 25 points for whites, and an incredible 29 points for Latinos (*Chart 2*). This has led to an increased appreciation of the transient nature of low-income and at-risk students: they and their families, often due to economic pressures, move around more than do better resourced students. Even more importantly, the data has led to increased appreciation of the under-reporting that occurs when we track success rates by individual institutions. Georgia State’s graduation rate of 51% climbs by more than 20 points when you include students who go on to enroll (and succeed) elsewhere.

Perhaps most promisingly, the hundreds of thousands of datum being collected on a daily basis by Georgia State’s new GPS Advising system have the

potential to be a game changer (and the subject of an upcoming article in *The Wall Street Journal*.) Academic advisement has long been a hold-out when it comes to data; the details of advisement are often veiled behind the private conversations of students and advisors. Now, we not only have the ability to see what impact the careful tracking of every undergraduate and his or her academic choices will have on existing metrics—encouraging news, for instance, is the fact that after one year of GPS Advising, Georgia State’s average number of credit hours at the time of completion is down for the first time in five years—it also opens the door to a whole new set of metrics. If we can track whether each student is on path or off path for timely graduation, how do these numbers compare by various degree programs and how do they track over time? (See *Chart 7*.) If we can identify all of the pre-Accounting students who failed to meet the minimum grade in their first course in the program and we intervene immediately, what percent of students can have their path righted and go on to succeed in the Accounting degree program? (See *Chart 8*.) If we can track the effects of different types of interventions, what potential do the resulting data hold for strengthening the nature and substance of the interventions that we offer?

The search for such answers is exciting, and it will be a major focus of Georgia State’s college completion efforts in the coming year.

