



Georgia Southern University

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Georgia Southern University is a public, Carnegie Doctoral/Research university devoted to academic distinction in teaching, scholarship, and service. It is the largest and most comprehensive research institution in southeast Georgia. The University's hallmark is a culture of engagement that bridges theory with practice, extends the learning environment beyond the classroom, and promotes student growth and life success. Georgia Southern's nationally accredited academic programs in the liberal arts, sciences, and professional studies prepare a diverse and select undergraduate and graduate student population for leadership and service as world citizens. The University offers a student-centered environment enhanced by technology, transcultural experiences, private and public partnerships, and stewardship of a safe residential campus recognized for its natural beauty. Georgia Southern University is committed to advancing the State of Georgia and the southeastern region through the benefits of higher education, offering over 120 baccalaureate through doctoral degrees and a variety of outreach programs. The University fosters access to its educational programs, provides a comprehensive and fulfilling university experience, and enhances quality of life in the region through collaborative relationships supporting education, health care and human services, cultural experiences, scientific and technological advancement, athletics, and regional economic development.

As a residential campus, Georgia Southern's enrollment trends are strongly influenced by the characteristics of a traditional age, residential student population. As of the Fall 2013, Georgia Southern's total enrollment stood at 20,517, with students from 47 states and over 89 countries. Demographic characteristics of the undergraduate population have varied little over the past five years. Fall 2013 undergraduate student enrollment was 17,904 students, representing 87% of the total enrollment. Of this population, 88% were full time students (12% part time). The average age of the undergraduate student was 21. Fifty percent of the undergraduates were female and 35% were from minority backgrounds. Only 5.8% (n = 1031) of the undergraduate population were new transfers to the institution, 75% of whom transferred from University System of Georgia institutions. Ninety-four percent of beginning freshmen lived on campus. First time Freshmen retention rates rose from 77% to 80% in FY2014. First time Freshmen six year graduation rates rose to 50.5%. A total of 2912 undergraduate degrees were awarded in 2014, an increase of 124 degrees from 2013. Successful course completion pass rates also increased in 2014 to 89.7% (up from 87.2%) for all courses attempted. Attempted courses with failing grades dropped to 5.8% (from 6.2%) and withdrawals from courses dropped to 6.3% (down from 6.6%) for all attempted courses.

Thirty nine percent of undergraduates (n = 6,932) were Pell grant eligible in Fall 2013 which was typical for the past three years. The percentage of Pell eligible students was generally the same within each classification of student. Overall, females were most likely to be Pell eligible. Only 27.7% (n = 4,141) of undergraduate students were first generation in Fall 2013, typical for the past three years. Of that total, 55.1% were female. Lastly, a mere 4.9% (n = 869) of undergraduate students were adult learners, the majority (56%) female.

Graduate student enrollment for Fall 2013 was 2,613 (up from 2,581 in Fall 2012), representing 13% of the total enrollment. Of these, 39% were full time students (61% part time), 65% were female with an average age of 32. A total of 935 graduate degrees and post-master's certificates were awarded in 2014, an increase of 48 degrees from the previous

year. Course completion rates remained essentially unchanged over the past year with an 88% success rate.

This past year, attending to our mission to meet the educational and economic development needs of our region, we have focused our completion efforts in the areas geared towards the unique needs of our traditional residential (and young) majority student population. We have expanded intensive advising and early intervention efforts for undergraduate students. We increased supplemental instruction delivery and support resources available to assist students at risk academically, being more aggressive in reaching out to these students earlier and with more intensity. We have increased strategies to shorten the time to degree by intensifying efforts to increase the number of credits students take per semester and to encourage summer enrollments. We have continued outreach to non-traditional student populations, particularly those students who have some credits towards their degree and those whose academic needs are changing due to economic or educational requirement demands. In particular, we increased opportunities for undergraduate online degree courses and programs and initiated or expanded programs to meet the needs of special populations such as active military and veteran populations, Pre-K to 12 educators, and Eagle Incentive Program students (i.e., students seeking admission who present below the entry requirements).

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Georgia Southern University continues with its focus on the following top priority completion goals and selected high impact strategies (Five of the numerous strategies employed were selected for this update narrative.):

Increase the number of undergraduate degrees awarded

- Aggressively recruited new and transfer students (including joint/dual degree students Eagle Incentive Program Students, military/military supported students, Hispanic students, part time students, and Bachelor of General studies students) to increase

student enrollment by 2%

Provide intrusive advising to keep students on track to graduate

- Expanded the Early Alert System to include mandatory reports on all Freshmen students in order to identify students at academic risk earlier in each semester and increased the number of identified students seen by Interventionist Advisors

Shorten time to degree completion

- Increased advising efforts to encourage students to take credit hour averages of 15 semester credit hours/semester and to enroll in Summer semester courses leading to earlier completion of degrees

Restructure instructional delivery and resources to support educational excellence and student success

- Increased availability of online course spaces in the Bachelor of General Studies program and actively recruited former students with some credits towards their degree
- Refocused efforts to provide the services that have been high priority requests from surveyed military students (i.e., support with financial aid and military benefits, admission and enrollment assistance, tutoring or other special service needs including assistance in securing mental and physical care.)

