University of West Georgia

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

The University of West Georgia, a charter member of the University System of Georgia, is a comprehensive, residential institution providing selectively focused undergraduate and graduate education primarily to the people of West Georgia. The University is also committed to regional outreach through a collaborative network of external degree centers, course offerings at off-campus sites, and an extensive program of continuing education for personal and professional development. Opportunities for intellectual and personal development are provided through quality teaching, scholarly inquiry, creative endeavor, and service for the public good.

The University of West Georgia has 86 active programs of study, including 43 at the bachelor's level, 29 at the master's and specialist levels, four at the doctoral level, and 10 at the advanced certificate level. The university awarded 2,183 degrees in fiscal year 2013. The number conferred has risen since fiscal year 2009 when the university awarded 1,895 degrees. This represents an increase of 16%.

There were 11,929 students enrolled in the Fall 2013 semester: 9,959 at the undergraduate level (83%) and 1,970 at the graduate level (17%). The overall enrollment at the university rose 6% from 11,252 in Fall 2008 to 11,929 in Fall 2013. It is important to note, too, that UWG's increasingly diverse population is linked to growing numbers of students who are eligible for the Pell grant, a federal grant issued to students with financial need. To illustrate, in Fall 2008, 23% of our undergraduate students were Pell-eligible. That number jumped to 45% in 2009 and 52% in 2010. The Pell-eligible figure remained steady at 52% until Fall 2013 when it increased again to 55%. Although trends in average SAT scores have decreased somewhat over the past five years, UWG has a history of success with our students in that 80% of undergraduate credits are successfully completed and fall-to-fall retention rates are at 74%.

Changes in our student population certainly influenced the initiatives we selected for our Complete College Georgia campus plan. We purposely targeted interventions we believed would benefit first generation students, working students, and those who could profit from more directed guidance. Those strategies include intrusive academic advising; early, proactive academic interventions; online offerings attractive to working students; and block scheduling that enhances success for new freshmen transitioning from high school to college. Further, we are moving toward shortening the time required to earn a degree. As a result, we have strengthened options for earning credit by exam and are exploring prior learning assessment through membership in the Adult Learning Consortium. Lastly, UWG's dedication to access to higher education through dual enrollment has resulted in a tripling of these students over the past five years (to 103 in FY 2013-2014) and in credits earned by these students (to 992 in FY 2013-2014).

In sum, the University of West Georgia is committed to providing access to college for students in the western region of the state, as well as students from across the state of Georgia and the nation. Given the makeup of our student population and demographic trends in our region and in response to the Complete College Georgia (CCG) imperatives, the university has taken and will continue to take a more directed approach to helping our students with course progression and degree attainment. The details of our FY14 completion work are outlined in Focus Area 2: Institutional Goals and Strategies and described more fully in Focus Area 3: Strategies and Activities Update.

INSTITUTIONAL GOALS AND STRATEGIES

This FY14 Status Update (Narrative Overview) addresses the five most prominent strategies targeted by UWG's Complete College Georgia Campus Plan. In this section (Focus Area 2), each strategy is introduced by answering three questions:

1. How will meeting the goal increase completion for our students?
2. What needs or challenges to achieving the completion goal have been identified?
3. What steps or programs has our campus taken to address the identified challenges?

1. Intrusive Academic Advising

Intrusive advising, also known as proactive advising, is a research-based approach that deliberately structures student intervention at the first sign of academic difficulty in order to motivate the student to seek help. The intrusive model emphasizes the role of trained and responsive professionals to guide the student toward degree completion.

For more than a decade, the UWG Excel Center provided advising for first and second year students and tutoring or supplemental instruction for all students. However, continuing enrollment growth made it difficult for the unit to keep pace with increased demand for its services. In Fall 2013, UWG responded to this challenge by dividing the unit into two centers: the Advising Center and the Center for Academic Success. Two new directors were hired in Spring 2014 to lead the units in their expanded missions.

