



Gordon State College

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Gordon State College's mission is to ensure affordable, supportive access to high quality post-secondary education. As an access institution, we provide engaged faculty-student interaction through intimate classroom experiences, innovative and effective teaching strategies, excellent advising and mentorship programs, and effective student support services. GSC offers baccalaureate and associate degree programs, and the institution has focused more in recent years on meeting the needs of military, adult, underprepared, low income, and dual-credit students.

After a peak enrollment of 5,009 in 2010, enrollment has stabilized at approximately 4000 students. While we have not included "first-generation college" as a characteristic in our tracking of students, GSC does enroll a significant number of first-generation college students as an access institution. Appendix A shows that 52% of new students in fall 2013 had one or two learning support requirements (19% of the overall student enrollment), and 18% of the entire student population were Pell-eligible. In that same semester, 20% of the overall student population were adult learners. These numbers indicate a significant percentage of students who are considered to be in the high risk group. Accordingly, Gordon State has been one of the first institutions in the USG to take remediation transformation to scale. Overall, we have targeted high risk populations for increases in access and completion.

At the same time, our institution has increased its population of students taking courses on a dual-credit basis. In the semester of our peak enrollment, fall 2010, we enrolled 36 dual-credit students. By fall 2013, that population had increased by over 400%, to 151 students. We have worked hard with high schools in our area to provide more opportunities for dual credit. In addition, we have reviewed our policies for accepting AP credit and brought them into alignment with national norms.

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The following high-impact strategies were undertaken at Gordon State College after reviewing data on completion indicators, our institutional mission, and our available resources.

Strategy for Goal 1: Increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by targeting increases in access and completion for students traditionally underserved in postsecondary education. (See Appendix B for targeted subpopulations.)

Total degrees awarded in 2013-2014: 609 (goal: 614), an increase of 150 degrees from 2008-2009 (33% increase.) The one-year retention rates for full-time, part-time, and Pell-eligible students in the fall 2013 first-year cohort are the highest in the past five years. The rate for part-time students has most significantly improved, 12.1% higher than for the fall 2009 cohort. See Appendix B for complete report.

Justification and Challenges: Prior to the CCG initiative, this institution had focused on full-time students much more than on part-time and had given no special attention to adult learners and veterans as populations with characteristics and specific needs. By focusing on these populations, we have come to understand better how we can provide:

- flexible course delivery that meets students' scheduling needs
- enhanced academic and non-academic support within the context of
 - limited time on campus for many part-time and adult students
 - specific needs of these populations

- assessment of prior learning gained through work/military experience

Challenges: The development of half term courses, hybrid courses, credit for prior learning and additional online courses required the revision and alignment of computer system and departmental processes as well as additional training and review of courses to ensure high quality is maintained regardless of location, delivery method or duration. While GSC has significantly increased adult learner populations, we note that we are not located near a military base nor in a high-density population area. This has caused our efforts to recruit more military students to be less productive.

GSC has a long history of serving African American and low-income populations. Perhaps the chief challenge is trying to combat circumstances outside the college's control. As the Summary of Activities for Goal 1 in Section 3 describes, GSC has completed or is continuing a number of initiatives aimed at providing access and completion support for these populations, although some initiatives benefit all student populations. These two traditionally underserved populations are the largest of the targeted groups and those in which we have the opportunity to make the most difference in retention, progression, and completion efforts.

Strategy for Goal 6: Shorten time to degree by participating in dual enrollment and awarding credit based on Advanced Placement.

Justification and Challenges: This strategy provides a means for high school students to complete a degree in less time, at the same time significantly reducing the cost of earning a degree. *The number of dual-enrollment students at GSC*

more than doubled (121% increase) from 2012 to 2013 (Appendix A, Dual Enrollment), and we have the capacity to enroll more each year.

Changes in state policy have had a significant positive impact on dual enrollment participation at GSC. Perhaps as importantly, budget constraints in the public high schools have made credit earned in college classes more attractive. Local schools cannot afford to offer a wide array of AP classes with low enrollments; dual enrollment is an attractive alternative. The Summary of Activities lists the partnerships we have developed to allow a greater number of high school students to take advantage of dual credit. We expect the number of dual-credit students to increase this year.

Challenges: *As noted previously, while we have significantly improved resources for veterans and their families, our service area population does not bring a high demand for military-related credit opportunities. (See Appendix C, Credit by Exam)*

Strategy for Goal 7 (combined 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3)

Increase the likelihood of degree completion by transforming the remediation process: enrolling most students in need of remediation in gateway collegiate courses in English and mathematics, with corequisite Learning Support; combining reading and writing remediation; and ensuring that all remediation is targeted toward supporting

students in the skills needed to pass the collegiate course.

