



Georgia Regents University

(Soon to be Augusta University)

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

As one of the state of Georgia’s four research institutions, Georgia Regents University (GRU – *soon to be Augusta University*) has the unique designation as the state’s only public, academic health center. GRU offers a broad range of traditional liberal arts, education, business, allied health sciences, nursing, dental medicine, and medicine programs – making GRU one of handful of institutions in the United States with this curricular array. Further, in the higher education arena, we are one of the few institutions to undergo a major organizational transformation and blending of two institutional cultures in the 21st century. Less than three years into this transformation, Georgia Regents University has become a dynamic, responsive institution that places student success at the core of our vision to become a top-tier university that is a destination of choice for education, health care, discovery, creativity, and innovation. Guiding this vision is our mission.

“Our mission is to provide leadership and excellence in teaching, discovery, clinical care, and service as a student-centered comprehensive research university and academic health center with a wide range of program from learning assistance through postdoctoral studies.”

Our mission statement explicitly states that we are student-centered, and we believe firmly in holding student success at the core of all our educational activities. As such, we explicitly focus on our students within our strategic plan, *Transition Forward*. The plan and these goals guide our new initiatives both as a dynamic institution and as they relate to retention, progression, and graduation of our undergraduate student body.

In fall 2014, Georgia Regents University enrolled 5,224 undergraduate students at the institution, representing a decline of 430 students from fall 2013. Of the undergraduate students enrolled in fall 2014, 64% were female and 36% were male. The enrollment of females versus males remains relatively comparable to previous years. The ethnic diversity of the student body also remains constant: 57% White; 25% Black (Non-Hispanic origin); 6% Hispanic; 4% multiracial; 1% Asian; <1% American Indian or Alaska Native; <1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; and 7% unknown or non-disclosed. Maintaining ethnic and racial diversity is important to the institution as we further develop into a student-centered comprehensive research institution. The average age of our undergraduate student body is 24, signifying that we must pay attention to the expectations of traditionally aged students while addressing the concerns of our adult students. The same percent of students (43%) received Pell grants in fall 2014 as in fall 2013.

The incoming cohort all new freshmen in fall 2014 had a higher freshman index than previous cohorts with more than 65% meeting or exceeding the research institution minimum (2500) and by all indications, there are even stronger scores for the incoming fall 2015 cohort. While the increasingly higher freshman index means some local students who would have traditionally had access to Georgia Regents University are not eligible for admission, we judiciously use the opportunity to offer Limited Admission as well as promote our partnership with East Georgia State College (EGSC) who operates on our campus. EGSC provides an access point for local students who may not meet GRU admissions criteria with the expectation that those who continue into a baccalaureate program will enroll with GRU. These enrollment patterns and demographics of our undergraduate students continue to inform the development of Georgia Regents University’s student success initiatives.

Transition Forward Organizational Goals

1. create, enhance, and sustain programs that prepare graduates for success in a rapidly changing global workplace and society;
2. provide an environment that promotes innovative education, and;
3. develop an undergraduate curriculum with a distinctive profile that embraces the principles of liberal arts as fundamental to all disciplines and that recognizes the value of a culture of intellectual inquiry, creativity, and undergraduate research.

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS, HIGH IMPACT STRATEGIES, AND ACTIVITIES

We continue to refine our Complete College Georgia completion goals, high impact strategies, and activities to meet the needs of current and future students. Our four goals are slight modifications from our original goals proposed in “Our Path Forward” (2012). The faculty and administration see these goals and activities as a method to enhance the culture of the institution and the way Georgia Regents University supports the success of our undergraduate students. As defined by Complete College Georgia, our strategies fall within the four overarching goals:

- Goal 1** Increase the number of undergraduate degrees awarded,
- Goal 2** Increase the number of degrees that are earned “on-time,”
- Goal 3** Decrease excess credits earned on the path to getting a degree, and
- Goal 4** Provide intrusive advising to keep students on track to graduate.

