



# Georgia College & State University

## INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

Georgia College & State University (Georgia College) remains committed to being an integral part of the University System of Georgia's Complete College Georgia (CCG) initiative for creating a more educated state. The CCG Campus Completion Plan, initially developed by Georgia College in 2012, was built around its mission as Georgia's designated public liberal arts university where excellence, engagement, and innovation are essential components of an educational experience that according to its mission "supports the needs of the region and creates pathways to individual success and personal fulfillment." This sentiment remains today as Georgia College continues to refine and improve upon the CCG goals, strategies, and objectives previously developed.

## STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Georgia College's enrollment has been stable over the ten years. First Time Freshmen enrollment (see Graph 1: First-Time Full-Time Students) was initially capped between 2007 and 2010 to support our mission, but has experienced steady increases since 2011, growing from 1200 students to approximately 1400 students for the last three years. (See Graph 2: Fall Undergraduate Enrollment). Further enrollment growth at Georgia College is planned for graduate programs while maintaining undergraduate enrollment at its current levels.

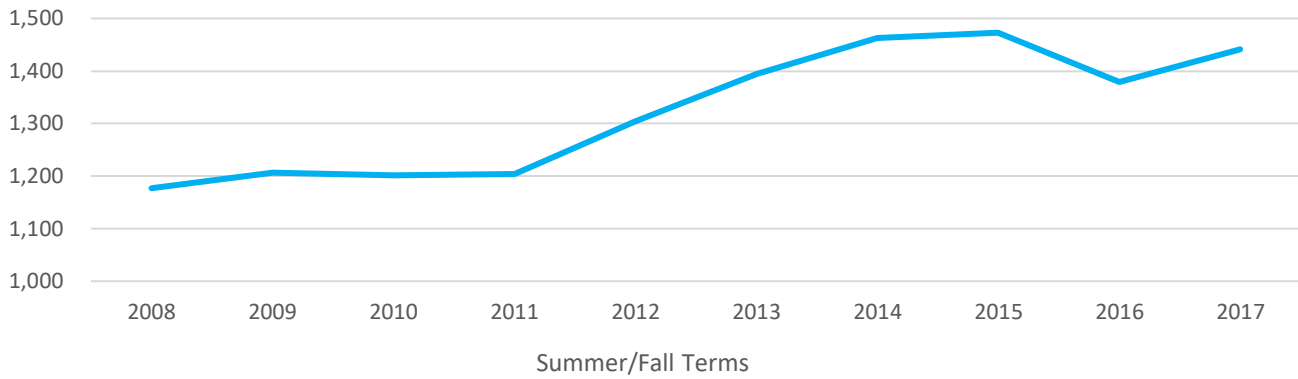
The academic profile of the incoming classes improved in quality as evidenced in average SAT with an increase from the low 1100s in Fall 2007 to nearly 1200 in Fall 2017 (see Graph 3: First Time Freshmen Average SAT). The average high school GPA has also steadily increased from Fall 2007 to Fall 2017 (see Graph 4: First Time Students Average HS GPA).

Georgia College's four-year graduation rate (see Graph 5: Graduation Rates) rose by 10 points between 2008 and 2011 from 39.93 to 49.55 (25% overall increase) and has remained steady at roughly 49% since 2011. We are hopeful that our strategies to increase four-year graduation at Georgia College will help us achieve a 50% four-year graduation rate in the next two years.

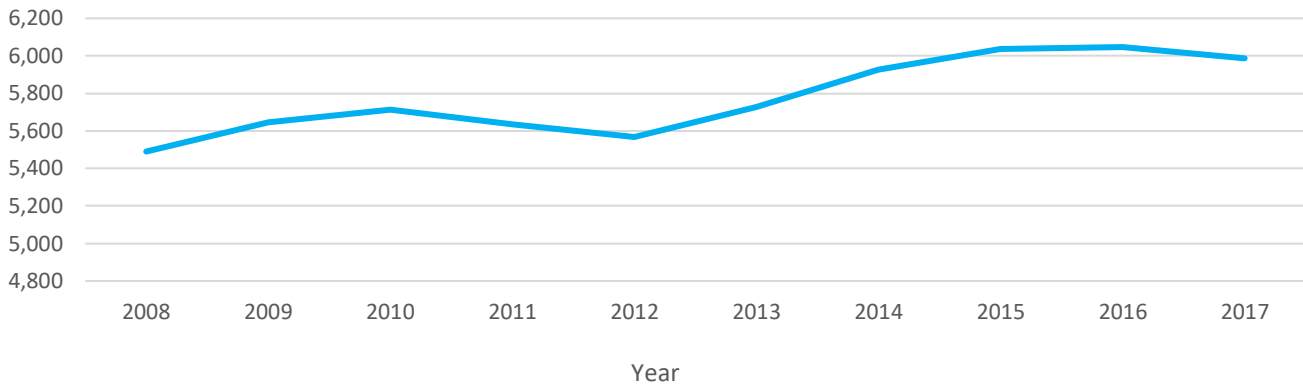
The diversity among our student body is illustrated in Graph 6: First-Time Students by Race and Ethnicity over the last ten years. Reviewers will note the trend line for minority students, particularly African-American and Hispanic. Percentage of African-American students increased modestly from 2013 to 2014 while percentage of Hispanic students remained steady. Attracting first-year students from diverse populations continues to be a challenge for Georgia College; however, we are proud of the graduation rate of the students from minority ethnic groups who do attend. Georgia College has the second highest four-year graduation rate for African American students in the system and the third highest for Hispanic students. In coming years, Georgia College hopes to increase its minority student enrollment through the implementation of the initiatives outlined in its 2014 Diversity Action Plan, the University's Strategic Plan ("A Path to Preeminence"), and through the potential the College has to admit greater numbers of students from the Georgia College Early College Program.

Georgia College continues to be committed to its designated public liberal arts mission and the purposeful execution of activities designed to improve retention and graduation rates of its students.

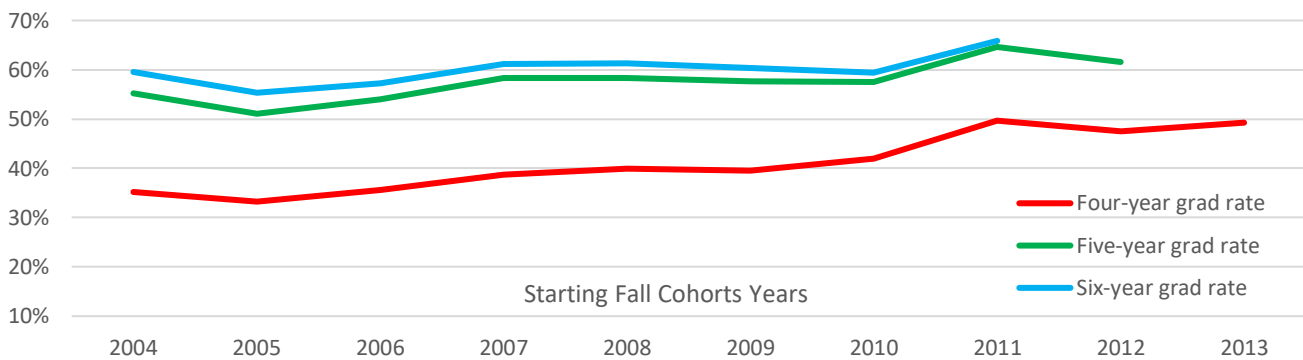
**Graph 1: GC - First-Time Full-Time Students**