Justification and Challenges: We think that this strategy will have the greatest impact of any of the strategies on retention and completion at Gordon State College. *Of our first-year students in fall 2013, 52% had one or two Learning Support requirements. Based on pilot data from 2013-14, the strategies described above improve retention and completion rates of students while shortening degree completion time and saving students money.*

GSC personnel studied remediation transformation for two years and piloted the corequisite model for first-year students in 2013-2014. While the number of students in the pilot was small, the pilot data are promising. *89% enrolled in corequisite math passed their first college-level math course in one semester. In corequisite English, 63% passed their college-level English course in one semester. (See Appendix D)* We look forward to collecting and analyzing additional data by fall 2015 to demonstrate the effectiveness of the new remediation model.

Challenges: *We are at full scale in adapting the new remediation model as of fall 2014. The challenges have been fairly minor at the institutional level - primarily training faculty and making the necessary alterations in curricula, published information, and policies.*

SUMMARY OF GOALS, HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

GOAL

1: INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES AWARDED BY USG INSTITUTIONS

High-impact Strategy

1.1 Target increases in access and completion for students traditionally underserved in postsecondary education:

- Part-time students
- Adult learners (undergraduate students 25 or older)
- Military and former military students
- Underserved minority (African American males)
- Low income (Pell recipients)

Summary of Activities

GSC has continued to build on its efforts to attract, retain, and move to completion traditionally underserved students. Progress in this area has included the following efforts:

Part-time Students: GSC's efforts have focused on flexible course delivery. We have expanded the online course offerings, especially during the summer term, and created more hybrid courses, including half semester classes (8 weeks). In addition, we have increased the number of classes offered two days a week.

Adult Learners:

- Our AL Coordinator
 - Developed and enhanced new student orientation specifically for AL's and planned events to connect AL 's to college campus, culture and resources.
 - Established tutoring sessions to cater to AL needs, including weekend math and writing tutoring.
 - Established an AL mentoring program to assist students with getting adjusted to college life. The AL coordinator worked with several of our adult students to put together a mentoring program that has been well received and is a meaningful experience for both mentees and mentors.
 - Coordinated faculty training in assessing Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and worked with those faculty to create departmental policies. In support of the PLA 2000 course used in the USG, the AL Coordinator was trained in Ingress, the system for sharing course sections and related information among USG institutions.
- Another support mechanism for adult learners created this past year is OWLs (Older Wiser

Learners), a support group offered through our Counseling and Accessibility office.

- GSC has required all first-year students with Learning Support requirements to take our 8-week First Year Experience course. In 2013-2014, we offered an online section of the course strictly for adult learners each term. This section was adapted to fit the needs of this student population.

Military and former military: GSC main campus and off-campus sites are not located near a military base, and the main campus is not in or near a high-density population area. As Appendix B (Goal 1 Metrics, Access) shows, we have very few military (current and former) students.

We have continued, however, to find ways to attract veterans and active duty service members in our service area. A staff member in the Counseling and Accessibility Office was designated as our Veterans Coordinator, and she represents GSC on the Regents Advisory Committee on Military Education. As part of our efforts to be military friendly, we give credit for formal courses and tests connected to the workplace and validated by the American Council on Education (ACE), including DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) as well as through portfolio evaluation.

Gordon State College became an active member of SOC (Servicemembers Opportunities College) in 2012. In addition, the Student Veteran Association assists in the development of military programming and supportive services such as Veteran Memorial Services and fundraisers to meet the needs of the veteran population.

Underserved Minority (African American males):

AAMI: In 2009, the college implemented a component of the African-American Male Initiative (AAMI) through the Brother to Brother Chapter of Student African-American Brotherhood (SAAB). This AAMI program includes academic advising, community service, and personal development. Additional features include study skills workshops, team-building activities such as the ropes challenge course and bowling, career boot camp, and participation in relevant conferences.

Historically, African-American males enrolled at our institution have had to overcome challenges such as inadequate academic preparation and the inability to navigate the college setting. In 2009, African-American males accounted for almost 16% of the student population; however, increased admission standards, especially in the area of learning support requirements, have negatively impacted this demographic; enrollment dropped to 11% in Fall 2013. To that end, this initiative would serve as a catalyst to increase the educational productivity and academic success of African-American males.

Low Income (Pell recipients): As a state college and an access institution, GSC offers quality education at a great value, and the college emphasizes that fact in its advertising and communications to students and their families.

GSC is one of the few institutions in the USG that has a call center such that students who call about financial aid will be able to speak directly to a Gordon representative rather than having to leave a message. Our knowledgeable call center personnel are able to advise prospective students on how to fulfill the high school requirements and paperwork to become eligible for federal and state financial aid.