Goal 1 Increase the number of undergraduate degrees awarded

Georgia Regents University’s aim is to increase the number of all undergraduate degrees awarded across all constituent groups (i.e., first generation, gender, race/ethnicity, age, military)

aligns with the University System of Georgia’s goal for all institutions. We have intentionally chosen not to focus on a particular demographic group because we recognize there are needs across all our populations. Overall, the total number of undergraduate degrees awarded has increased over the past four years.

Number of Undergraduate Degrees Awarded			
2012	2013	2014	2015
898	985	1036	1042

Over the past three years, we have modified our other goals and strategies very little in the pursuit of higher rates of retention, progression, and graduation. Many of the strategies have now become part of institutional culture. We have used this opportunity to concentrate on certain programs we believe will have the greatest impact. We have discovered several high impact strategies and activities for Goals 2, 3, and 4. These are listed below.

Goal 2 Increase the number of degrees awarded “on-time”

High Impact Strategy To help keep students on target to graduate “on-time,” defined as within four years, we focused on increasing the number of students who take 15 or more hours per semester. One of our original Complete College Georgia goals was to implement a fifteen-to-finish campaign called “4Years4U.” The 4Years4U campaign requests students sign a pledge to take at least 15 credit hours per semester each semester until they finish their undergraduate degree. 4Years4U has started an institutional culture shift in course load expectations.

Further, students are encouraged to take full course loads through a “flat tuition” model where students enrolled in 10 or more credit hours pay the full-time equivalent rate for 15 credits hours. Students who might have traditionally only registered for 12 hours now have a financial incentive to take more. In addition to these tuition incentives, we continued our Completion Promise Awards through the addition of the Coca-Cola Finish Line Scholarship. Both programs provide grants for those students who are a few hours short of graduation but do not have the financial means to finish.

Summary of Activities GRU launched the 4Years4U campaign beginning with the fall 2013 freshmen class. The campaign has continued for every incoming freshman class. Promotional giveaways, branded with the 4Years4U logo, were included originally for those students who signed the pledge. In addition, signs and banners were posted around campus to promote the campaign and flyers were included in campus orientations prior to the start of the first year. We discontinued the giveaways due to cost restrictions; however, we continue to use banners and other advertisements around campus and in the local community to promote the 4Years4U program.

Baseline Status GRU uses fall 2012 as the baseline to measure progress on the 4Years4U campaign. In fall 2012, only 8% of this undergraduate student cohort signed up for 15 or more credit hours per semester.

Interim Measures of Progress The 4Years4U campaign is a continuation of an initiative that began in fall 2013. In spring 2017, the first cohort of students will meet the four-year graduation milestone and be used to set a new benchmark.

Percent Freshman Cohort Enrolled in 15 or More Hours Each Fall of First Year			
2012	2013	2014	2015
8%	72%	89.5%	86%

The 4Years4U campaign also provides leading indicators to reach the benchmarks of earning 30, 60, and 90 credits by the start of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year respectively. The attainment of these credit hour benchmarks is more important ultimately due to how some credit hours are balanced based on course hours.

Fall Freshmen Cohort	Credit Hours Earned			4-Year Graduation Rate	6-Year Graduation Rate
	Earned 30 Credits	Earned 60 Credits	Earned 90 Credits		
2012	14.2%	12.1%	10.8%		
2013	37.1%	24.7%			
2014	47.1%				
2015					

In 2014 - 2015, 9 students received over \$15,000 of Completion Promise Awards and Coca-Cola Finish Line Scholarships.