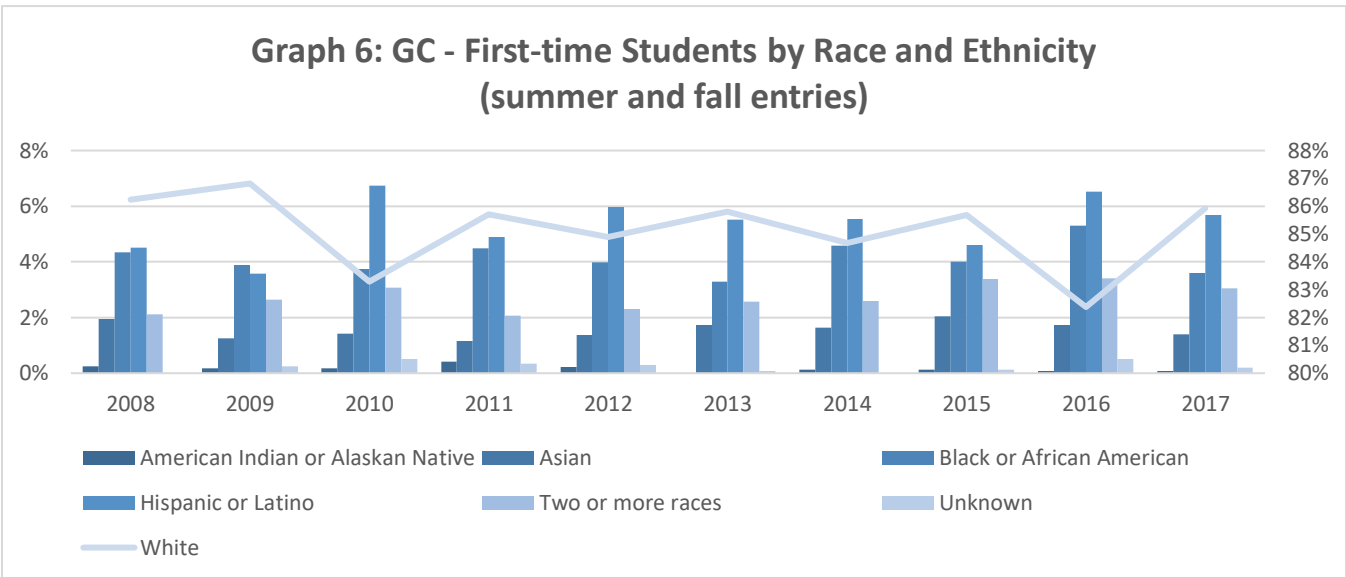
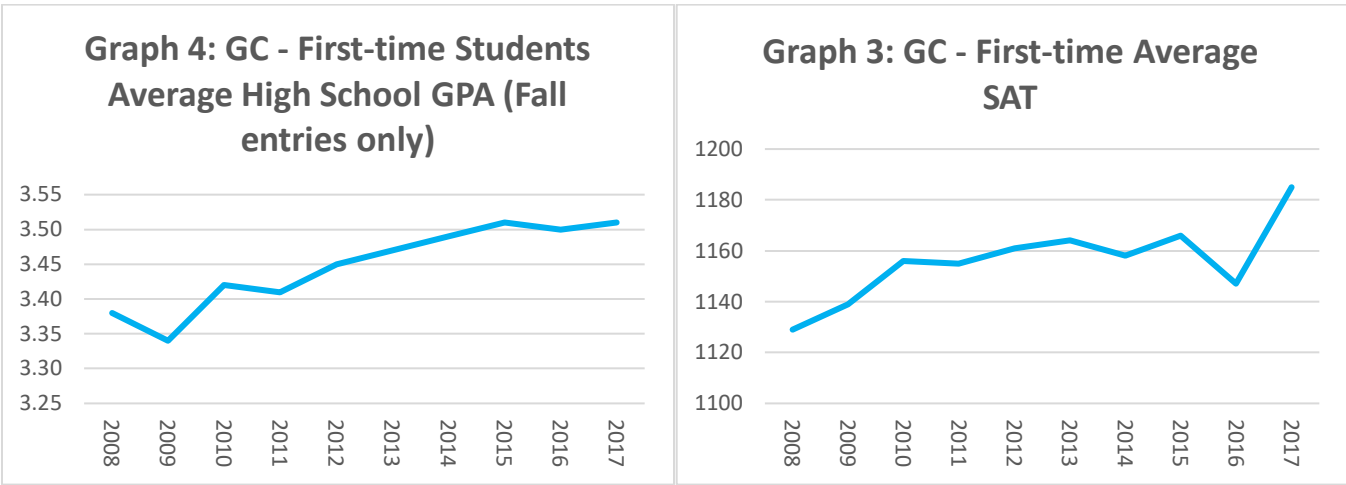


**Graph 2: GC - Fall Undergraduate Enrollment**



**Graph 5: GC - Graduation Rates**





## SUMMARY OF INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES, ACTIVITIES, AND OUTCOMES

This narrative report describes four strategies that Georgia College is implementing to address the goals of Complete College Georgia designated by the University System of Georgia. Two of the strategies are high impact strategies that affect students at and beyond Georgia College and two are high priority strategies, designed to address specific, institutional completion goals for Georgia College. This report describes each strategy and its impact, summarizes the activities supporting each strategy, and outlines the baseline measurements, lessons learned, and points of contact.

### HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY #1: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES AWARDED BY USG INSTITUTIONS BY INCREASING HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION FROM GEORGIA COLLEGE EARLY COLLEGE.

**COMPLETION GOAL:** THIS HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGY AIMS TO INCREASE HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION FROM THE GC EARLY COLLEGE (EC) PROGRAM BY 5% ANNUALLY AND INCREASE EARNING OF COLLEGE CREDITS BY THE TIME OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION BY 5% OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS.

**DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY**

This strategy is a priority because of its potential to have a direct, positive impact on over 250 high school students in Middle Georgia - increased high school graduation rates, college admission and completion - and to increase diversity at Georgia College.

**GEORGIA COLLEGE EARLY COLLEGE COMPLETION DATA**

	<b>Total GCEC Enrollment</b>	<b>Graduating High School (Attended GC)</b>	<b>% of Original Class of 55*</b>	<b>Continuing @ IHE</b>	<b>**Dual Enrollment Range of College Credits Earned by GCEC graduates</b>
<b>2011-12</b>	168	10 (1)	18.2%	10	15-29
<b>2012-13</b>	194	11 (0)	20%	11	13-26
<b>2013-14</b>	229	19 (5)	34.5%	19	15-37
<b>2014-15</b>	216	12 (2)	22%	12	9-32
<b>2015-16</b>	234	26 (9)	47.27%	26	9-42
<b>2016-17</b>	255	25 (1)	45.45%	25	9-62
<b>2017-18</b>	280	37 (0)	67.27%	37	9-98

\*Students graduating from GC EC compared to original class enrollment \*\*Number of college credits awarded to GC EC graduates in each of the past six years

**SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES**

We attribute this rise in the number of students graduating from the Early College program at Georgia College for the past two years to the initiatives implemented by the EC and GC administration, student groups, faculty mentors, academic advisors, and the clear goals set by the director of the EC program.

**Collaboration and goal setting**

Efforts by the GC administration during the 2016-2017 academic year to maintain communication with GC EC - to provide support, initiate programming, and set goals - have helped to increase graduation from EC. These conversations greatly improved communication. The goal of the EC is for all seniors to graduate and be admitted to institutions of higher education (i.e. colleges and universities).

