



Georgia Highlands College

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Georgia Highlands College (GHC) is a limited-mission, four-year state college which serves as the associate-level access institution for northwest Georgia and offers limited number of bachelor's degrees targeting the economic needs of the region. The mission is to provide access to excellent educational opportunities for the intellectual, cultural, and physical development of a diverse population. GHC seeks to be a gateway to student success and has six goals in the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan, including to 1) Effect quality teaching and learning focused on academic achievement and personal and professional growth; 2) Provide comprehensive student services that encourage and enable all students to be successful learners; 3) Engage students in a challenging atmosphere that prepares them for responsibility and leadership in an evolving global environment; 4) Utilize appropriate technologies to advance programs, services and operations to support teaching and learning; 5) Maintain efficient and effective administrative services and facilities to support all programs of the college; and 6) Foster community relationships that facilitate partnering for mutual success.

The motto of the most recently published strategic plan is "focused on student success." GHC has identified five directives to guide our growth and transformation as an institution over the next three years. These directives are institutional health and stability, enrollment management, academic excellence, diversity, and community engagement. The strategic plan and CCG efforts align to form processes, policies, and programs to improve student success and increase the number of degrees awarded at GHC. A large part of GHC's student body are considered traditionally underserved populations, such as first-generation, low socioeconomic groups, adult learners, veterans, and underprepared students.

This year, GHC has chosen to showcase five of our high impact strategies, including the African American Male Initiative program, Success Coaching programs, QEP-Academic Advising, Learning Support Co-Requisite Remediation and Math Pathways, and our Gateways to Completion work. These initiatives are driven by the need to increase retention, progression, and graduation rates. Our overarching goal is to help students identify and actively progress toward the achievement of the student's educational goals. The strategies that we highlight involve cross-campus collaborations amongst faculty, staff, administrators, and students.

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS, HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES, & ACTIVITIES

HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY: AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE INITIATIVE (AAMI) PROGRAM

The African American Male Initiative (AAMI) program at GHC has a documented track record of increasing the retention and graduation of Black or African-American males.

COMPLETION GOAL: INCREASE ACCESS FOR UNDERSERVED AND/OR PRIORITY COMMUNITIES.

DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY OR IMPACT

Black or African American students comprise the largest minority population at GHC. Black or African American males are nationally and locally at substantially more risk of dropping out or stopping out than their female counterparts. The AAMI program at GHC started in 2008 with a focus on success, retention, and completion. It is included at GHC in a more general program toward minority male success, Georgia Highlands African American and Minority Male Excellence (GHAME), open to all males with a focus on minority males. The community partner for GHAME is the 100 Black Men of Rome-Northwest Georgia chapter.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The AAMI program at GHC provided students in the program with mentoring from faculty and staff as well as from community volunteers, with academic and career advising, and with troubleshooting assistance for issues as different as financial aid planning to transportation challenges. To help retention, the program created involvement opportunities for the students such as leadership training, field trips and community service. By the end of the academic year, GHC's AAMI program was one of four remaining USG programs to be part of the MDRC research study. The study intends to establish best practices and sustainability for AAMI initiatives at GHC and elsewhere.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

Participation rate (percentage of eligible students participating in AAMI in each Fall term), one-year retention rate for first time, full time students, three-year graduation rate for associate degrees, and annual degrees conferred for all African American Males and separately for members of the AAMI program (five-year view of all measures in Data Appendix).

Participation. The number of AAMI participants in Fall 2016 was 64 from a total enrollment of Black or African American males of 352 for a participation rate of 18%. This figure is below the historical level of participation (24%-29%). An important goal for 2017-18 is to increase the participation figure. The short-term goal is 50% participation in Fall 2017.

One-year retention. First time, full time (FTFT) Black or African American males who started in Fall 2015 and were members of GHC's AAMI were retained to Fall 2016 at a rate of 95%, while those who did not participate returned the following Fall at a rate of 59%. The overall retention rate for FTFT Black or African American males was 68% at GHC, compared with the State College average of 52%. The goal is to retain AAMI members at a one-year rate of 90% or higher.

Three-year graduation for associate degrees. FTFT Black or African American males who started in Fall 2013 and were members of GHC's AAMI graduated with associate degrees by the end of summer 2016 at a rate of 28.6%, while those who did not participate graduated at a rate of 4.8%. The overall three-year graduation rate for Black or African American FTFT students was 9.1%, compared with the State College average of 8.4%. The same substantial difference in graduation rates between AAMI and non-AAMI members is seen throughout the five-year view. The goal is to exceed the three-year graduation rate for Black or African American males at any college in our USG sector, which for the 2013 cohort would mean exceeding 16.3%.