Measures of Success	<p>The 4Years4U campaign uses a series of metrics to determine the progress of students toward a degree “on-time” for those students beginning in the fall 2013 and later. The metrics are based on the entering fall freshmen cohorts each year. By 2020, we intend on having 60% of 1st year students (fall 2019 cohort) earning 30 or more hours by the start of their second year, 39% of 2nd year students (fall 2018 cohort) earning 60 or more hours by start of their third year, and 24% of 3rd year students (fall 2017 cohort) earning 90 or more hours by the start of their fourth year. We want a 15% four-year graduation rate (fall 2016 cohort) and intend to have a 40% six-year graduation rate (fall 2014 cohort).</p>
Lessons Learned	<p>GRU continues to make major gains in the number of students enrolling in and completing 15 or more credit hours compared to our baseline. The challenge with the 4Years4U programs lies in the sustained engagement of students to continue to pursue 15 or more credit hours past the first semester and into their major. We are engaging our analytical capabilities to see in which student populations (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, major, etc.) we see the biggest declines. This will help us provide more targeted support for these individuals and engender further gains in our support of student success.</p>
Goal 3 High Impact Strategy	<p>Decrease excess credits earned on the path to getting a degree</p> <p>GRU focused on five strategies to decrease excess credits earned on the path to getting a degree. The first strategy was to eliminate learning support but create “stretched” sections of MATH 1111, ENGL 1101, and ENGL 1102 for students who do not score well on the placement exams. Students in these stretched sections earn three hours of credit as with the normal sections, but allow two extra hours per week for just-in-time remediation. This format eliminates the need for prerequisite or co-requisite courses that would add extra hours, and thus decreases excess credits earned on the path to getting a degree.</p> <p>The second strategy was to create program maps for each major with appropriate general education Area A2 math sequences (math pathways). We also included Area D science sequences to ensure alignment with the math pathway and science area which would help the student be most successful in their chosen major. The creation of program maps is tangential to another campus project focused on curriculum mapping at the program and course level. The result of both the program schemas and curriculum maps will be a path to a degree through a “choice architecture,” which reduces course selection opportunities for students but does not sacrifice the quality of learning.</p> <p>A third strategy was to implement pre-determined schedules for the first semester of all new freshmen. A schedule of courses is prescribed based on the students’ intended area of major and includes the necessary courses to ensure that students can complete their intended major within four years. Starting in fall 2015 after students complete their first semester, they will have more freedom to select course times and sections; however, these courses must be in their pre-approved course plan. The student’s advisor will regulate the appropriate course registration through DegreeWorks, and then, the student can adjust his or her schedule for their preferred course times through College Scheduler (software interfaced with Banner).</p> <p>A new strategy proposed last year, but not yet implemented, is designing meta-majors. At GRU, one meta-major cluster might be nursing/occupational therapy/radiological sciences and another might focus on English/foreign language/history. These clusters have common science and mathematics core courses, which allow students to explore potential majors without enrolling in unnecessary courses thereby earning credits that would not ultimately count towards their degree.</p> <p>The fifth strategy, currently ongoing, is to redesign core curriculum gateway courses that consistently have high DFW rates.</p>
Summary of Activities	<p>The original stretch courses in English and Math continue to run successfully. In addition to the regular stretched courses in ENGL, new stretched sections specifically designed for non-native English speakers were added.</p> <p>In 2014 – 2015, we finalized the development of mathematics pathways in Area A2 and science sequences in Area D. The addition of MATH 1001 to the GRU curriculum has been helpful for many majors that needed basic quantitative reasoning skills and preparation for elementary statistics. We met with each major to identify the appropriate science sequence. Students are “steered” into this pathway. These recommendations are included on program maps, or “track sheets” as the students call them, approved by faculty and used by academic advisors to keep students on track.</p> <p>We also conducted our second Curriculum Design Academy, which selects core curriculum gateway courses with DFW rates higher than 20%. The intent of the program is to refine gateway courses until no course has a DFW rate higher than 20%.</p>
Baseline Status	<p>The baseline measures for each gateway course are both the number of students affected and the % of DFW rates in these gateway courses.</p>
Interim Measures of Progress	<p>Participation in the stretch courses consistently yields the same or better pass rates in our MATH 1111, ENGL 1101, and ENGL 1102. We are now in an active monitoring stage of these courses to ensure enough sections are available for those who need the “just in-time” remediation. Stretched sections of mathematics and English continue to operate on an as need basis depending on the</p>

freshman cohort student population.

Success Rates (ABC) in Regular versus Stretch Courses in 2014 - 2015			
	ENGL 1101	ENGL 1102	MATH 1111
Regular	79.3%	66.7%	70.4%
Stretch	81.3%	72.9%	71.8%

Mathematics and science pathways are now established for all majors as well as program maps for the first two years.