**Highlighting the success of students admitted to college**

This spring, EC again hosted spring *Signing Day*, where each student admitted to a college was announced, applauded, and accompanied on stage by alumni from the college to “sign” their commitment to attend the college where they had received admission. The public acknowledgement in front of parents and other GC students, the presence of alumni from the respective colleges, and the general excitement that included balloons and cheerleaders that is often part of athletic signing day were excellent ways to make acceptance to college a fun and inspiring experience for the students, the alumni, and their parents.

**Mentoring EC students**

GC work-study students from the College of Education have spent much of their time working with EC students as peer mentors. Mentors and EC students met once a week to discuss the challenges of applying to college, what to expect in college, and how to survive and thrive once they enroll.

**Outreach from the GC Male Connection**

The MALE Connection is GC’s African-American Male Initiative, supported by the USG’s African-American Male Initiative (AAMI), which started in 2002. The MALE Connection, an acronym for Mentoring African-Americans for Leadership, Education and Connection, includes over 50 participants, over half of whom are EC and high-achieving male students who are mentored by our undergraduate students. Of the 37 seniors graduating from GC EC, 16 of those students are male, which we attribute in large measure to the success of the mentoring and outreach of the MALE Connection with EC male students. Chiefly, this outreach involved biweekly sessions with EC students, usually led by our undergraduate members of AAMI. Such sessions took place on Fridays from 1:30pm - 2:30pm and covered professionalism, college prep, relationships, and goal-setting. We are continuing this relationship with Early College this year as well, with sessions (monthly this year) beginning in September.

## **Collaborations between EC, GC faculty, and the GC Student Government Association**

EC and GC faculty members are working together to create small group tutoring sessions to address the basic skills needed for students to succeed in college core courses. GC EC teachers have engaged in collaborative planning and team teaching with college professors to address those areas where students need to be successful. These intentional efforts are paying off for EC and GC faculty and the students, as evidenced by all seniors in the EC program being accepted to Georgia colleges for the fall 2017 term.

### **BASELINE MEASURE OF SUCCESS**

In 2011, GCEC enrolled 168 students and since that time except for a small dip in numbers in the 2014-2015 year, the enrollment has steadily increased from 168 to 280 students in the 2017-2018 academic year (40% increase). Each year, all of the students graduating from Early College have enrolled in college after graduation. The number of students who have accepted to college institutions after graduating from Early College has increased from 10 to 37 this year. Since 2011, the number of Early College graduates attending Georgia College has fluctuated between 0 students to a high of 9 students in the 2015-2016 academic year. While Early College students do not always attend Georgia College, the support of Georgia College faculty, staff and students has helped to contribute to their success in completing high school and attending other colleges in Georgia. This year 36 of the 37 students who graduated from Early College enrolled in colleges in Georgia (18 USG, 15 GMC, 3 other colleges in Georgia -1 Paine College, 1 Clark Atlanta University, 1 Central Georgia Technical College). One student will attend Tennessee State University. Georgia College will continue to help prepare Early College students to be successful in Georgia College admission and once admitted and enrolled, to make sure that the students enrolled at Georgia College retain and graduate.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

Given the varied backgrounds of Early College students, often without a tradition of family members who have attended college, comprehensive mentoring and on-going engagement with them is important to ensure their readiness, their acceptance, and their retention in college. Because of Georgia College's high admission standards, we will need more concentrated efforts, like the tutoring by members of the Student Government Association, earlier in the students' tenure at Early College to help them prepare to meet these standards.

### **PRINCIPAL POINTS OF CONTACT**

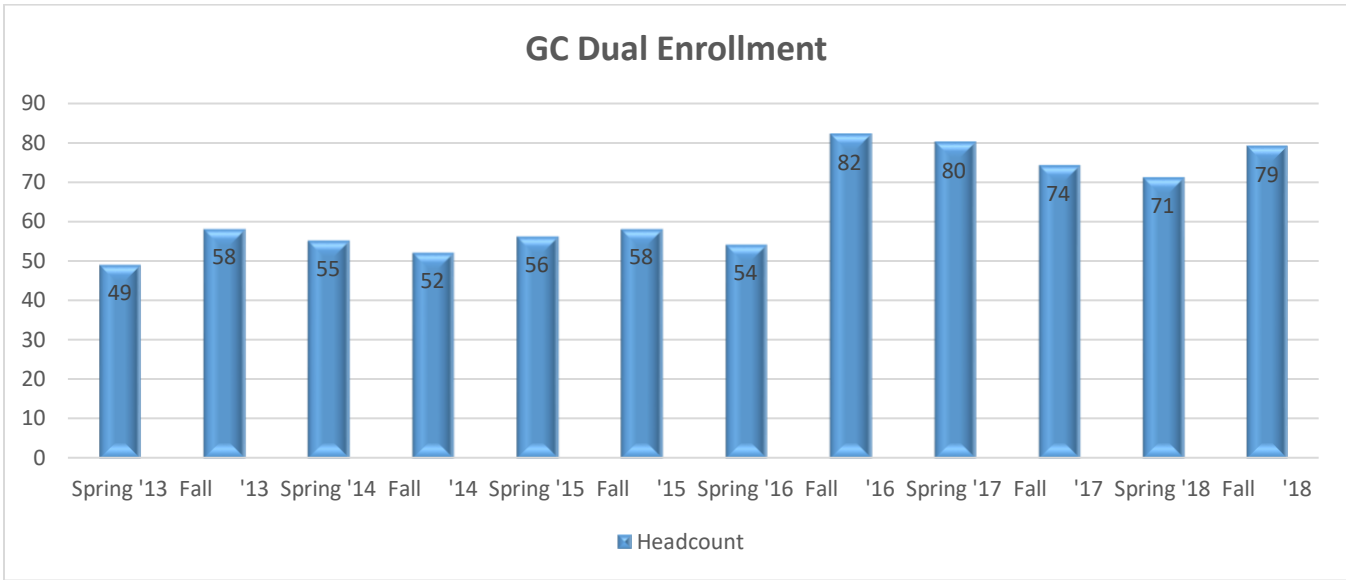
Runee Sallad, Director of the EC Program; Carolyn Denard, Associate Provost for Student Success

## **HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY #2 SHORTEN THE TIME TO DEGREE 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.**

**COMPLETION GOAL:** NO TARGET AT THIS TIME. WE WOULD LIKE TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN THE DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAM AND INCREASE THE NUMBER OF AP CREDITS ACCEPTED AS APPROPRIATELY DETERMINED BY THE REGISTRAR.

### **DEMONSTRATION OF IMPACT**

Increasing the number of Dual Enrolled students taking GC classes and the number of students earning college credit prior to high school graduation is a High Impact Strategy that can have a positive impact on graduation rates at Georgia College and in the state as a whole. Georgia College experienced its highest number of dual enrollment students in the Fall of 2016. Since then, the enrollment has continued to be in the 70-80 student range, a marked increase from the 49-58 student range in earlier years. The increase in Dual Enrollment students at GC over the last five years is attributed to changes in the Move-On When Ready program that provided additional cost savings to students. Each academic year, for the past five years, 100-150 Georgia high school students have been positively impacted by Dual Enrollment at Georgia College:

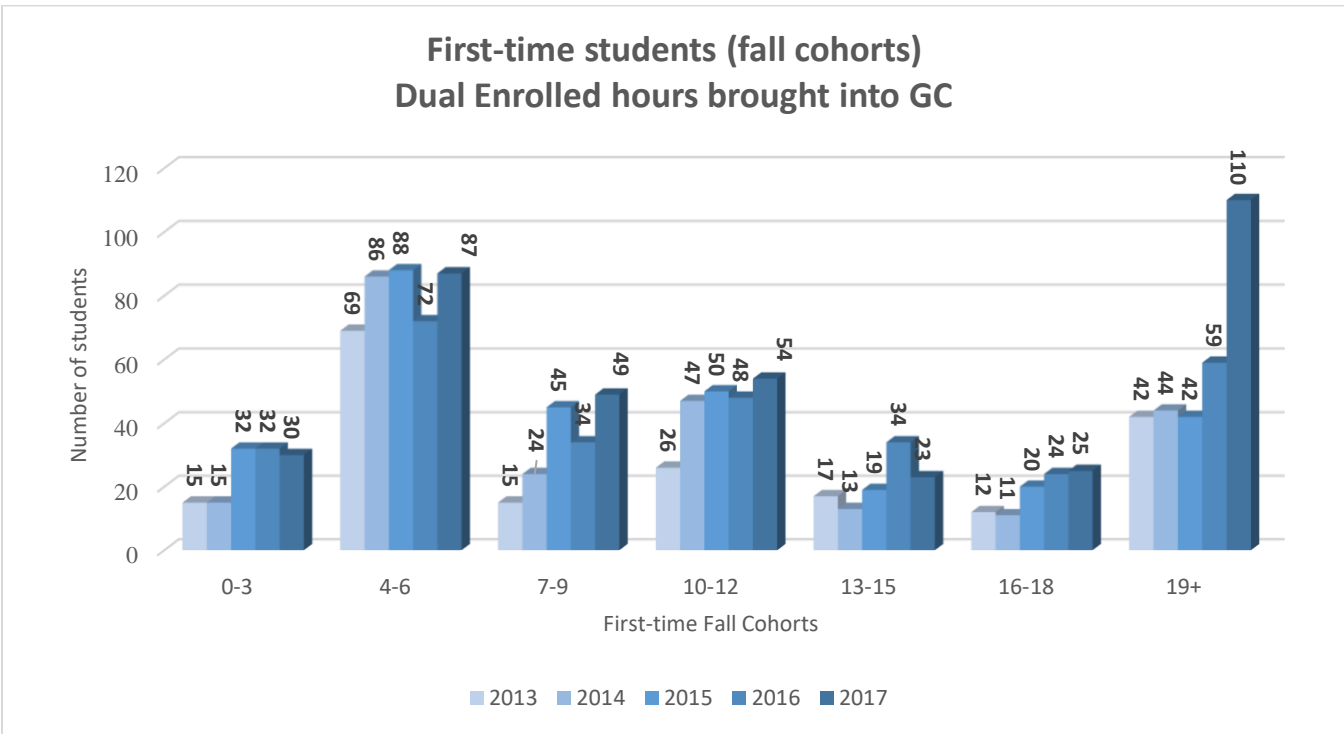
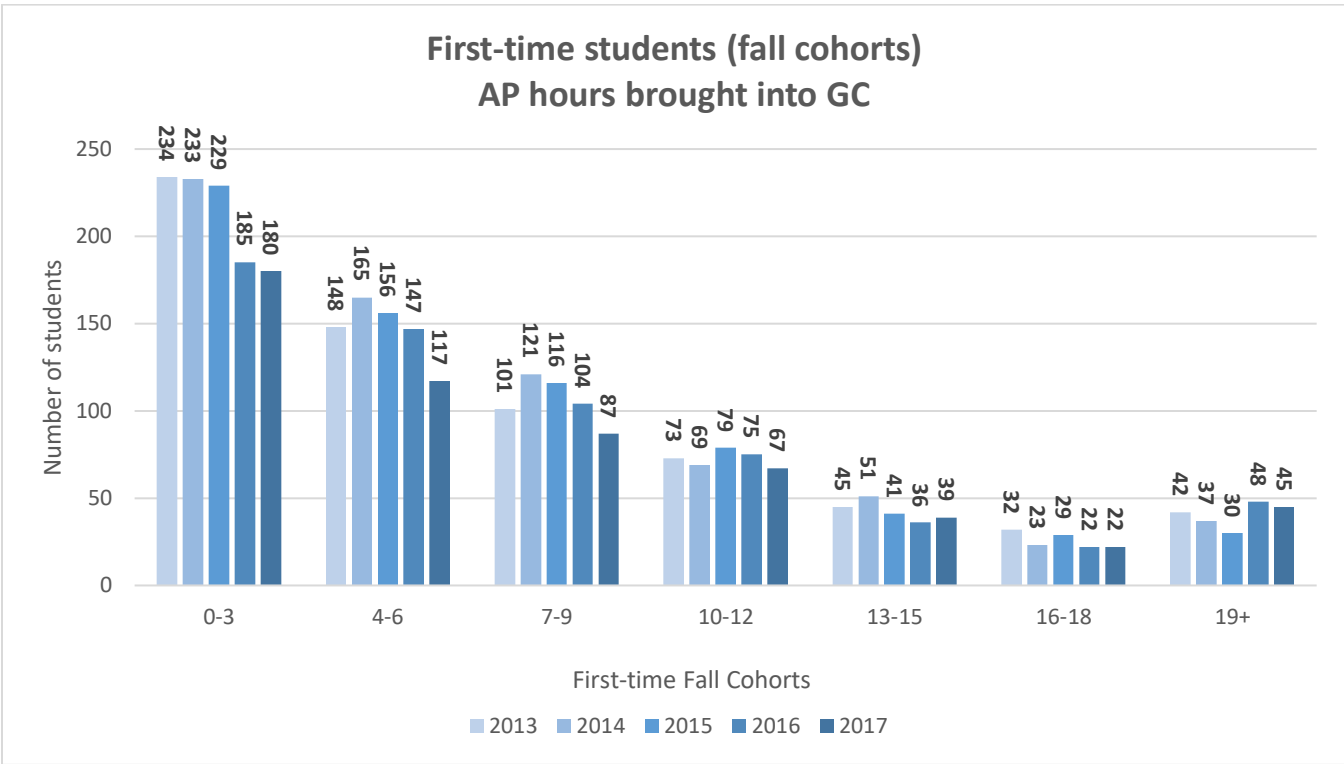


In addition to offering Dual Enrollment on our campus to our local area high school students, Georgia College also encourages entering students to enroll in advanced credit opportunities prior to arriving at GC, such as AP courses in high school and dual enrollment/MOWR classes at their local-area colleges.

AP score reports received during AY18 indicate that 557 entering first year students (38.65% of the entering class) received credit from AP and IB exams that equates to an average of 8.43 credit hours per student. This is a .43 credit hour increase over last year’s average. Additionally, 378 first year students (26.23% of the entering class) brought in Dual Enrollment credit averaging 14.8 credit hours per student. This is a 1.8 credit hour increase over the previous year. Combined, our entire entering first-year class in fall 2018 had a “head start” of 10,290 credit hours via both programs.

The charts below represent the numbers of students bringing advanced credit into GC as a freshman. An interesting note is that while the number of students bringing in AP credit has decreased by 60 students, Dual Enrollment participants in our freshman class have increased by 75 first-year students. The increase in the number of students bringing in 19 or more credit hours is especially dramatic - an increase of 53.6%. This growing DE trend is most likely due to the state of Georgia fully funding DE tuition, fees, and books for dual enrollment students.

With over 800 students impacted by both of these programs that shorten the time to degree, Georgia College has the potential to significantly increase its four-year graduation rate.



**SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES:**

**Outreach to local schools**

Georgia College Office of Admissions has reached out to local schools to offer assistance for students enrolling dually in high school and college. Admission counselors also work with high school counselors to encourage students all over Georgia to take advantage of dual enrollment opportunities in their local communities to gain advance credit and also improve their admission portfolio when considering application to Georgia College. Georgia College has an advisor specifically designated to work with Dual Enrollment students.