Degrees conferred. The data table and chart in the Data Appendix show the number and percentage of degrees conferred to AAMs rising until FY 2017 after an all-time high in FY 2016. The percentage of the degrees awarded to AAMs that were awarded to AAMI members remains high at 58% compared with the participation rates in AAMI, which have not exceeded 29% in any of the past five Fall terms. The goal is to increase participation and thereby the likelihood of degree completion for African American Males.

LESSONS LEARNED

Needs and challenges have been primarily a shortage of personnel. Those faculty and staff who assist with the program can do so only in addition to their official jobs, as time permits. This has led to an inconsistency of services. One full-time position has been added as of May 2017, an assistant in the AAMI initiative to the director, and this is a tremendous move forward. In addition, the MDRC study will assist GHC to better organize its services across the five campus sites of the College.

PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT

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HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY: SUCCESS COACHING EFFORTS

COMPLETION GOAL: RESTRUCTURE INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY TO SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND STUDENT SUCCESS.

DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY OR IMPACT

The Success Coach Program: The Success Coach Program developed from small-scale mentoring efforts that took place in the previously mentioned AAMI and GHAME efforts. The program began in Fall 2015 by assigning a faculty, staff, or administrator as a success coach to each FTFT freshmen. In Fall 2016 the program targeted General Studies students. The program was a two-part effort: 1) email newsletter to all General Studies students with the option to opt-in to be matched with a coach and 2) students who opted-in were matched with a coach on the same campus and with similar interests. In the Spring 2017, all students had the opportunity to opt-in to the program through Desire2Learn (D2L).

STEM-Success Coach Program: In the Fall 2016, the STEM Center decided to offer targeted success coaching to STEM majors.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

A first-year assessment of the Success Coach Program revealed that although GHC had a large number of employees volunteer to serve as Success Coaches, the students did not respond to their attempts to engage. As a result, the program managers decided to target a new audience: General Studies students, since at GHC all undeclared students Fall into the General Studies pathway. Research shows undeclared students are at higher risk of attrition and have lower levels of academic achievement than students who have declared a program of study (Kittendorf, 2012). We also decided to make a portion of the the program optional.

Activities to increase awareness. All students attending new student orientation received a handout explaining mentor programs at GHC. Advertisements were placed on the College television screens. The Success Coach Program set up a table at Student Life's Club Round Up during the first few weeks of class each semester. The Success Coach Program sponsored "Questions, Ask Me" tables during the first week of class. All students received an announcement about the program in the Desire2Learn accounts. All General Studies students received monthly student success newsletters, and each ended with the option to be matched with a personal success coach.

Activities to train coaches. GHC assessed the experiences of past coaches by hosting focus groups and administering a survey. Most of the feedback from new and returning coaches, as well as coaches who decided not to volunteer, reflected the level of work versus the return on the investment. Coaches felt the effort put into trying to get the students to participate outweighed the student response rate. Coaches were discouraged. The system used to track the interactions was cumbersome resulting in coaches not logging their attempts to reach out. A goal of the second year of the program was to simplify the process of contacting students and documenting the interaction. A formal training manual was created. As a part of the manual, coaches received curriculum for four checkpoints to cover with students who opted into the program. The checkpoints focused on self-discovery, academic planning, and goal setting. We did away with tracking the program through TutorTrac and worked with ITS to create a form for logging interactions. We also added a piece for referring students to other departments for an intervention.

Activities to incentivize program. Attempts to incentivize participation included coaches receiving wristlet key chains at the end of year one as a thank you for their efforts. Year-two coaches received tee shirts. Each student who opted into the program and met with a coach also received a tee shirt.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

Although many new efforts were made to improve the experience of both the student and the coach, results were the same as the first year. Students were taking the extra step to opt-in to the program, however they were not showing up for appointments or responding to the coaches (See Success Coach Programs in the Appendix). In-take forms from students who opted-in revealed the most common reasons students wanted to be matched with success coaches were to receive affirmation about their academic program, to have someone to motivate them to set and achieve future goals, and to seek advice about what careers they could pursue after graduation. This desire for students to have more academic planning and goal setting in an academic advisement and career services environment led to the beginning discussions of the upcoming QEP (discussed later in this document).

LESSONS LEARNED

GHC had a difficult time launching a program that was successful at the smaller scale to full-scale. Employees wanted to volunteer. Students expressed an interest in having a coach, but they still are not following through with the program. Assessment revealed students are unsure of their choices in academic programs, careers, goals, and what to do after college. The results of this program led to campus-wide discussions of how we can move our academic advisement away from course selection and registration and more toward an intrusive experience. The future of this program is uncertain at this time. The STEM program had a similar experience and as a result, the Division of Natural Sciences has decided to abandon their efforts.