Additionally, UWG partnered with the Education Advisory Board – Student Success Collaborative to implement a technology-driven, intrusive advising model that is grounded in predictive analytics. The EAB-SSC model is under development and will be piloted with three groups of UWG students in Spring 2015 (i.e., Nursing, Business, and students served by the Advising Center).

2. Dual Enrollment and Credit-by-Exam

Both strategies help shorten time-to-degree for those students who take advantage of these initiatives.

Dual enrollment: UWG's dual enrollment efforts began in the fall of 1995 with the opening of the Advanced Academy of Georgia, which is the state's residential program for high school students that allows them to concurrently enroll in high school and college level courses. The highly selective admission standards for the Academy are appropriate for this demographic group; however, many more high school students are capable of performing well in college courses through dual enrollment programs with more typical admission standards. Thus, it was not surprising when local K-12 superintendents identified UWG's dual enrollment admission policies as out-of-step with our peer institutions, as well as USG policy, and asked that they be revised (note: at that time our admission standards were the Advanced Academy standards). In response, UWG examined trends in student performance data (dually-enrolled students vs. regularly-admitted freshmen students). The Faculty Senate approved revised admission standards for dual enrollment (exclusive of standards for the Advanced Academy) after reviewing the performance data that demonstrated student success in the dual enrollment program. Dual enrollments have steadily increased since this change.

Credit-by-Exam: Several faculty members asked the Faculty Senate to address the issue of out-of-date and/or overly restrictive credit-by-exam policies. In response, the Senate directed all departments to review their credit-by-exam policies. As a result, updated departmental policies have expanded credit-by-exam options for students. The President approved the Senate recommendations, which were implemented in Fall 2014.

3. Early Alert –Early Intervention

The EA-EI initiative was introduced in FY13, with a simple electronic alert that faculty members could send to Student Services indicating that a particular student in one of their classes was at risk of not succeeding.

The Excel Center, which was charged with coordinating interventions, realized that it was overly burdened and inadequately prepared to take on the additional duties associated with the EA-EI initiative. This recognition partially drove the decision to divide the center into two new units with new hires (see Intrusive Academic Advising above). Student Affairs implemented the *Grades First* software in FY14 to provide logistical support for the initiative.

4. Online Offerings

Online courses, to include fully online and hybrid sections, as well as fully online undergraduate degree programs have the potential to serve working students and/or adult learners exceptionally well. Many UWG departments are enthusiastic providers of high-quality online programming.

The need for additional faculty to teach in growing online programs remains a significant challenge for the institution. For example, course sections in the fully online B.S. in Criminology program continue to fill the first day of registration each term.

5. Block Scheduling (ACCESS Pilot Project)

This pilot program (Accelerated Core Curriculum: Expanding Student Success, ACCESS), a specialized Learning Community, gives incoming freshmen an attractive scheduling option to ease their transition to college. For example, students enroll in 15 hours for the entire term, but take only three courses at a time. One of the three runs the length of the entire term, while two are finished in eight weeks. When those two are complete, students enroll in two more eight-week courses. This scheduling arrangement allows students to experience the rigor of college work in a highly supportive environment, but allows them to focus on a reduced number of classes at any one time.

The ACCESS program was recently awarded funding as part of the USG CCG Innovation Grants program, in response to the faculty's proposal noting that recent high school students would benefit from block scheduling during their first year in college. The pilot project enrolled its first students in Fall 2014.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES UPDATE

1. INTRUSIVE ACADEMIC ADVISING

CCG Goal 4: Provide intrusive academic advising to keep students on track to graduation.

Two High Impact Strategies.
UWG implemented two significant, complementary advising initiatives in FY14.

- Advising Center. The former Excel Center was redesigned as the new Advising Center with a proactive case management approach that assigns an individual student to the same professional advisor until the student declares a major and begins to work with a faculty advisor.
- Education Advisory Board-Student Success Collaborative (EAB-SSC). UWG partnered with the EAB-SSC to build a technology-driven, intrusive advising model that is grounded in predictive analytics.