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Chart 1

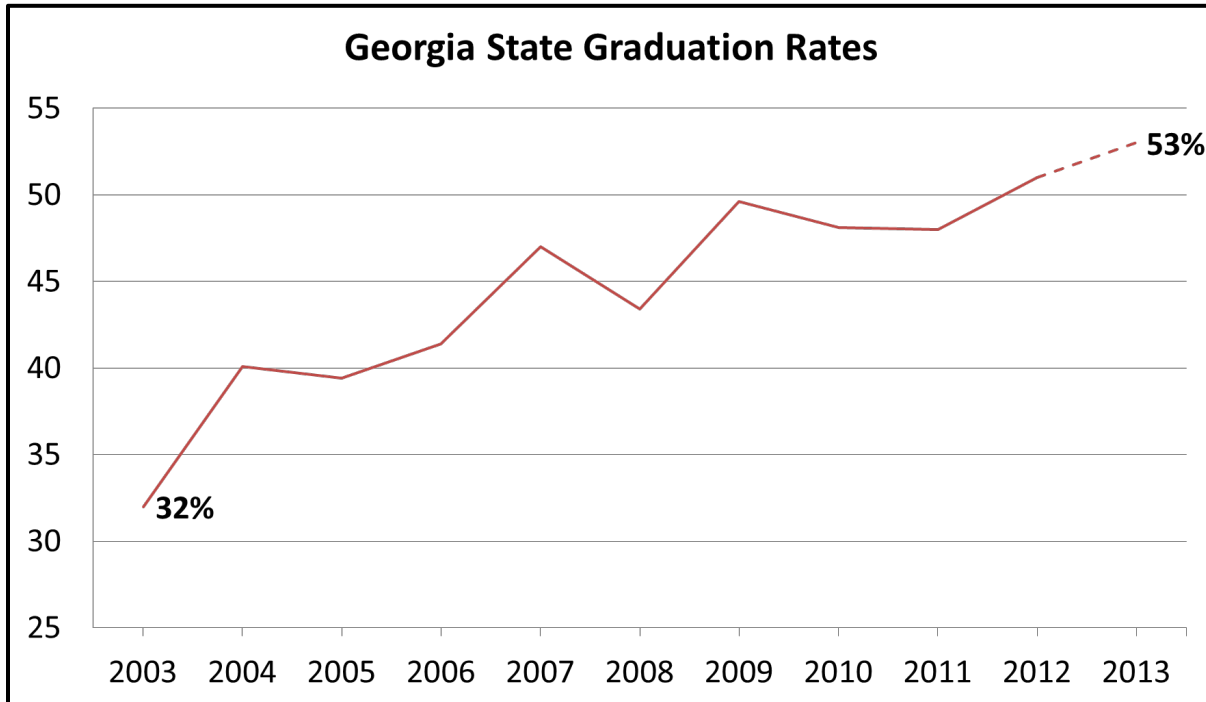


Chart 2

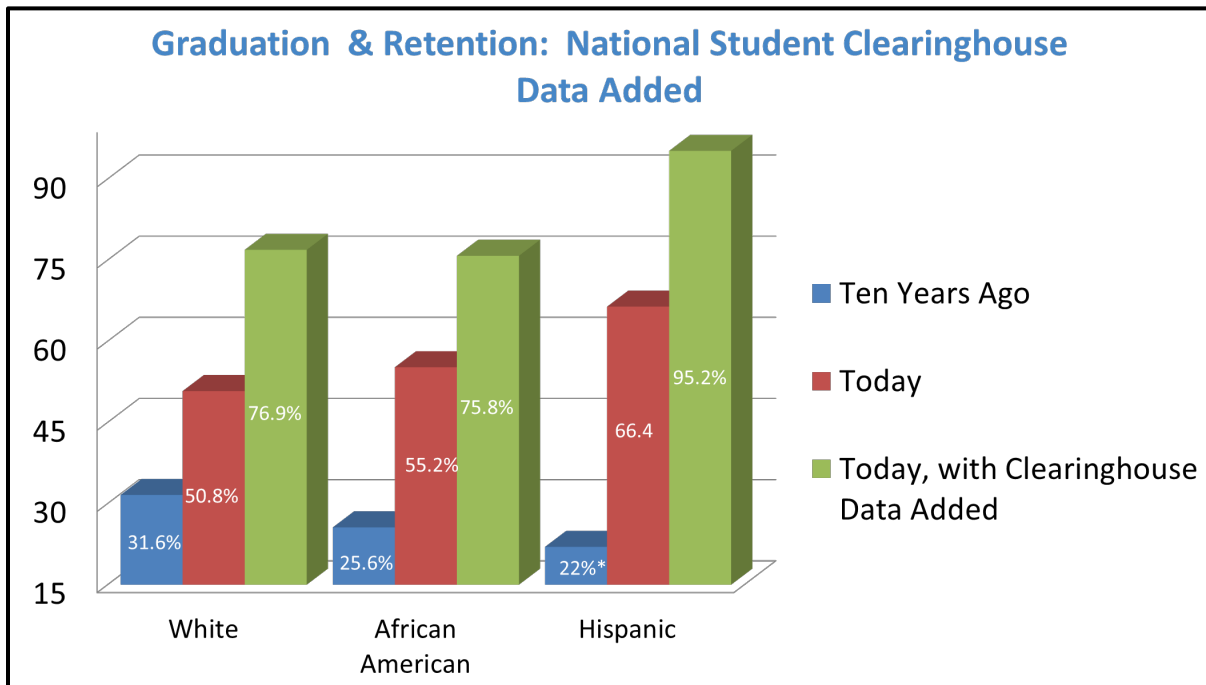


Chart 3

Georgia State Degree Conferrals						
2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	1-Yr Change	4-Yr Change
5,857	6,188	6,419	6,901	7,365	+7%	+26%