Our ongoing longitudinal analytics indicate that these strategies address the most pervasive issues facing Georgia Southern University students attempting to complete their college education. As a residential campus, Georgia Southern’s enrollment trends are strongly influenced by the characteristics of a traditional age student population. Hence, our strategic initiatives for increasing completion have been heavily focused on “on-campus” direct engagement with full time students, particularly those at-risk for progression towards graduation. We have had moderate success in increasing retention of at-risk students through our implementation of strategies aimed at the early identification and subsequent intrusive advising of these students. We have also had moderate success making aggressive semester to semester contact with students not registered, but eligible to register.

We continue to be challenged in our outreach efforts to special populations. Although we are seeing some increase in non-traditional student and adult population enrollment through our implementation of online program offerings, we continue to be viewed as a campus for traditional aged students. We are working on renewed undergraduate recruitment branding processes and strategies which we hope will increase our admission of non-traditional students. We have increased admission and retention resources for special populations, in particular Hispanic students, military and military supported students, part-time students, and adult learners with some college credit.

SUMMARY OF GOALS, HIGH IMPACT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Goal	Increase the number of undergraduate degrees awarded
High-Impact Strategy	Aggressively recruited and retained new and transfer students, including joint/dual degree students, Eagle Incentive Program (EIP) students, military and military supported students, Hispanic students, part time students, adult learners, and Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) students to increase enrollment by 2%
Summary of Activities	The Enrollment Management Council engaged in strategic planning for recruitment activities targeted at specific potential student populations (joint/ dual degree, EIP, military, Hispanic, part time, BGS, adult learner). Targets and goals were set at a 2% increase. Strategies included the development of programs, dedicated admissions personnel, and funding sources for each student category. Additionally, increased focus was placed on retention of undergraduate and graduate students and growth of graduate program students. A new undergraduate recruitment branding process was initiated. A strategic funding schedule for increasing the number of scholarships available for high ability and high need students was instituted.
Interim Measures of Progress	Degrees awarded increased in all categories except for doctoral degrees for the 2014 academic year. Overall there was an increase of 172 degrees conferred. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,912 Baccalaureate Degrees were awarded in 2014, an increase of 124 degrees • 762 Masters Degrees were awarded in 2014, an increase of 30 degrees • 110 post masters certificates/EDS were awarded in 2014, an increase of 33 degrees • 63 doctoral degrees were awarded in 2014, a decrease of 15 degrees Student enrollment in Fall 2013 registered a decrease of 121 students (-0.59%); Spring 2014 registered an increase of 226 students (+1.20%); Summer 2014 registered an increase of 150 students (+1.51%). Total increase for the 2013-2014 academic year was under the 2% goal set. Contributing factors were identified: 1) We continue to experience the unintended consequences of the implementation of our revised progression policy. (i.e., Students were allowed a “grace” year prior to being put on exclusion for extended GPA’s under 2.0 were excluded at a higher rate than normal – that trajectory is continuing to move its way through the classifications of students.); 2) A decrease in students graduating in the state of Georgia, coupled with decreasing state SAT scores, diminished the pool of available and qualified students; 3) Transfer student numbers were down slightly related to

the mergers of several of our traditional transfer institutions; 4) Graduate school programs across most Colleges did not reach enrollment goals.

Retention of Georgia Southern students was up by over 2% (to 80.5%). However, the goal to increase the Sophomore to Junior retention rate to 69% (as recommended by the Complete College Georgia Action Team) was not achieved. The current sophomore retention rate was 61.0%. An analysis indicates that this retention rate may reflect students who transfer to other institutions and students retained at the Freshman standing status related to their accruing fewer course hours. However, the persistence rate for students in selected majors, already taking courses in the major ranged from 84-93%, indicating that once a student engages in their major area of study, their persistence rates improve significantly. Strategies to encourage students to progress to the point of enrollment in a major and in major area courses will need to be a continued focus for advising efforts. It was also noted that 771 students transferred (successfully) to other institutions to continue their studies, thus skewing the actual Sophomore to Junior retention rate.