Summary of Activities

- Advising Center. Students are classified into four tiers, dependent on their academic status regarding progress toward graduation. Advisors proactively intervene with students in a timely manner, based on students' particular needs.
  - Tier 1 (students on track for graduation in four years in their current major)
  - Tier 2 (students off track for graduation in six years in their current major)
  - Tier 3 (students new to the University of West Georgia)
  - Tier 4 (students on track to graduate in five or six years in their current major; these are the students who can benefit the most from meeting with their academic advisor)
- Education Advisory Board-Student Success Collaborative. The Vice President for Student Affairs and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs

attended the EAB-SSC Intensive Launch, a two-day orientation to the partnership in early Spring 2014. EAB-SSC's technology team is working with UWG to develop the academic advising algorithm. Steps are underway to begin the pilot program with three groups of students in Spring 2015 (Nursing, Business, and students served by the Advising Center).

Interim Measures of Progress

- Advising Center. (1) 95% or more of Tier 4 students meet with academic advisor as needed.
- Education Advisory Board-Student Success Collaborative. EAB-SSC's Project Readiness goals are on track (i.e., Program Leadership, Communication, Accountability, Workflow). The technical implementation is moving forward as expected (i.e., Status = green, Concerns = none, Outstanding Requests = none).

Measures of Success

- Advising Center. (1) Number of students in each tier who meet with their advisors each semester. (2) Progress toward degree. (3) 30-60-90 hour benchmarks. (4) Four and six year graduation rates.
- EAB-SSC. Successful pilot project in Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 with three groups of students and their professional advisors. Successful scaling up to entire campus in Fall 2015.

2. DUAL ENROLLMENT AND CREDIT-BY-EXAM (See data in Appendix Tables 7, 8, 31 – 34)

CCG 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.

UWG employs a two-pronged approach related to CCG Goal 6. (1) Promote and expand opportunities for high school students to participate in dual enrollment on campus and online, to include the UWG Advanced Academy. (2) Promote and encourage students to submit AP and IB scores and take advantage of appropriate CLEP exams.

Summary of Activities

- UWG created the position of Pre-College Coordinator to work with area high school counselors and students to promote dual enrollment opportunities. UWG is also creating a second position to work with students who will attend the UWG Newnan Center.
- UWG continues to promote Credit-by-Exam opportunities for students and has provided exam times for incoming students at each orientation session.
- UWG has created a re-enrollment program targeting dual/joint enrollment students to encourage them to stay at UWG to complete their college degree.
- The university recently submitted its request for membership to the USG Adult Learning Consortium for consideration by the ALC Executive Committee at its

November 17, 2014, meeting. Further, the UWG College of Social Sciences formed a Steering Committee that is developing policies and procedures to guide Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) opportunities to award academic credit in some programs.

Interim Measures of Success.

Fall 2014 applications for Dual Enrollment (exclusive of the Advanced Academy) are up 76% over Fall 2013 (167 compared to 95 last year). In the incoming freshmen class there are 200 students, roughly 9% of the expected 2200 freshmen, who will not be required to take ENG 1101 because of dual/joint enrollment credit, sufficient AP or IB scores, or passing a departmental challenge exam.

Measures of Success.

(1) Number of students enrolled in dual/joint enrollment each semester.
(2) Number of credit hours generated by AP, IB, and CLEP credit-by-exam opportunities.
(3) Number of PLA-generated credit hours.

3. EARLY ALERT – EARLY INTERVENTION (See data in Appendix Tables 37-39 and Figures 1, 2)

CCG Goal 2: Increase the number of degrees that are earned "on time."

High Impact Strategy.

UWG implemented a system that identifies "at-risk" students and provided a mechanism for faculty/staff to alert appropriate personnel of at-risk behaviors and poor academic performance in order to provide meaningful interventions.