Chart 4

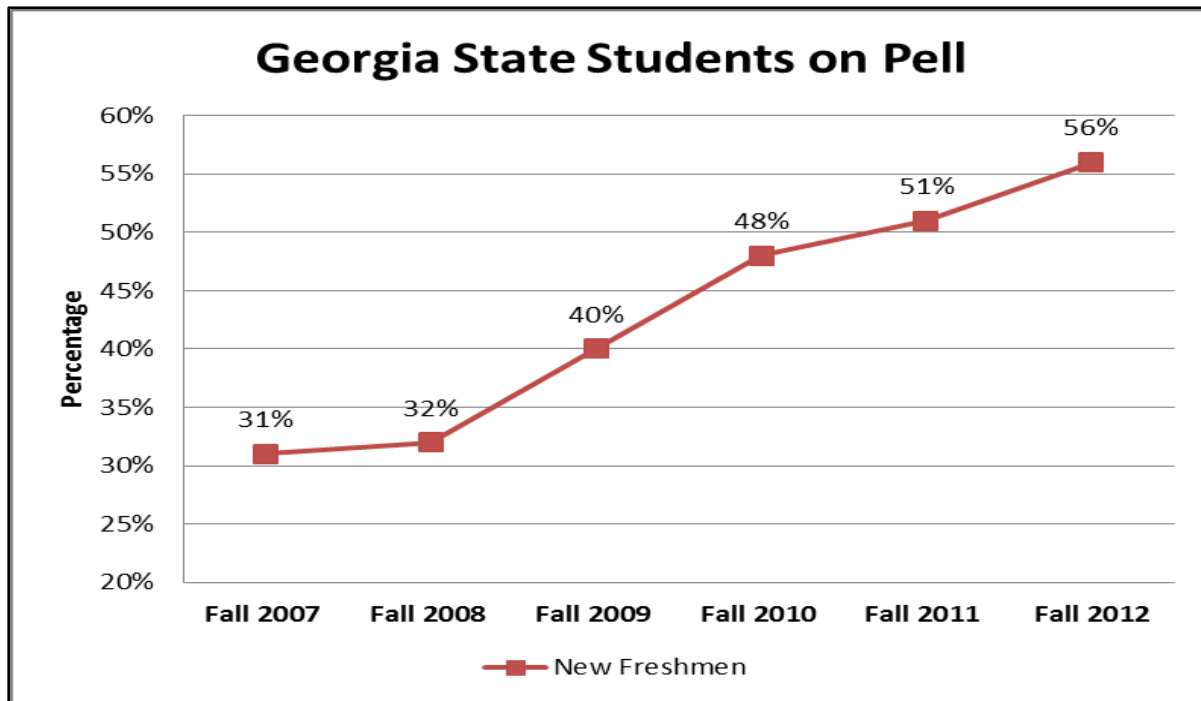


Chart 5

Top 100 Degree Producers					
2012 African-American Bachelor's - All Disciplines Combined					
2011 Rank	Institutions	State	%		
			Total	Grads	%Chg
			2010-2011		
1	Georgia State University	GA	1262	31%	17%
2	FAMU	FL	1224	94%	5%
3	North Carolina A & T State University	NC	1172	90%	-6%
4	Jackson State University	MS	966	94%	4%
5	Howard University	D.C.	953	93%	-10%
6	University of Central Florida	FL	939	9%	10%
7	University of Memphis	TN	862	32%	0%
8	Troy University	AL	859	32%	4%
9	University of Florida	FL	859	10%	11%
10	University of South Florida-Main Campus	FL	845	12%	6%
11	University of North Texas	TX	835	13%	11%
12	Temple University	PA	831	15%	-5%
13	University of Maryland-University College	MD	809	25%	11%
14	Florida Atlantic University	FL	808	18%	-3%
15	Virginia Commonwealth University	VA	805	19%	13%