The recruitment of special populations yielded initial data which was encouraging. Military associated students grew to over 730 students, primarily undergraduates. Overall Hispanic recruitment also grew by 4.1% (n = 833). The number of first time undergraduate Hispanic students has grown to 758 (up from 558 in 2009) with a retention rate of 79.5%, just 1% under the total University retention rate. The four year graduation rate for first time Hispanic Freshmen entering in AY2009 (33.6%) was higher than that of AY 2009 first time non-Hispanic Freshmen (24.5%). Graduation grade point averages were slightly lower for Hispanic 4th year graduates at 3.25 versus 3.31 for non-Hispanic graduates of that same class. Part time students grew largely in the Bachelor of General Studies Program which increased overall enrollment by 77 students (n = 432). Eagle Incentive Program students grew by 70 students (n= 548). Ninety four percent of these students (n = 515) achieved admission eligibility and returned in Fall 2014. Students joint enrolled through our ACCEL program has grown 37% (n = 145) since 2008, with a 43% increase in new joint enrolled students (n = 141) this year and a 71% retention rate after the first semester for this population. The undergraduate adult learner population (i.e., those 25 years of age or older) remained unchanged at 4.9% (n = 869). Scholarship awards in 2014 totaled \$1,636,277 compared with a 2013 total of \$1,531,547. An analysis of financial supports available for high ability and need based students indicates a continued need for increasing the financial awards. As of 2012-2013, all Colleges have a major gift advancement officer, and there has been an overall 1 percent increase in the amount of scholarship dollars available for distribution, under the 5% goal.

Measures of Success

The University's Office of Strategic Research and Analysis at Georgia Southern University provides the metrics and analysis of all outcome assessment data. Metrics used for the analysis of this strategy included:

- Undergraduate and Graduate Level Headcounts, Credit Hours, and Full-Time Equivalency by College, Department, Degree, Major, and Delivery Mode – AY 2000 to 2013 (This includes the history of students completing degrees in STEM fields.)
- Retention Rates, Graduation Rates, and Demographics of 1905 Scholars, Honors Scholars and Non-Honors Students – AY 1998 to 2013
- Peer and Aspirational Institutions, Comparative Analysis of Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Data – AY 1999 to 2013
- Annual Report Data for Each College/Department: Fall Semester Enrollment, First Year Retention Rates, Six Year Graduation Rates, Degrees Awarded, Course Completion Rates – AY 2013-2014 (This includes annual data for STEM fields.)
- Graduate Level Program Completion Rates – AY 2007 to 2013
- Transfers of Students To and From Georgia Southern – AY 2006-2013
- Cohorts of First-Time Degree-Seeking Transfers to Georgia Southern University: Retention and Graduation Rates – Fall 2006-2013
- Eagle Incentive Program, Non-Eagle Incentive Program, and Integrated Post-Secondary Data System (IPEDS) First Time Freshmen: Retention, Graduation, Demographic and Academic Comparisons – 2004-2013
- Bachelor of General Studies Students: Enrollment, Retention/Progression, and Graduation Rates – AY 2011 to 2014
- Sophomore Persistence Rates by Selected Major Groups and Exit/Transfer Information – AY 2004 to 2013
- University Advancement Office Annual Reports of Awards and Scholarships – AY 2012 to 2013

Goal	Provide intrusive advising to keep students on track to graduate
High-Impact Strategy	Expanded the Early Alert System to include mandatory reports on all Freshmen students in order

Summary of Activities

to identify students at academic risk earlier in each semester and increased the number of identified students seen by Interventionist Advisors

This year, significant progress was made on this goal as a result of the following activities that were engaged in to keep students on track for graduation:

- Increased the number of Advisors in each College Academic Advising Center (27 new advisor hires) and placed a specialized Interventionist Advisor in each Advising Center
- Introduced intrusive advising interventions that promoted retention, increased graduation rates, and encouraged enrollments, particularly for at risk students
- Introduced a mandatory Early Alert system for all Freshmen students and adjusted the timing for reporting students at risk to intrusive advisors to 3 weeks into the semester and added increased specificity in identifying the issues causing concern
- Monitored courses with high DFW rates and employed strategies to reduce those rates by creating supplemental instruction courses for core STEM courses experiencing particularly high rates
- Continued studying the impact and unintended consequences of the newly instituted University progression policy; Asked for reconsideration of the policy by the faculty Academic Standards Committee
- Continued aggressive attention to student registration for Fall, Spring, and Summer sessions including multiple direct contacts with all eligible students not registered
- Encouraged students to take 15 credits/per semester in order to progress to graduation in 4 years

Instituted mandatory referrals to the Academic Success Center for students identified as at risk through the Early Alert system. The resources directed to these students included: Tutoring (in person/online—individual, group); Testing preparation; Learning support for placement in supplemental courses and COMPASS testing; Supplementary courses in math (4), English (1), Reading (1); Methods of learning course; One-on-one consultation in any area needed; Study skills sessions; University Writing Center referrals with workshops on effective writing, computer labs for writing assignment preparation, online resources, and ½ to one hours consultation sessions on writing