### Change in funding model

The change in the funding model for dual enrollment from the Accel Program to Move-On When Ready proved to be quite beneficial for increasing the number of Dual Enrollment students. Under Move-On When Ready funding, families receive funding for all tuition, mandatory fees, and the use of required textbooks. The Office of Admissions works closely with local schools to explain the benefits of this program.

### Encouraging entering student to enroll in AP courses in high school

In addition to offering Dual Enrollment, *Georgia College encourages entering students to enroll in Advance Placement (AP) courses in high school* with the intent to exempt college courses by AP exam score. Students are advised of the potential for AP credit through direct mailings, the admissions website, and at recruitment and orientation events.

### BASELINE MEASURE OF SUCCESS

The number of first-year students entering GC with AP credit was 367 in Fall 2009, and it reached a peak of 699 students in 2014. The number has drifted down each year since 2009, with 557 students entering GC with AP credit in 2017. However, students bringing in Dual Enrollment credit has climbed steadily over the past nine years, from 103 in 2009 to 378 in 2017. We continue to work to appropriately increase these numbers for the coming years.

### LESSONS LEARNED

We have learned that Dual Enrollment can be positively impacted by providing free tuition for dually enrolled students and that encouraging students to take AP credits pays off in the number of students who enter the university with college credit.

### PRINCIPAL POINTS OF CONTACT

Suzanne Pittman, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management; Kay Anderson, Registrar; and Mike Augustine, Senior Director of the Academic Advising Center.

### **HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGY #1: TARGETED, INTRUSIVE ADVISING TO ENSURE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS MEET FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION GOAL.**

**COMPLETION GOAL:** INCREASE FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE AT GEORGIA COLLEGE TO 50% OR ABOVE BY 2020.

#### **Demonstration of Priority**

For over ten years, Georgia College's graduation rate remained steady in the 30% range. In the spring of 2015, however, the graduation rate increased by 10 points—from 39% to 49%. Our assessment of the reasons for this increase were intentional changes in advising and in course delivery at the University (summer online courses and the benefits of centralized advising). In the spring of 2016, the graduation rate slipped to 47.7% (See Graph 5). To prevent the graduation rate from slipping again, we set out to engage in an intentional effort by academic advisors to monitor the progression of those students closest to completing the hour requirement of the institution and to intervene early as necessary to help to make sure that all students who were eligible for graduation in one year (those with 90+ hours), would meet additional requirements, graduate on time and would not be delayed by lack of course availability, lack of knowledge of requirements and deadlines, or other structural issues that could prevent their timely graduation.

#### SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES:

##### **Senior Information Sessions**

In early October, all seniors were invited to an information session to advise them of all graduation deadlines and requirements and to inform them about post-graduation scholarship opportunities.

##### **Targeted Intrusive Advising.**

The Senior Information Session in early October was followed in late October by manual checks from advisors of students' status, including direct calls when necessary, of all 1401 students with 90+ hours. These calls revealed students who had not completed graduation applications, who needed to complete course petitions, who were having financial difficulties, who were struggling in their courses, and who needed to complete



legislative exams. Advisor conversations with students also shed light on structural obstacles resulting from scheduling difficulties in majors that have course pre-requisites that must be complete before students can register for required practicums or internships for graduation.

## Advisor Follow-Ups.

In November, April, and July (four to six weeks prior to the end of each term), advisors conduct one last check on the progress of students who have completed graduation applications. Using the data provided by the Office of the Registrar, each student was evaluated for payment of graduation fees, remaining testing requirements, satisfaction of institutional and major credit-hour requirements, and completion of internships and graduation applications. Advisors intervened as necessary to assist student to complete these requirements immediately so that they could satisfy requirements for graduation. Advisors were successful with several of the interventions, particularly with completing graduation applications and the state legislative test requirements.

## MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

The success of Intrusive Advising was measured in the following ways: 1) by the number of seniors who graduated in 2017 versus 2016, 2) by identifying obstacles preventing students from progressing, and 3) by the efficacy of the strategies that advisors need to employ going forward to prevent obstacles in senior progression from continuing. Of the 1401 students with 90 or more hours at the beginning of the fall of 2017, 1246 or 88.92% of those students graduated; 708 or 56% of those students were members of the entering cohort of 2014 or four-year graduates. The other graduates were from a number of cohorts dating back as far as 2011. While preliminary numbers indicate that the number of students who did graduate in four years represents a slight decrease in the four-year graduation numbers from last year (preliminarily down to 48.39 from 49.25), the number of students who graduated overall increased by 18% from 1076 in 2017 to 1242 in 2018. While the 708 seniors who graduated in four years represents 48.39% of the number of students who entered in fall 2014 (1463), those 708 seniors represent 75.3% of the number of seniors from the 2014 entering class (940) who remained at the university at the beginning of their senior year. While we continue to work diligently to make sure that each entering class graduates from Georgia College in four years, our greatest success, institutionally, this year was increasing our overall number of students who graduated from Georgia College. Among all schools in the USG, Georgia College is also second in the USG in four-year graduation rates and first in its “state university” sector.

## LESSONS LEARNED

While all of the students with 90+ hours did not graduate and the overall four-year graduation rate decreased slightly this year, we did graduate a significant amount, see above, of the students who had 90 plus hours at the beginning of the fall of 2017. This illustrates that intrusive advising clearly has the potential to positively affect the overall number of seniors who graduate. We learned important information about the student profile and the obstacles that prevent some students from graduating: completing testing requirements and major pre-requisites in a timely manner, completing double majors, and taking leaves of absence for personal and health reasons. We also learned that there are structural requirements that prevent four-year graduation for some students: programs that require five years to complete and late grade reporting for summer study abroad and internships are two examples. While we can work to address, and eliminate where possible, personal and structural impediments to a four-year graduation, we understand that some impediments will remain. We learned, that we must focus our intrusive advising efforts *on all fronts*—increasing first-and second-year retention, helping students overcome personal and academic impediments, and eliminating structural barriers where possible. We believe that, together, the aggregate of these efforts will help us increase the four-year graduation rate at Georgia College.

## PRINCIPAL POINTS OF CONTACT

Carolyn Denard, Associate Provost for Student Success; Beauty Bragg, 2016-2017 Provost Fellow; and Mike Augustine, Senior Director of the Academic Advising Center.

## **HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGY #2: IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE OBSTACLES THAT PREVENT HIGHER RETENTION OF SOPHOMORE STUDENTS INTO THEIR JUNIOR YEAR WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING THOSE OBSTACLES AND INTRUSIVE ADVISING STRATEGIES TO ENSURE TIMELY PROGRESSION.**