PRIMARY POINT(S) OF CONTACT:

Success Coach Program: Crystal L. Edenfield, Program Manager, New Student & Retention Programs; STEM Success Coach Program: Lisa Branson, Assistant Professor of Biology

HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY: ACADEMIC ADVISING AS THE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN (QEP)

COMPLETION GOAL: DECREASE EXCESS CREDITS EARNED ON THE PATH TO GETTING A DEGREE; PROVIDE INTRUSIVE ADVISING TO KEEP STUDENTS ON TRACK TO GRADUATE; RESTRUCTURE INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY TO SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND STUDENT SUCCESS; AND INCREASE THE NUMBER OF DEGREES THAT ARE EARNED "ON TIME."

DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY OR IMPACT

In Fall 2016, the QEP team administered a survey that revealed strong college-wide support for focusing on improvements to academic advising as the GHC QEP. During Fall 2016 and Spring 2017, a QEP team of approximately 30 faculty, staff, and students researched advising best practices and designed a QEP plan to implement a new advising model at GHC. With the current model, students are encouraged, but not required, to participate in what is called Early Bird Advising each semester with a faculty or staff advisor. In Fall 2016, 38.5% of our student population chose to participate. In Spring, 26.3% of our student population chose to participate. To address low participation of students who receive academic advising, the new model, which will be implemented summer 2018, will require that all students new to GHC participate in two advising activities during the first term enrolled at GHC and a third activity during their second term at GHC. During term one, students will meet with other students in small groups with an advisor during the first few weeks of the semester. These small group meetings will address such issues as time management, technology concerns, and study tips. Mid-semester, students will be required to meet in one-on-one sessions with advisors to create an academic plan tailored to each student's goals. During the student's second semester, the student will have a required follow-up advising session to make sure progress is on track. In addition to these activities, the QEP team chose to implement a software system to aid in tracking advising activities and referrals to campus resources.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

GHC chose academic advising as a QEP. The QEP team is currently transitioning from planning to implementation.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

Establishing baseline data

LESSONS LEARNED

CCSSE data and PASS data as well as Success Coach Program data indicated students lacked sufficient career counseling and discussions of academic goals beyond GHC degree pathway. The QEP has the potential to transform the way students experience academic advising, as well as interactions with faculty at GHC.

PRIMARY POINT(S) OF CONTACT:

Sharryse Henderson, QEP Chair; Jennifer Hicks, Director, Academic Success Center

HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY: LEARNING SUPPORT – CO-REQUISITE REMEDIATION AND MATH PATHWAYS

Co-requisite remediation and math pathways that start in Learning Support have had a substantial impact on students' success in gateway classes and follow-on classes after those, and students following the new model are expected to increase credential attainment at the end of three years from the first group at scale with LS changes in Fall 2014 (end of summer 2017).

COMPLETION GOAL: INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF DEGREE COMPLETION BY TRANSFORMING THE WAY THAT REMEDIATION IS ACCOMPLISHED.**DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY OR IMPACT**

In Fall 2016 and historically, half the incoming freshmen at GHC require remediation, so steps taken to increase their success can have a dramatic impact on progression and completion. GHC keeps a running comparison of cohort success between students starting in Fall 2009, before the transformations currently in place were begun, and cohorts in Fall 2014 (first term with transformations at scale) and the most recent Fall term to track the impact.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The focus during 2016-17 was refining the courses in the current format. English and mathematics faculty put together groups to look and develop the courses. Data was compiled to review student success and look at areas of improvement. The English group has worked to create an across the board curriculum for ENGL 0989. MATH 0989 and MATH 0987 course material were adjusted. Work has been done to try to align the delivery of the co-requisite MATH 0999 course by creating day-by-day materials for instructors. The material in all MATH 1111 classes has been restructured to better align with the MATH 0999 co-requisite. The same is true for MATH 1001 and MATH 0997.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

For the overall program, the goal is student success in the college level courses beyond the gateway classes, equivalent retention to those not starting in Learning Support, and increased degree completion.

In the Data Appendix, two baseline comparisons are made with 2016-17 Learning Support students: 1) a historical comparison of success, progression, and retention with students starting in Fall 2009, before co-requisite remediation and math pathways were at scale, and 2) success, progression, and retention comparison with students taking the gateway and follow-on classes who did not start in Learning Support. Comparisons are provided at two levels of Learning Support: the highest level (in Fall 2009, MATH 0099, ENGL 0099, READ 0099; in Fall 2016, co-requisite placement) and the lowest level (for Math only, in Fall 2009, MATH 0097; in Fall 2014 and Fall 2016, foundations placement). The comments in this section refer to students starting in co-requisite remediation.