The faculty who teach in thirteen gateway courses have completed revisions through the Curriculum Design Academy, including core-level anatomy and physiology, chemistry, English, humanities, history, mathematics, political science, and psychology. The fall 2013 courses (in table below) were selected based on the DFW rates, which include WFs. These courses have seen an average reduction of DFW rates of 6% in these courses compared fall to fall. The fall 2014 courses (also in table below) were selected based on the numbers of students affected and the DFW rates, which include WFs. Data for the fall 2014 cohort of courses will be available at the end of fall 2015 semester. We will track these data annually to ensure continued success in these courses.

Fall 2013 Curriculum Design Academy - D, F, W, WF Rates				
Course		Pre-	Post-	Change in %
BIOL 2111	Anatomy and Physiology I	51%	57%	+6%
ENGL 1101	College Composition I	27%	17%	-10%
ENGL 1102	College Composition II	30%	31%	+1%
HUMN 2001	World Humanities I	27%	14%	-13%
HUMN 2002	World Humanities II	23%	13%	-10%
MATH 1111	College Algebra	42%	32%	-10%

Fall 2014 Curriculum Design Academy - D, F, W, WF Rates				
Course		Pre	Post	% Change
CHEM 1211	Principles of Chemistry I	27%		
CHEM 1212	Principles of Chemistry II	31%		
HIST 2111	United States to 1877	20%		
POLS 1101	Introduction to American Government	13%		
PSYC 1101	Introduction to General Psychology	26%		
			Data available after Fall 2015 semester.	

Measures of Success

By 2020, we intend to see at least the same or better rate of success in stretched courses compared to regular courses; this will vary by course. Also by 2020, we intend to see an average rate of less than 25% for DFW (including WFs) in all our core courses and 20% reduction in extra credits earned at GRU for a degree upon graduation.

Lessons Learned

Faculty have actively supported the approach to selecting the correct mathematics course for their majors, the “stretched” sections of ENGL for students who need the additional support, and the appropriate science sequence. Not all faculty view high DFW rates as negative. Finding the right balance of rigor and support proves challenging when working with courses that have high DFW rates. The Office for Faculty Development and Teaching Excellence works with individual departments and small groups to provide an environment in which faculty can receive support to improve their teaching abilities in ways that improve student success in these courses.

Further, our analyses show many students in the past had earned more credits than necessary to receive a bachelor’s degree. Our analysis showed that the major causes of excess credits included switching majors due to changes in career choices, poor course selection, and lack of advisement on appropriate courses to complete a particular major. These strategies address the issue of excess credits. We continue to analyze the metrics above to determine the effectiveness of our interventions. The GRU class of 2017 will establish our success rate and serve as a new benchmark.

Goal 4 High Impact Strategy

Provide intrusive advising to keep students on track to graduate

Georgia Regents University continues three high impact strategies related to intrusive academic advising to keep students on track to graduate. First, our Academic Advisement Center provides dedicated professional advising support to all students who have earned less than 60 credit hours, transfer students regardless of credit hours earned, and students who are returning after prolonged absences or returning from academic difficulty. Fourteen professional advisors in the Academic

Advisement Center, who specialize in one or more degree programs and areas, work with the faculty of those departments to ensure that they are providing sound advice for each major. The advisors' knowledge of their specific programs and input from faculty create continuity of program expectations as students move from the Academic Advisement Center to their faculty advisor.

The second strategy requires that any student who wishes to change a schedule or change majors see an advisor. The advisor informs the student of how the changes will impact their choice of major, their financial aid, and the timely completion of their degree thus helping them stay on track. While we have seen an increase in change of majors, these changes have occurred earlier in the student's career allowing them to choose the right academic major more quickly and to stay on track to graduate.