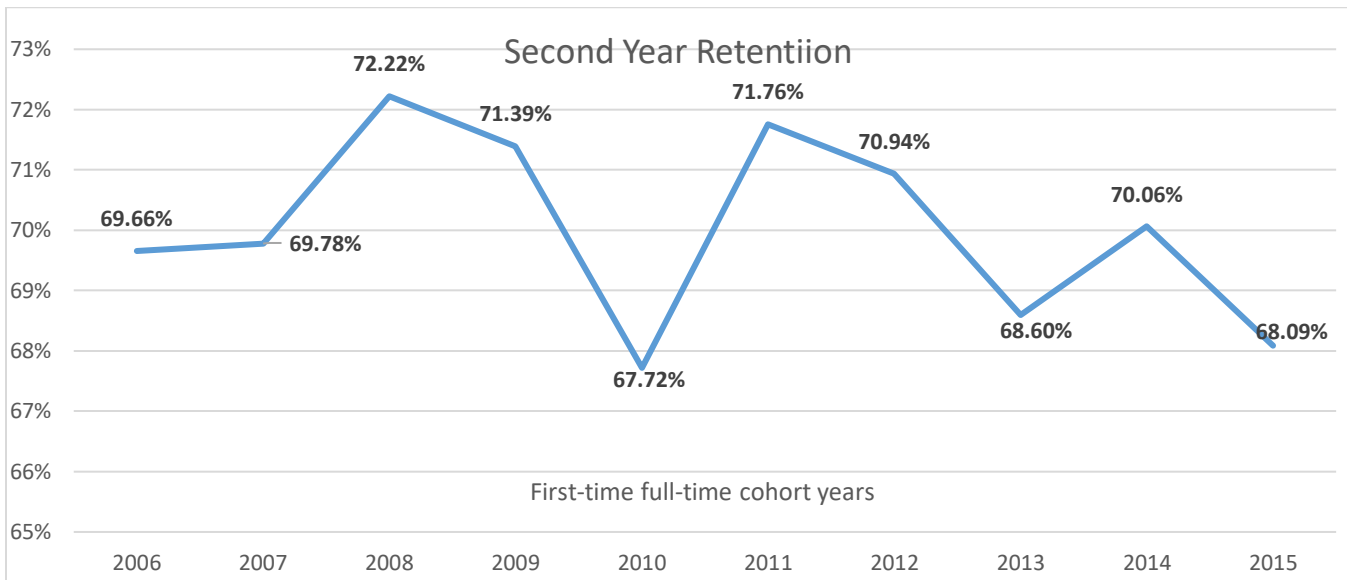
**COMPLETION GOAL:** WE WANT TO INCREASE SOPHOMORE RETENTION—NOW IN THE 68%-70% RANGE—TO 75% BY 2021.

### **Demonstration of Priority**

Over the last 10 years, sophomore retention at Georgia College has been in the range of 65 to 70 percent. The 30-to-35 percent of students who leave Georgia College each year are students who go on to highly-ranked institutions mostly in Georgia and, to a lesser degree, to other highly-ranked institutions throughout the nation. Because these students who leave Georgia College each year are high achieving students (GPAs of 3.0 or above) who go on to complete college at competitive institutions, we believe that it is in our best interest to make concerted efforts to keep these students at Georgia College. Improving the retention numbers of second-year students is directly tied to increasing our overall graduation rates. High achieving students who return for their junior year are more likely to remain at the institution and graduate. Nearly 80% of the students who continue at Georgia College beyond the sophomore year graduate in four years.

**DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGY**

Because we understand that retaining more students beyond their sophomore year is critical to increasing the overall graduation rate in each class and because the numbers have remained steady for the past 10 years, fluctuating between 65 and 70%, Georgia College engaged in a two-fold strategy of research and targeted initiatives to improve sophomore retention.



**SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES**

**Research of Sophomore Retention Committee**

Over the past year and a half, a subcommittee of the Enrollment and Retention Subcommittee completed an in-depth analysis of the reasons second-year students do not return to Georgia College their junior year. The Sophomore Retention Subcommittee included stakeholders from the Advising Center, Housing, Campus Life, Faculty, the Office of Institutional Diversity, Student Life, and Academic Affairs. The work of the subcommittee was to research and identify the obstacles that prevent sophomores from returning and to make recommendations to the full committee that would address each obstacle. This year, the committee completed its work and developed a list of seven recommendations. These recommendations included targeted data collection, intrusive advising, monitoring of academic progression, earlier faculty-student engagement, social climate assessment, class bonding activities, and support for the mental and financial health of students. Several actions accompanied each recommendation and once approved by the Provost and President’s Cabinet, seven teams led by team captains for each recommendation, will begin implementing the actions of each recommendation. The value of the campus wide committee made it clear to various stakeholders what the challenges of sophomore retention were, its impact of sophomore retention on our overall graduation rate, and an increased sense of ownership by the entire university that “retention is everybody’s business.”

**Intrusive Advising:**

As they did with seniors, advisors checked the enrollment status of their second year advisees in November, April, and July. When they were not registered, advisors reached out to students by phone and email to determine why they were not registered and to offer advising help and referrals as needed to get these students registered. Advisors were able to identify and successfully address issues ranging from course

availability to financial aid and keep many of the sophomore students retained and on track for timely progression because of their outreach. Each advisor completed a Sophomore Enrollment Review to document the number of sophomores registered, what the problems were with registration, and obtain projections regarding sophomore enrollment for the coming term.

### **Transcript Request and Outreach**

In early October, Academic Advisors began their review of the Registrar's list of students who had requested a transcript with the intent to transfer (as opposed to requesting for jobs or scholarship applications). In addition to the names of the students on the Registrar's list, the advisors also identified students who have expressed an interest in transferring in advising conversations, to their professors, or to other university staff that subsequently shares it with the advisor. Advisors tagged both these groups of students in our student advising platform as "intent to transfer" or "ITT". Advisors then reached out to students with ITT tags to discuss their intent and to see if there were advising solutions, referrals, help with registration that they could provide that would prevent students from transferring. While the majority of students indicated that they "always intended to transfer" (for familial, affective, and historical reasons) many students were experiencing registration issues and misconceptions about major and career correlations. Advisors were able to intercede with these objective obstacles, but the "affective tie" that many students have to institutions like UGA because it is the flagship institution or because there is family history, continues to be a major challenge for Georgia College in the area of sophomore retention. It is an area that we continue to address and we hope that the high impact opportunities that students have at Georgia College will gradually begin to help us reduce the number of students who transfer to other institutions for these reasons.

### **Sophomore Outreach to Participate in High Impact Practices and Leadership Roles**

In an effort to address issues of sophomore retention, the Director of the Learning Center began last year to make an intentional effort to begin to interview sophomores for Supplemental Instruction Leadership positions, which had traditionally gone to seniors. Sophomores who were hired for these positions were grateful for the opportunity and indicated in satisfaction surveys later in the year that had they not been appointed as a Supplemental Instruction Leader, they would have likely left the university. They liked the opportunity to be engaged with a high achieving cohort; work directly with faculty; and get a deeper involvement with their field of study, preparing them better for jobs and graduate school. Twenty-six of the twenty-eight students who were selected as SI returned to Georgia College for their junior year. The model of the Learning Center is one that we will be replicating with all of our high impact opportunities. At Georgia College, sophomores can also assume important SGA Leadership positions and they are encouraged to run for office to serve in these positions. The last two SGA presidents were both sophomores when elected. Getting involved at such a high level in student government has helped them develop deeper affective ties to the College and helped them to decide to stay through their senior year. We will be working on tapping more sophomores in other areas to assume leadership positions and to participate in high impact practices that they might not be able to if they transferred to a larger institution.

### **Comprehensive Advising for Pre-Nursing Students**

Georgia College admits approximately 250 first year students each year who are interested in applying to the nursing program at the end of their sophomore year. Because we have space for only 112 students (56 each semester), we have the potential to lose over 100 sophomores who do not get admitted to the nursing program. Academic Advisors for pre-nursing students now spend time in first-year seminars and in one-on-one and group advising sessions, informing students who want to apply to our highly competitive nursing program of other opportunities in public health and about related majors at the university. The broader role of these advisors is helping us to retain good students at the college who will go on to graduate with their entering class. Last year of the 109 GC students who were not admitted to the nursing program, we were able to retain 48 of them through "Plan B" advising.

### **Launch of Team Advising Initiative**

This year, Georgia College was awarded a Momentum Year Grant for Team Advising. Team Advising will be a comprehensive advising effort that will address with a team of professionals across campus the educational, social, financial, and health obstacles that might present a students from continuing. Team Advising will provide an early group effort to intervene—not just with academics, but in all areas—to help retain students at Georgia College for four years.

**MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS**

While the focus of our work is on increasing institutional retention rates, Georgia College now ranks third among all USG institutions in sophomore retention (second only to Georgia Tech and UGA). Georgia College ranks first in its “state university” sector. Our baseline second-to-third year retention rate is roughly 68%. In 2017, that rate increased to 70%. Preliminary numbers for sophomore retention indicate that we will be in the 70% range again this year. With the continuation of successful advising practices and the implementation of the recommendations made by the subcommittee over the next three years, we hope to increase our sophomore retention rate to 75% by 2021.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

We learned that over half of the students who leave Georgia College after their second year are students with GPAs above 3.00. Factors contributing to their withdrawal from the institution were the limited availability of spaces in second-tier admission programs like nursing; familial connections to other Georgia institutions to which they want to belong; perceived higher prestige of Georgia’s flagship research institutions that they believed increased their chances for employment and acceptance into graduate programs; lack of qualitative rituals that help them develop an “affective tie” to the university; a lack of a full appreciation of the regional and national reputational prestige of Georgia College; and a limited understanding of the professional and personal value of a liberal arts education. We also learned that there are some factors that Georgia College cannot remedy - for example, the large number of students who would like to be admitted to the Nursing Program. In those places, however, where we can make a difference, we are working together intentionally to eliminate obstacles and give our students reasons to want to stay at Georgia College.

**PRINCIPAL POINTS OF CONTRACT**

Carolyn Denard, Associate Provost for Student Success; Mike Augustine, Senior Director of the Academic Advising Center; Chris Ferland, Associate Vice President for Institutional Research and Effectiveness

**OVERALL OBSERVATIONS**

Compared to all other institutions in the USG, Georgia College is performing well in both the areas of graduation and retention. We are second overall in four-year graduation rate, third in first-year retention, and third in sophomore retention. Compared to institutions in our sector we consistently out-pace our peers by as much as 30 percentage points. We are not content to accept our current graduation and retention rates, and we are working diligently to increase those numbers in every category. We know that Georgia College has many attractive opportunities for just the kind of students who are leaving the institution and that we must do more to keep them here. Our challenge is retain more of the students who enroll at Georgia College as first year students beyond their sophomore year. Our track record with those who retain (of graduating nearly 80%) clearly shows that if they remain at Georgia College they will benefit from their experience here and that our overall four -year graduation rate would increase significantly. Our continuing goal is to find ways to communicate to these students the many immeasurable benefits provided by a public liberal arts college and the qualitative educational reasons that they should continue and graduate from Georgia College.

**MOMENTUM YEAR 90-DAY UPDATE**

Over the past 90 days, Georgia College has worked steadily to implement all aspects of the Momentum Year Initiative. The summary of our work is outlined according to the Elements outlined in our Momentum Year Implementation Plan presented to the USG in April 2018.

**ELEMENT 1 (A): PURPOSE**

*Each student is guided into an academic focus area or program that best aligns with that student's aspirations, aptitudes, and potential for success.*

During the spring and summer of 2017, Georgia College completed trainings with academic advisors and career service advisors on academic mindset including articulating a clear definition and objectives of the Momentum Year Initiative. First -Year students have been registered through our POUNCE first- year registration system, and we have assigned undeclared students a specific advisor to help them make good decisions about their major. During this Fall Semester, Georgia College is offering 11 sections of the First Year Seminar (FYS) for students who are Undeclared but who have indicated a specific interest in an academic focus area. We are currently teaching focus area sections of FYS for Humanities, Health Sciences, STEM, Business and Social Science. Academic advisors will also include a discussion of academic mindset in their First Year Seminars, and students will complete the Academic Mindset Survey during the first three weeks of class.

**ELEMENT 2 (B): PROGRAM OF STUDY**

*Degree programs are aligned into academic focus areas that have common first year courses.*

Georgia College's **academic** focus areas include STEM, Health Sciences, Humanities & Fine Arts, Communication, Education, Social Sciences and Business. These focus areas are aligned with academic majors, and we have posted academic program maps for all majors on the Advising Center website. Over the last 90 days, we have been making sure all of the academic maps are accurate and up-to-date and easily accessible to students. Advisors have been using the academic maps during advising sessions as planning tools to make sure that students know how to read the maps and how to successfully outline their program of study over the next four years. The program maps have also become useful for recruitment purposes when advising prospective transfer students.

**ELEMENT 2 (C): PROGRAM OF STUDY**

*Students are provided with a default program map that is sequenced with critical courses and other milestones clearly indicated and advised and counseled to build a personal course schedule that includes core English and mathematics by the end of their first academic year.*

All academic program maps include core courses, including core English and Mathematics. Many students through Dual Enrollment and AP Credits are coming in with both core English and Mathematics already satisfied. All Georgia College students have completed core English and mathematics by end of their first

year. Through POUNCE registrations and early advising sessions during the first year advisors are making sure that students are on track to complete the remaining core courses during the first two years.

#### ELEMENT 2 (D): PROGRAM OF STUDY

*Students are provided with a default program map that is sequenced with critical courses and other milestones clearly indicated and advised and counseled to build a personal course schedule that includes three courses related to a student's academic focus area in the first year.*

All our first-year students, including undeclared students, are registered for their first semester by a professional academic advisor. The advisor is skilled in the nuances of the core curriculum and core courses are selected to accommodate the student's focus area. Early interactions via the POUNCE registration process allow students and advisors to explore potential multiple paths, utilize program maps and other resources, and to look for commonalities in curriculums to help guide core course selection. First-year students are receiving instructions in the First Year Seminars aligned to their major or general interest area on the core and key courses needed in their academic focus areas.

#### ELEMENT 2 (E): PROGRAM OF STUDY

*Students are provided with a default program map that is sequenced with critical courses and other milestones clearly indicated and advised and counseled to build a personal course schedule that incorporates as full a schedule as possible - ideally 30 credit hours - in the first year.*

Last fall, Georgia College implemented a "Think 30" campaign that focuses on taking 30 credit hours each year, including first year. Given GC has a number of students who are science majors/medical/dental/vet school aspirants, we look at 30 credits across fall, spring and summer. This helps ease the anxiety of students taking a number of science classes with labs and do not want to earn a low grade in these courses to keep their GPAs up. Over the last 90 days, all academic advisors have been reviewing student schedules and working with students in advising sessions to ensure they are successfully taking 30 credit hours over fall, spring and summer. Advisors have also begun to periodically monitor the schedules of first and second year students to make sure that they are staying on track with the number of credit hours taken so that they do not fall below 30 hours in one calendar year. Recent reports on credit hours suggest that the Think 30 Campaign has been successful in increasing the number of first year students on track to complete 30 credit hours each year by completing 14 to 15 hours each semester: This fall, 53% of first-year students are enrolled in 14 hours or more (with plans to take 16 hours in the spring); 41% of first-year students are taking 15 or more credit hours, and only 16% are taking 12 hours or less.

#### ELEMENT 2(F): PROGRAM OF STUDY

*Students are provided with personalized curricular maps and have ongoing advisement in their academic program. Students are directed to co-curricular activities and practices that are supportive of their major and overall integration into the college environment.*

At Georgia College, *GC Journeys* was created to engage students early in their time at GC in both curricular and co-curricular activities. First year students have been introduced to *GC Journeys* in their first-year seminars and advisors have been trained to make sure that students are adding co-curricular choices to the activities that students engage in while at Georgia College. *GC Journeys* is an added incentive. Over the last 90 days, Georgia College has also launched GUIDE, a mobile app that will allow us through cell phone notifications, to engage students early by making sure that they know what is happening within their discipline of choice and other co-curricular activities they can participate in. We have also begun trainings for faculty regarding *GC Journeys* and their role in mentoring students to be engaged early with curricular and co-curricular activities through workshops and programs offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning. A one-week long faculty orientation for new faculty highlighted the faculty role in *GC Journeys* and student engagement at Georgia College. We have also begun to work more intentionally with Student Affairs to ensure that student engagement with the *GC Journeys* programming is supported and implemented in student affairs areas as well.