Gateway Class Success. The Fall 2016 cohort of Learning Support students in Math continues the patterns of improvement on these measures begun with the Fall 2014 cohort, GHC's first term at scale with changes to remediation. GHC has noted in prior updates the improvements in timely completion of gateway classes after co-requisite remediation and math pathways were adopted. In Fall 2016, 81% of students who started in co-requisite remediation in math passed the corresponding gateway course in two terms, exceeding the goal of 70% and exceeding the progress of the Fall 2014 cohort (71%).

Similarly, the Fall 2016 cohort of Learning Support English students passed the gateway class (English 1101) in two terms at a higher rate than the Fall 2014 students (89% compared with 77%, respectively). Both figures compare favorably with the gateway pass rate in two terms for the Fall 2009 cohort (50%).

Follow-on Class Success. Improvements to success rates dropped off for the Fall 2014 LS Math cohort as they progressed through the corresponding follow-on classes (either Statistics or Pre-Calculus). The rate for passing a follow-on math class in three terms for the Fall 2014 cohort was higher than the rate for the 2009 cohort (38% compared with 13%, respectively) but not as much higher as the gateway pass rates (71% compared with 34%). Corresponding data for the Fall 2016 cohort will not be available until the end of Fall 2017.

The Fall 2014 cohort of LS English co-requisite students completed the follow-on course (English 1102) in three terms at the same rate as the Fall 2009 cohort (35%), unexpected when the gateway completion rate was so much higher (79% compared

with 50%). However, the Fall 2016 cohort is on track to exceed timely completion of the follow-on course, with 48% of the cohort having completed English 1102 in two terms. The rest of the follow-on data for Fall 2016 will be available at the end of Fall 2017.

Retention. After a year in which one-year institutional retention of first time, full time Learning Support students was higher than retention of non-LS FTFT students (63% for Fall 2014 LS students, 62% for non-LS), the Fall 2015 cohort was retained at a lower level (67% compared with 72%), though still with only half the gap of previous cohorts, before GHC was at scale with LS transformations. The goal is to retain students who start in LS at the same rate as students who did not.

Completions. Having started at scale with transformed remediation in Fall 2014, GHC can begin at the end of Spring 2017 to examine whether improvements in success and progression for Learning Support students are translating into increased completions. The full historical comparison for completions for LS Math students is shown in the Data Appendix, extending to as far as the Fall 2014 students have gotten (the end of the second Spring semester of enrollment).

As of the 2.75-year mark (for the Fall 2009 cohort, the end of Spring 2012; for the Fall 2014 cohort, the end of Spring 2017), the percentage of students in the two cohorts who had completed a credential of any kind, anywhere, is almost identical (9.43% for the 2009 cohort; 9.76 for the 2014 cohort). Credential attainment for the Fall 2014 cohort is lower than that of students who did not start in LS Math as well (9.7% compared with 13%).

LESSONS LEARNED

For co-requisites, the greatest challenges have been format and student engagement. As the co-requisite and college level courses are not tied together or necessarily taught by the same instructor, keeping the material in the courses at the same pace has been an ongoing concern. Another continuing discussion is how much of the co-requisite material should be remedial and how much of it should be reemphasizing the coursework in the connected college course. The co-requisite classes have also struggled with higher student absentee rates—this has been approached on an instructor by instructor basis, focusing on suggested strategies rather than creating a departmental policy.

With an eye to the overall student success goal (success in college-level courses beyond the gateway classes), the changes stated in the Summary of Activities section were incorporated this year. Increasing that success and the overall level of completions among students who begin with Learning Support requirements will most likely be an ongoing challenge.

PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT

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HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY: GATEWAYS 2 COMPLETION (G2C) EFFORTS

Gateways to Completion (G2C) is an effort to develop and implement strategies to improve success and completion in gateway courses, ones that students take in their first terms in college and/or are prerequisite to other required classes

COMPLETION GOAL: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE GATEWAY COURSES AND THUS SHORTEN TIME TO DEGREE.

DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY OR IMPACT

Students who fail to complete work in courses that most college require in initial semesters also do not graduate. Time to degree and thereby costs of a degree increase as well.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

As part of a cohort of ten University System of Georgia institutions, GHC partnered with the John Gardner Institute's Gateways to Completion project. Academic leadership identified five gateway courses that can impede progress that have both high annual enrollments and low pass rates: BIOL 2121K (Anatomy and Physiology), ENGL 1101 (Composition I), HIST 2111 (American History I), MATH 1001 (Quantitative Skills and Reasoning), and MATH 1111 (College Algebra).