Summary of Activities.

UWG purchased and launched *Grades First*, an early alert software package that allows faculty to alert our Center for Academic Success (CAS) of students with poor academic performance. Further, the *Grades First* system allows CAS staff to: 1) communicate with students via text and email, 2) create and save contact reports, and 3) create and save Academic Success Plans. It also allows students to schedule tutoring and academic coaching appointments online. A *Grades First* training program was held in Summer 2013 and a user's guide was created and distributed to help faculty learn how to use the system.

A proactive campaign was launched in Summer 2013 to identify students with poor academic profiles/performance and begin outreach before classes began in Fall 2013. A retention analysis was conducted and revealed that freshmen with an index score below 2,350 were at a higher risk for attrition, so all incoming freshmen in Fall 2013 with the 2,350 index or lower were contacted and encouraged to use CAS services prior to the start of fall classes. Additionally, returning students who were on academic warning or were returning to UWG from probation were contacted prior to the start of the fall term.

The CAS also restructured our mentoring program and altered the role of mentors to serve as Peer Academic Coaches. Students needing assistance were assigned to a Peer Coach who met weekly with the student and an Academic Success

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Plan was created to identify and monitor the specific areas of need for the student. Further, the CAS expanded tutoring and supplemental instruction offerings during the 2013-2014 academic year. For example, extended tutoring hours ran from noon to 11 pm and additional sites were established to provide tutoring in designated residence halls and Ingram library locations.

Interim Measures of Progress.

2013-2014 academic year data will establish the baseline for future comparisons, because usage data for tutoring and supplemental instruction had not been kept previously. Additionally, this was the first year of operation for the *Grades First* system.

Measures of Success.

(1) Number of students using tutoring/supplemental instruction each semester.
(2) Number of students who meet 30-60-90 hour benchmarks.
(3) Freshmen retention rates.

4. ONLINE OFFERINGS (See data in Appendix Tables 2, 35, 36, 40)

CCG Goal 8: Restructure instructional delivery to support educational excellence and student success.

High Impact Strategy.

UWG provides fully online and hybrid courses, as well as one fully online undergraduate program (B.S. with a major in Criminology, housed within the College of Social Sciences), to help working students and adult learners achieve their academic goals.

Summary of Activities.

UWG administers the USG eCore® program. As an eCore® affiliate, UWG eCore® course offerings are included in those that are offered across the affiliate institutions as part of the system-wide collaborative program. To further the goals of CCG, UWG's eCore® Administrative Services office expanded its offering of short term courses. What began as a gradual addition to the traditional full term course plan, with three courses offered in Summer 2012, has now evolved into 20 of the 24 eCore® courses being offered in multiple 8-week sessions. The 8-week courses and full term courses require identical course learning outcomes and rigor. Restructuring course delivery, thus shortening time to degree completion, is in direct response to the CCG plan.

Several departments are significantly strengthening their online offerings. For example, the UWG College of Social Sciences' fully online B.S. in Criminology program recently completed an articulation agreement with West Georgia Technical College that facilitates the smooth transfer of 15 lower division units in Area F to directly transfer to UWG. The UWG Department of Management in the Richards College of Business is working with West Georgia Technical College with the goal of signing articulation agreements for CISM 2201 and BUSA 2106. Beginning in Fall 2014, the Management Department will begin enrolling students in its new e-Flex Management Program. Additional UWG

departments that recently increased their undergraduate offerings of online courses include Accounting and Finance, Economics, English, Mass Communications, and Political Science and Planning.

UWG Online and the Faculty Development Center, with support from UWG's Center for Teaching and Learning, facilitates faculty participation in Quality Matters (QM) training to enhance effective online instruction. The B.S. in Criminology program is moving to a fully approved QM curriculum.

Interim Measures of Progress.