#### ELEMENT 3 (A): ENGAGEMENT

*All incoming freshmen will be invited to participate in the USG Getting to Know Our Students Mindset Survey before the first three weeks of the semester.*

During the summer all academic advisors reviewed the parameters of the academic mindset survey and shared ways that they will administer the survey in their classes for best student response. Having the survey available earlier this year, allowed more time for planning and inclusion in the course syllabus and will likely yield a greater response rate as a result. All advisors are planning to administer the survey during the first three weeks of class.

#### ELEMENT 3 (B): ENGAGEMENT

*All faculty and staff, especially those who work with students in their first year, are oriented toward student engagement and success, and are provided with the training and tools they need to fulfill their roles in this regard.*

Over the summer, both academic and career advisors and new faculty have been engaged in training and tools they need to help solidify Georgia College's effort to ensure student engagement. The Center for Teaching and Learning has taken the lead in training faculty and staff who work with first year students to assist them with understanding engagement and student success. A new *GC Journeys'* Director has been appointed to ensure that all stakeholders—faculty and staff—are aware of the goals and the opportunities of the guided student engagement of the *GC Journey's* program and, by extension, other co-curricular opportunities for engagement by Georgia College students.

#### ELEMENT 3 (C, D, & E): ENGAGEMENT

*For part 3 of the template, select specific enrichment activities that your institution is investigating, piloting, implementing or building to a greater scale that promotes student engagement, connectivity and satisfaction with their program of study and/or college itself, or their productive academic mindset. These may be high impact practices (HIPs), reorganized courses through G2C, academic mindset interventions or other practices.*

Georgia College has chosen to promote engagement, connectivity, and satisfaction through a program called "*GC Journeys.*" This program represents an engaging, hands-on, skill-rich undergraduate experience. It is unique in the state and designed to make learning relevant and purposeful. Upon graduation, students will be fully prepared to enter graduate school or the workforce and take on the challenges and realities of today's rapidly changing, information-intensive, and vastly diverse global society. Because the elements of the program are intertwined in many ways, we are choosing to highlight all of them together as one "Element 3: Engagement" rather than creating three separate sections.

The program has 3 key elements:

- 1) Throughout their time in the GC Journeys program, **each student will participate in five high impact practices**; three already designated (First Year Experience, Career Planning Milestones & Senior Capstone) and two of their choice. The experiences of their choice include internships, Intensive Leadership Experiences, Mentored Undergraduate Research, and/or Service Learning designed to teach students to apply their learning and skills in experiences outside of the classroom. This aspect of the program is designed to increase student engagement as well as promoting the many positive outcomes associated with high impact practices. This element is in the full implementation phase with the incoming first year students.
- 2) Courses at GC will not only teach "content as usual" but also **every course will focus on one of 12 essential skills** drawn from AAC&U's "essential learning outcomes" - practical skills that are essential to success in the workforce. Some of these skills include critical thinking, global awareness, inquiry and analysis, and ethical reasoning. This aspect of the program is designed to decrease the dissatisfaction students often feel when they have the sense that they are taking courses that they do not see as related to their future lives or careers. This also helps students recognize that while certain subjects may only be tangentially connected to their lives or careers, those subjects can serve as the ideal vehicle for learning broadly useful, transferable skills. This element is in the preparation phase and will be piloted in spring 2019.
- 3) Faculty and staff will be prepared to implement **a wide variety of "targeted interventions"** - small scale interventions demonstrated to have a significant impact. These fall into three categories:
  - a) Interventions related to student perceptions of themselves and their work - examples include: attributional reframing, promotion of growth mindset/academic mindset/social belonging, values affirmation and, utility value
  - b) Interventions related to teaching - examples include: collective teacher efficacy, a focus on high impact/evidence-based teaching practices, and instructor clarity and credibility



- c) Interventions related to learning - examples include: self-regulation strategies (overcoming procrastination/present bias, increasing persistence, goal setting), stress reduction strategies/learned optimism/positive psychology, and research-based study skills

This element has been addressed with faculty workshops with first year faculty and will continue this year with faculty throughout the university.

### ELEMENT 3 (F): ENGAGEMENT (REPEAT AS NEEDED)

*For part 3 of the template, select specific enrichment activities that your institution is investigating, piloting, implementing or building to a greater scale that promotes student engagement, connectivity and satisfaction with their program of study and/or college itself, or their productive academic mindset. These may be high impact practices (HIPs), reorganized courses through G2C, academic mindset interventions or other practices.*

Over the last 90 days, we have introduced the *GC Journeys* program to students, especially first year students, through a media blitz including videos that document the HIPs in their first-year seminar, a social media campaign, posters, and more. We have also introduced the program to faculty and staff and provided ongoing training on how to understand, introduce, and champion the *GC Journeys* program with students and with internal and external stakeholders. During the next 90 days, we plan to develop websites for students and faculty so that any information anyone could need to participate in a HIP (students) or develop a HIP (faculty and staff) is at their fingertips. The faculty website will include links to all processes such as how to propose a HIP that meets our standards, get approval, assess the students (outcomes), and assess the HIP (inputs), host a state conference on HIPs and ELO's with 3 speakers from AAC&U, increase the quantity of HIP offerings while ensuring that they meet the standards of quality we have already established, and prepare the first faculty cohort through a 15 week program on course redesign that meets 2 hours per week with intensive work between the weekly sessions.

One of the most substantial elements of *GC Journeys* is the AAC&U ELO-aligned core. And over the last 90 days, committees charged with advancing the liberal arts curriculum at Georgia College have been discussing ways that each core course will "carry" one of the AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes along with the course outcomes that include discipline-specific learning objectives as mentioned above. While subject matter knowledge is clearly essential, the AAC&U ELOs provide the "21st century skills" that are needed to thrive in today's global society. In redesigning the core (including all gateway courses), faculty are being asked to consider best practices in their course redesigns.

Selected faculty at Georgia College have also been involved in piloting the G2C course redesign for core courses with high DFWI rates. A strategic team from Georgia College attended the G2C conference in March. In May, this faculty team (Steering Committee) met and agreed on the four courses chosen for the redesign. Over the summer, this team completed the Gateway Course Success Inventory, attended webinars and feedback sessions, and they are now preparing the SLG in Qualtrics for administration this fall. This team will use the Community of Practice model now used with Supplemental Instruction in STEM courses to guide their work in academic interventions and course redesign for the selected courses. The work of the G2C faculty team and the research of the John Gardner Institute fully support and parallel the direction that Georgia College is moving to implement the course redesigns of the G2C initiative.

The First-Year Seminar has become a vehicle for defining and applying the principles and practices involved in developing an academic mindset among students. Faculty workshops that focus on pedagogy in the new *GC Journey* courses have also provided opportunities for faculty to focus more intentionally on developing an academic mindset in their classrooms.

For the past 90-days, Georgia College faculty, staff, and administrators have been working to establish the parameters of our work, articulating desired outcomes, and establishing best practices for implementation and assessment of the Momentum Year Initiatives. During this academic year, Georgia College will continue to fine-tune our work and begin to implement all aspects of Momentum Year Initiatives or what Georgia College refers to as "*GC Journeys*."