Participants in the project include a team of academic leaders serving as GHC Liaisons and headed by VPAA, a G2C overall coordinator, faculty who teach in the five courses to serve on G2C Course Teams, and a roster of representatives including faculty and staff from across the institution serving on an advisory Steering Committee. In the first year of this effort, which began in February 2016, members of these groups met frequently, gathering and reviewing data about the five courses and overall systems for student and faculty support at the college. Based on this foundation each course team has now identified approaches and techniques that will be piloted in Fall 2017, the beginning of Year 2 of the G2C effort.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

One measure is increased student success both in the five gateway courses and in the associated follow-on courses (BIOL 2122K, ENGL 1102, any subsequent HIST course, MATH 2200 [Statistics], and MATH 1113 [Pre-Calculus]). Course ABC rates will be used to assess the overall goal of improvement. Specific targets have not yet been set.

As a second measure, GHC seeks participation from across the college, eventually involving all departments a majority of faculty members, and students. Third, data gathering and analysis procedures will be formed to provide strong reporting and formats that are easy to understand. Fourth and ultimately, these changes should lead to improvements in retention or persistence among students who take the gateway classes and in increased attainment of credentials.

Student success. Piloting begins in Fall 2017. A four-year view of DFWI rates in the selected courses and the follow-on courses appears in the data appendix. An example of interventions that have already been piloted and corresponding outcomes is also provided (BIOL 2121K).

Involvement. So far, 60% of departments at the college have been involved in the G2C project and 19% of faculty members.

Retention. Baseline one-year institutional retention figures for first-time students (full time and part-time separately) appear in the data appendix. Baseline retention figures for students enrolled in the target classes are in progress.

Degree completion. Baseline three-year and six-year institutional graduation rates for first-time students (full time and part time separately) appear in the data appendix.

LESSONS LEARNED

The initial work has been to identify the appropriate courses, support the faculty who are involved in the pilot efforts, and maintain the focus of all the people involved. Many are also involved in other efforts to improve student success and services. Maintaining the GHC G2C effort with all that is happening is a challenge. Laying an appropriate foundation for G2C and how it fits with other efforts will be a key to future success. In addition, data must be readily available and understandable to all.

PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT

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OBSERVATIONS

AAMI

- 2015-2016 one-year retention rates for AAMs who participated in AAMI are notable. This signals the continued need to broaden participation and further resource the program.
- 2013-2016 graduation rate among participants is remarkable on its own and compares favorably with the State College average.
- Degrees conferred continue to increase; after an all-time time in 2016, AAMI members graduated at nearly 30% higher rate than among the GHC general population.
- GHC's AAMI program is one of only four included in the MDRC study grant, clearly a stellar opportunity to analyze, scale, and learn more that converts to student success.

SUCCESS COACHING

- Our experience tells us that efforts in this regard require more research and greater targeting, broad-based volunteerism among faculty and staff notwithstanding.
- Despite good intentions, the connection was unclear for students, with both assigned and opt-in mechanisms falling short of our desired outcomes.
- With our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) focused on progressive and assigned academic advising, we intend to incorporate best practices to realize our goals in both academic and career advisement.

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN (QEP)

- GHC has conducted a widespread, thoughtful process to choose academic advising for focused student learning improvement; student learning outcomes are intentional, goal-oriented, and data-driven.
- A solid plan for digital implementation accompanies this plan, with multiple authentic assessment mechanisms embedded.
- Our QEP advising model is designed to launch with all new students beginning in summer 2018 and will scale to all GHC students through the course of implementation.

LEARNING SUPPORT – CO-REQUISITE REMEDIATION AND MATH PATHWAYS

- While improvement in timely completion of gateway course is in good evidence, success rates in follow-on classes and one-year retention of LS students are not as promising. Certain 2017 findings are still out, though.
- Concerns regarding LS through co-requisite and on to credit attainment continue.
- We plan a digital courseware implementation pilot through a Gates Foundation Digital Fellowship of which GHC is a part, and it will be aimed at learning support mathematics.

GATEWAYS TO COMPLETION (G2C)

- Our institutional awareness of high enrollment/high grades of DFW is heightened, and the connection between gateway success and retention, progression, and graduation is clearer.
- We are tackling gateway course trends in four of five divisions at GHC, with thousands of students affected in targeted sections of English, math, history, and biology.
- Pilots of best practices officially launch in Fall 2017, but prior, smaller trials are promising; three of the five targeted courses already show positive movement toward higher pass rates.