**Online For Profit Schools Excluded*
 Source: Diverse: Issues in Higher Education

Chart 6

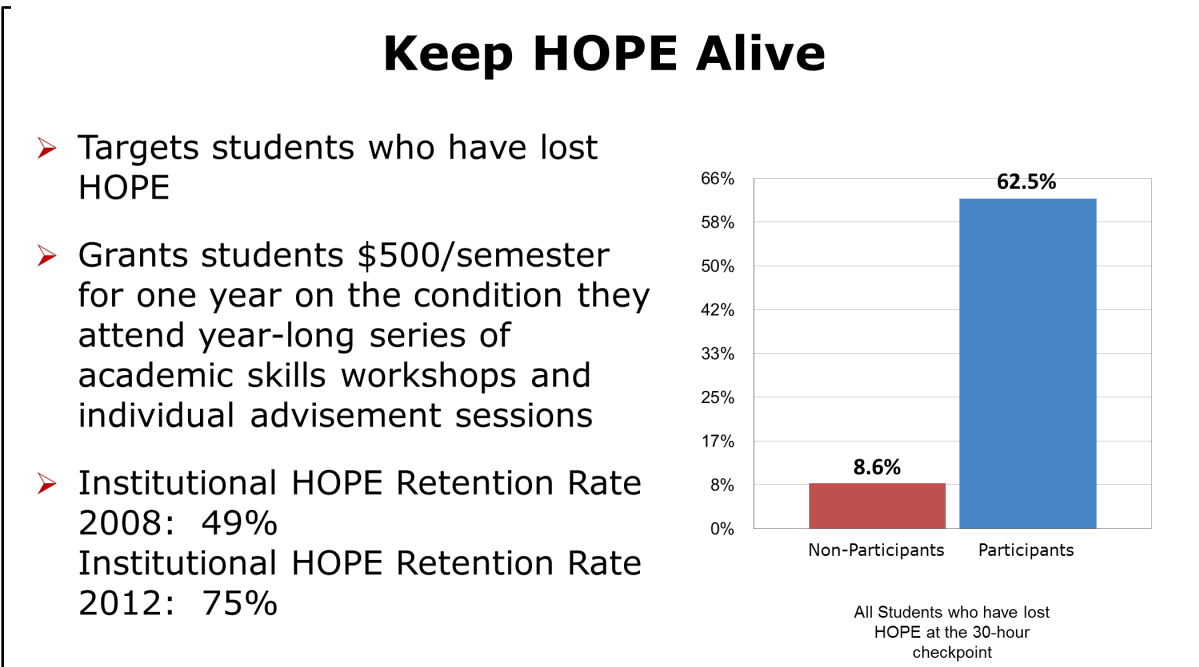


Chart 7

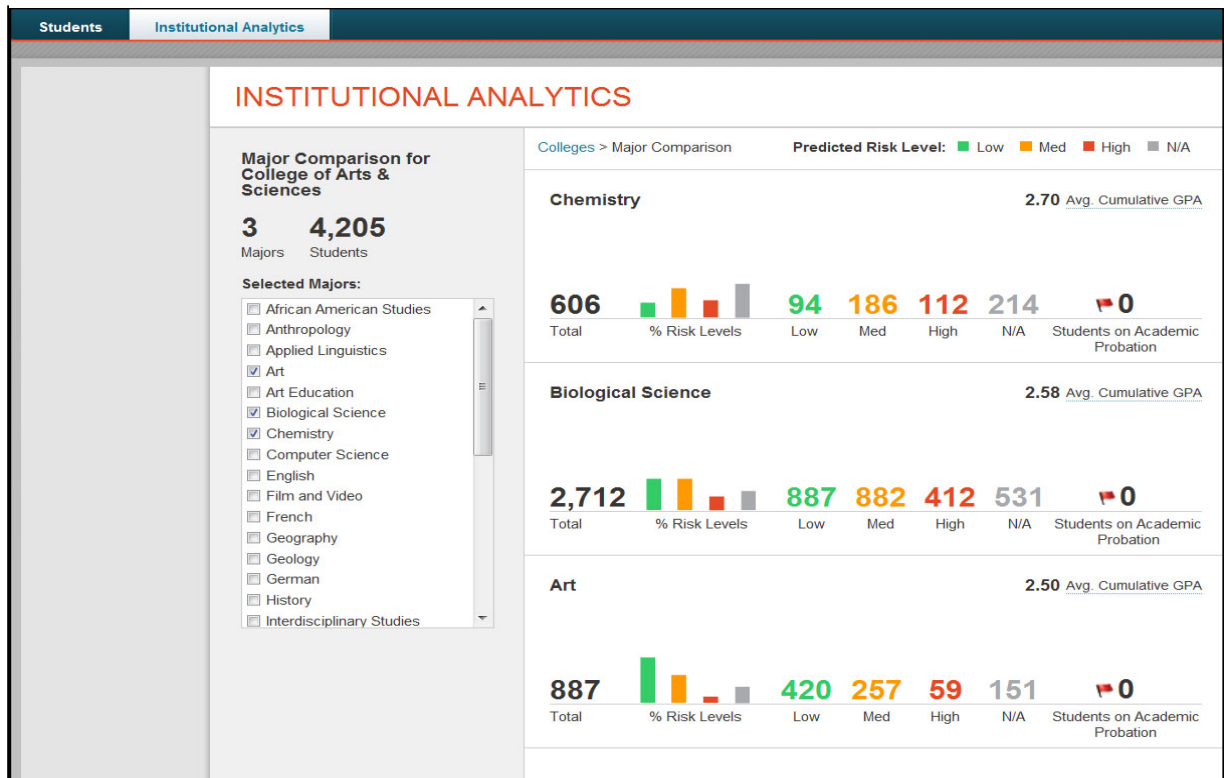


Chart 8

Course	Alert Desc	Total
ACCT 2101	Did not register	559
	Missed Minimum Grade	218
	Course not completed	53
	Updated by advisor	5
ACCT 2102	Did not register	468
	Missed Minimum Grade	160
	Course not completed	46
	Updated by advisor	8
BIOL 1110K	Did not register	532
	Missed Minimum Grade	189
	Course not completed	36
	Updated by advisor	1
BIOL 1120K	Did not register	490
	Missed Minimum Grade	128
	Course not completed	14
BIOL 2300	Did not register	224
	Missed Minimum Grade	169
	Course not completed	55
BIOL 2310	Did not register	286
	Missed Minimum Grade	43
	Course not completed	19
BUSA 3000	Did not register	376
	Missed Minimum Grade	76
	Course not completed	37
	Updated by advisor	6
CHEM 1151K	Did not register	104
	Missed Minimum Grade	48
	Course not completed	4

Why are so many students missing the threshold grade in Accounting?

Why are so many students not taking introductory science courses on time?