Once students are on campus, we support them regarding financial needs:

- Payment plans: In past years we would lose some low-income students because they had not planned their finances well or did not have enough information (FAFSA results, for example) to plan well. They might have a relatively small balance that they could not pay, yet they were dropped from classes. Beginning this fall, GSC has partnered with Nelnet to allow students to pay their balances over time.
- Financial education: Beginning in 2013, GSC added a Financial Literacy component to the Gordon First Year Experience course. The Office of Financial Aid has promoted Financial Literacy resources to our students for many years.
- Supplies and meals: GSC allows students to use their aid to pay for textbooks, school supplies, and meal plans. Students are better equipped to work and to succeed in their classes.
- Affordable Learning Georgia: Our ALG Campus Champion and Library Coordinator work to inform faculty, staff, and students about Affordable Learning Georgia and the benefits of open educational resources. Before ALG, a number of our faculty were already exploring ideas to reduce textbook costs for students. We have anecdotal evidence that in this past year, more faculty have been creating free online resources, placing textbooks on reserve in the library, and creating less expensive published materials.

Other Retention and Completion Efforts:

For the purpose of improving retention and completion for all students, the GSC Student Success Center has

- Instituted Early Alert intrusive advising for disengaged and poorly performing students, spring

- 2013. Faculty report students of concern in the fourth week of the fall and spring semesters.
- Expanded Early Alert to Always Alert in Fall 2014 to allow faculty to report concerns as early as the first week of the semester.
- Continued Supplemental Instruction
- Provided individual tutoring
- Conducted success/academic skills workshops
- Created a Career Services Center in fall 2013 which helps tie career goals to academics

Interim Measures of Progress

Increasing enrollment, at least in significant numbers, is a challenge to make happen in a short time frame, and is subject to a considerable degree to economic fluctuation and other factors outside our control. We recognize that GSC can have a more immediate, as well as long-term, impact on progression and outcomes. Many of the activities described above should improve retention and degree completion in more significant numbers in our African American and low-income student populations.

Measures of Success

Progression Metrics:

- 1.1: 5-year history of one-year retention rates for all students and first-time freshmen. See Appendix B: Progression
- 1.2-1.4: 5-year history of one-year retention rates for students who begin as full-time, part-time and Pell-eligible. (See Appendix B, Progression)

Access Metrics:

- 1.1: 5-year history of entering students, by underserved population (See Appendix B, Access)
- 1.2 & 1.3: 5-year history of dually enrolled students (See Appendix B, Access)

Outcome Metrics:

- 1.1 through 1.5 Five year history of number of bachelor’s degrees conferred by institution and by underserved populations (See Appendix B, Outcomes)

GOAL

6: SHORTEN TIME TO DEGREE COMPLETION THROUGH PROGRAMS THAT ALLOW STUDENTS TO EARN COLLEGE CREDIT WHILE STILL IN HIGH SCHOOL AND BY AWARDING CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING THAT IS VERIFIED BY APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

High-impact Strategy

6.1 and 6.3: Participate in dual enrollment programs for high school students and award credit based on Advanced Placement scores

Summary of Activities

6.1: In the past year, GSC has worked with four public school systems in our area to facilitate dual enrollment.

1. Pike County High School: Planned for bussing students accepted into the Accel program to the GSC main campus. The high school provides transportation at specific days and times, and we schedule needed classes and reserve seats. We also work with the school personnel to promote dual credit with students and parents.
2. Jackson High School (Butts County): For fall 2014, we have agreed to follow the approach developed with Pike County.
3. Mary Persons High School (Monroe County): This past year, GSC offered classes for students in the Accel program at the Monroe County Education Center. For fall 2014, MPHS and GSC have agreed to eliminate the on-site classes and follow the Pike County approach.

In addition, GSC has

1. Participated in the steering committee for a regional college and career academy involving Griffin-Spalding Schools, Pike County, Butts County, and Southern Crescent Technical College;
2. Participated in the Academy for Advanced Studies, the college and career academy in Henry County. Southern Crescent Technical College and Clayton State University are partners. GSC offers on site evening classes that are available to students in the Accel program and a few daytime classes.

6.3 has been completed. Gordon State College recognizes the Advanced Placement (AP) Program of the College Board and awards credit for examinations according to the following regulations. (Course and credit descriptions available on website at:

<http://www.gordonstate.edu/admissions/advanced/ap/index.asp>)

1. Credit hours earned through AP examinations will be recorded on a student's permanent record and will count toward graduation.
2. Credit by AP examination will not be allowed for a course in which the student is enrolled or has previously received a grade.