The third strategy is a strong analytic backbone that supports all our strategies to change institutional culture and drive students to success. We fully implemented GradesFirst this past academic year and begun piloting the Student Success Collaborative system from the Education Advisory Board (EAB). EAB acquired GradesFirst this year, and we are expecting the newly combined system to be piloted in fall 2015. The combined systems, now called EAB SSC Campus, will provide early intervention for students doing poorly in courses and provide analytical insight to help students select majors in which they will be successful. This new version of the system will be implemented both in the Academic Advisement Center and with faculty who advise upper division students within the major.

Summary of Activities

GRU created the Academic Advisement Center in summer 2014. Over the course of the 2013 – 2014 academic year, 14 professional advisors were hired or relocated from undergraduate departments to the new professional advising office. The center currently advises 4,178 students. The purchase of College Scheduler will relieve advisors from time spent in course selection and registration and allow them to focus on engaging students proactively.

Baseline Status

Not applicable. Success of the advisement center comes from tangential metrics such as retention and progression.

Interim Measures of Progress

As of fall 2014, all undergraduate students with less than 60 hours began seeing a professional advisor. This includes most of the students from the fall 2013 cohort and all from the fall 2014 cohort. The advisors have become more active in the orientation process as well and are now beginning to build schedules based on student interest through a survey filled out prior to orientation. They are also becoming more active in reaching out to students who do not re-enroll in a particular semester and following up on issues these students might have.

Measures of Success

The metrics used for academic advisement are the same as those used in the 4Years4U campaign with the Academic Advisement Center being responsible for students earning up to 60 hours.

Lessons Learned

Traditionally, faculty had the responsibility for advising undergraduate students for all four years. The shift to professional advising during the first two years of a student's undergraduate career has improved distribution of accurate information about changes to curriculum and policies that affect students. Colocation and intentional collaboration between the Advisement Center and Career Services created more opportunity for career advising during the first two years, helping students to make more informed choices regarding their major earlier in their career. We have begun to work on programming that helps faculty assume more of a mentoring role, regardless of a student's progress, and allow for a seamless transition from professional to faculty advisors. Our Declaration Day initiative, which provides an opportunity for students to celebrate both the completion of 60 hours and the official selection of a major, brings together students, professional advisors, and faculty members to help with this transition.

OBSERVATIONS

Our activities focus on a triad of student engagement, faculty engagement, and administrative support to achieve higher rates of retention, progression, and graduation. The high impact strategies listed above have proven to be successful for Georgia Regents University and our students. We have already begun to see major improvements as shown in the metrics above. This success is the result of implementing programs that tackle multiple issues at once. As our student success initiatives have grown, we have also appointed an Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Success to monitor our activities and plan for innovative programs to help us achieve even greater student success.

In addition to the high impact strategies above, we have several original CCG strategies that have become part of institutional culture. In the initial Complete College Georgia plan, we set strategies to create a first year seminar program, place more emphasis on academic enrichment activities for high ability students, analyze any policy that was perceived to hinder retention, progression, and graduation, and redesign our undergraduate core curriculum. In 2014 – 2015, we continued our Convocation program and had a nearly 68% participation rate from our incoming freshman class. Our academic enrichment areas (study abroad, honors, and undergraduate research) continued to see increases in student participation. Study abroad has seen an increase from 174 students in 2012-2013 to 291 students in 2014 – 2015. Our Honors Program enrolled 253 students in fall 2013, compared with 139 students in fall 2013 and 101 students in fall 2012. The Center for Undergraduate Research and Scholarship Summer Scholars program added 10 students in 2015 for a total of 39 compared with 21 in 2013 and 29 in 2014. We offered the first INQR 1000:

Fundamentals of Academic Inquiry course in 2014 – 2015. INQR 1000, a required course in Area B of the common core, engages a small group of students with a committed faculty member to pose and answer a question of interest. Many students report INQR 1000 as one of their favorite courses in their first year, and faculty are enjoying the opportunity connect with incoming students.

Making improvements in student success takes sustained and collaborative efforts. Changes were made when analysis showed potential for improvement. During the analyses we take the time to reflect on what did not work, what did work, and celebrate our accomplishments and successes. These celebrations help individuals see the positive effects of their efforts and stay committed to them. Georgia Regents University is at the forefront of creating what comes next in undergraduate student success for the state, nation, and higher education.