(1) Number of faculty who complete the Quality Matters training.
(2) Number of new online undergraduate courses.
(3) Number of online undergraduate course sections.
(4) Number of fully online, undergraduate programs.

Measures of Success.

(1) Number of students who successfully complete undergraduate online or hybrid courses (grades of A, B, C, S).
(2) Graduation rates from the fully online B.S. in Criminology program.

5. BLOCK SCHEDULING (ACCESS PILOT PROJECT) (See data about Learning Communities Appendix Tables 23, 24)

CCG Goal 8: Restructure instructional delivery to support educational excellence and student success.

High Impact Strategy.

The ACCESS pilot project, a type of block scheduling, provides structured scheduling for new freshmen. Students enroll in full schedules – designed within restructured delivery timeframes – that allow students to focus on a reduced number of courses at any given time. Additionally, courses are scheduled to allow students to complete more credits per semester, thus saving them time and money as they complete their degrees.

Summary of Activities.

The pilot project is called ACCESS – Accelerated Core Curriculum: Expanding Student Success. Its purpose is to study the effectiveness of structured scheduling on student achievement, retention, and progression (RPG). Two freshman cohorts (one pursuing a 120-hour B.A. degree and the other pursuing a 132-hour B.F.A. degree) will take courses during Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 under a modified schedule, allowing B.A. students to complete 30 course credits and B.F.A. students to complete 36 in their first year.

A unique aspect of this project is its emphasis on faculty development. UWG's Center for Teaching and Learning will facilitate this work through a faculty learning community (FLC) of administrators and ACCESS instructors from the Colleges of Social Science, Science and Mathematics, and Arts and Humanities. Beginning in the Summer 2014, the ACCESS FLC met to review current RPG data for B.A. and B.F.A. students, discuss best practices in course design for block scheduling, investigate ways to increase student engagement, and evaluate methods for supporting students in the cohort

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model. Faculty will also be guided through a scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) process to identify an area of research related to the teaching of their ACCESS course. The FLC will continue to meet during the fall and spring semesters to discuss their projects and their findings. Results of these SoTL projects, along with data on students' academic achievement and retention, will be valuable for understanding the effectiveness of the ACCESS model on student learning and for planning for scale-up at UWG and beyond.

Interim Measures of Progress.

(1) Faculty indicator: Collaborative planning of courses.
(2) Faculty indicator: SoTL projects focused on student achievement designed in Summer 2014, implemented in Fall 2014, data analysis in Spring 2015, and writing completed in Summer 2015.

Measures of Success.

(1) Student indicator: Completion of 15 (B.A.) or 18 (B.F.A.) semester credit hours during first term.
(2) Student indicator: Completion of 30 (BA) or 36 (BFA) semester credit hours during first year.

OBSERVATIONS

UWG has been successful with our intentional approach to the Early Alert – Early Intervention program, tiered advising, assigned advisors using a case advising approach, aggressive recruiting for dual enrollment, and online offerings of high-quality programming (courses and one undergraduate, fully online degree program) that are attractive to working and adult students. Further, we anticipate that our new partnership with the Education Advisory Board – Student Success Collaborative will be a game-changer in terms of improving academic advising to support progress toward degree completion.

UWG faculty and administrators engaged in a year-long examination and discussion of the principles that support adult learning. The ongoing dialogue resulted in the Faculty Senate's unanimous support that UWG request membership in the USG Adult Learning Consortium. This year-long process modeled best practices in faculty governance that will serve our campus well as we continue to improve programming and services for adult learners.

Lastly, the grand opening of our new Center for Adult Learners and Veterans will take place on Veterans' Day (November 11, 2014). The center will aid the retention, progression, and graduation of students through services and support programs for adult learners, veterans, and their families. It will function as a first point of contact for these populations, much like a concierge service, which then connects students to various units across campus that can provide needed assistance. The center is one of many strategies UWG has embraced to make our campus more attractive to adult learners and veterans who are returning to school to achieve their academic goals.