Interim Measures of Progress

This strategy provides a means for high school students to complete a degree in less time, at the same time significantly reducing the cost of earning a degree. The number of dual-credit students at

Measures of Success	<p>GSC rose over 400% in one year, from fall 2012 to fall 2013, and we have the capacity to enroll even more each year. See Appendix A.</p> <p>6.1: Number of enrolled Accel students and total number of credit hours. See Appendix A.</p> <p>6.3: Number of AP credits accepted. Note: we have no control over the number submitted. In fact, the increased interest in dual enrollment could lead to a decrease in AP credit. (See Appendix C – Credit by Exam)</p>
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GOAL	<p>7: INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF DEGREE COMPLETION BY TRANSFORMING THE WAY THAT REMEDIATION IS ACCOMPLISHED</p>
High-impact Strategy	<p>7.1, 7.2, and 7.3: Enroll most students in need of remediation in gateway collegiate courses in English and mathematics, with corequisite Learning Support; combine English and reading remediation; and ensure that all remediation is targeted toward supporting students in the skills they need to pass the collegiate course.</p>
Summary of Activities	<p>This past year, GSC piloted corequisite remediation in English and math and has prepared to go to scale with full transformation of remediation this fall term. We will have all students with Learning Support requirements take either a Foundations course or corequisite remediation. The majority of students needing remediation will be placed in corequisite remediation. Students with a math requirement will be placed in a support lab for either Quantitative Skills and Reasoning or College Algebra, based on their COMPASS score, and will take the appropriate gateway course as a corequisite. Reading and English Learning Support will be combined in remedial English.</p>
Interim Measures of Progress	<p>This strategy should have an immediate impact on retention and progression at Gordon State College, and eventually on completion. Of our first-year students in fall 2013, 52% had one or two Learning Support requirements. The activities described above should improve morale in this student population by getting them into certain fundamental core classes in the first semester or year and by reducing their “Learning Support profile.” Without such a lengthy process for completing remedial work, students should be more motivated to stay in school. Ultimately, they will be able to earn a degree in less time, save money and reduce student debt in doing so.</p>
Measures of Success	<p>7.1 through 7.7 Having piloted the strategy in 2013-2014, we have collected some data for 7.1-7.3. The numbers are small but indicate positive results. See Appendix D, Goal 7 Data. We will be able to begin fully assessing outcomes by fall 2015.</p>

OBSERVATIONS

- Our most successful strategy and activities to this point have come under Goal 6, shortening time to degree completion by facilitating access to dual credit opportunities. GSC has worked with public high schools, private schools, and homeschooling associations in our service area for many years to promote dual credit. When circumstances made dual credit more attractive to the public high schools, those working relationships made expanding access to approved college classes much easier. Policy changes at the state level and tight budgets have caused the public high schools, in particular, to turn to dual credit as an effective strategy for solving problems. Many superintendents, principals, and counselors also recognize the benefits to students and their families. By working together in scheduling the right classes at the right times, in promoting dual credit to students and parents, and in giving close attention to managing day-to-day operations, these partnerships are helping students earn degrees more quickly, at a significant cost savings for families.
- In terms of overall GSC numbers, it appears that transforming remediation is going to be the strategy to have the greatest impact on retention, progression, and completion. The data from our pilot program in 2013-2014 are very encouraging. (Appendix D, Goal 7 Data)
- Without question, progression improved within the pilot. We will be interested in learning of the effect these changes will have on degree completion.
- To date, efforts at attracting targeted populations to enroll at GSC in greater numbers have not been successful, with the exception of dual credit students. (See Appendix B, Goal 1 Metrics, Access.) In the past two years, GSC has intensified its marketing and recruiting efforts. We hired a company to help us better understand our students, institutional strengths and weaknesses, and perceptions of the institution. The college has employed a firm to help us improve our communications with targeted populations. Enrollment management strategies have improved GSC internal processes. We hope that we will see higher numbers as a result of these efforts, and we recognize that our enrollment could have declined more without them.
- In regards to progression and completion, GSC has studied and made changes in course delivery formats and time frames; it will take more time to get us where we want to be in that area. We have implemented strategic decisions in developing new academic and student support programs.
- As an access institution, GSC has the major challenge of trying to change long-term habits in a short timeframe for a significant portion of our student population. Such

habits include time management, financial management, study skills and work ethic. We must assist students with developing good habits before they lose academic eligibility and/or become financially bereft.

- The overall institutional retention rate has shown modest improvement over the past six years, but several subpopulations have improved significantly (See Appendix B, Goal 1 Metrics, Progression) including first

time freshmen, first time full-time freshmen, first time part-time freshmen and first time Pell-eligible students.

- With the addition of baccalaureate programs, we have seen a growth in the number of baccalaureate degrees awarded along with an increase in baccalaureate degrees awarded to the subpopulations of adult learners, underrepresented minorities and Pell-eligible students. (See Appendix B, Goal 1 Metrics, Outcomes)