Interim Measures of Progress

Academic Interventionist Advisors met with all students who were not in Good Standing in Fall 2013 and Spring 2014. In Fall 2013, 19.4% of students who were not in good standing and met with the Interventionist Advisor in their College Advising Center returned to Good Standing. In Spring 2014, 25.7% of students who met with their College Advising Center Interventionist Advisor returned to Good Standing. The number of students who returned to a 2.0 cumulative grade point average after working with their Interventionist Advisor was as follows: Fall 2013—46.1%; Spring 2014—50.9%.

Supplemental instruction courses were newly created for core STEM courses that experience particularly high levels of D, F, W grades. DFW rates in math courses dropped from 38% to 23.3% this year. Additionally, the increase in intrusive advising—including referring students to mandatory sessions in the Academic Success Center—resulted in over a 2% increase (from 77.4% to 80%) in first year freshman retention rates in 2013-2014.

Across the entire University, the DFW rate improved between AY 2013 and AY 2014 as follows:

- AY 2013—12.8% (6.2% obtained D's or failed; 6.6% withdrew); 87.2% of courses were successfully completed
- AY 2014—11.7% (5.65% obtained D's or failed; 6.05% withdrew); 88.3% of courses were successfully completed

Further, successful completion of courses rose by 1% in courses taken in 2013-2014.

An analysis of students placed on academic warning, probation, or exclusion demonstrated the full implementation of the revised progression policy implemented in Fall 2012 has begun to stabilize. In most semesters, the numbers of undergraduate students being placed on academic warning/withdrawal standing status has decreased by 0.97%. Those students being placed on Exclusion 2 (dismissal from the University for 5 years) has dropped in the past year by approximately 4%. Students returning to the University following an academic status withdrawal increased by 10% this past year.

Measures of Success

- Annual Report Data for Each College/Department: Fall Semester Enrollment, First Year Retention Rates, Six Year Graduation Rates, Degrees Awarded, Course Completion Rates—AY 2011 to 2014
- Grade Distribution Summaries Per College, Department, Program, Student Status, Course—AY 2013 to 2014 (Conducted every semester—with 5 year comparisons)
- DFW Course Reports—AY 2011 to 2013

- Graduate Level Program Completion Rates – AY 2007 to 2013
- Sophomore Persistence Rates by Selected Major Groups and Exit/Transfer Information – AY 2004 to 2013

GOAL

SHORTEN TIME TO DEGREE COMPLETION

High-Impact Strategy

Increased advising efforts to encourage students to take credit hour averages of 15 semester credit hours/semester and to enroll in Summer semester courses leading to earlier completion of degrees

Summary of Activities

The following activities were implemented (or already in place) to encourage students to increase their credit load per semester:

- Used Degree Works to track student progress, advise them of their time to completion, show the consequences of changing their major or delaying graduation, show their likelihood of gaining enrollment in certain programs (e.g., Nursing, Engineering, Business)
- Provided one-on-one counseling, both at registration times and at the SOAR new student orientation/registration sessions, to students and parents regarding the cost of taking fewer than 15 credits per semester,
- Instituted an aggressive summer registration marketing and enrollment plan which included: 1) advisors contacting students directly and through injection pages on the University website which presented mandatory surveys of students’ plans for the summer; 2) advertising in multi-media forms; 3) mailed letters to students at their home residences; 4) increased the number of online courses and available seats in campus courses

Interim Measures of Progress

Student credit hour averages for the year were as follows:

- • Fall 2013 = 12.42 (up from 12.35 in 2012-2013)
- • Spring 2014 = 12.28 (stable with 12.28 in 2012-2013)
- • Summer 2014 = 6.73 (down from 6.83 in 2012-2013)

Despite aggressive advising for students to take a fuller course load, we continue to have difficulties in getting students to enroll for 13-15 credits hours per semester. Contributing factors appear to be: 1) Parents/peers advising students to take fewer credits in order to retain the Hope Scholarship and/or “enjoy” their college experience; 2) Fiscal issues related to the gap between 12 and 15 credits which results in additional tuition charges.

Summer enrollments were up for 2014 by 1.51% (n = +150). The most notable increases were in online courses with an additional 98 students registered (up 9.43%). Despite this increase, student credit hour production remained unchanged. However, it is predicted that this increase in credit hour production will soon result in an increase in degree completion.

Measures of Success

The following metrics were used to measure success for this strategy:

- Daily Dashboard Enrollment Reports (providing year to year comparisons)
- Undergraduate and Graduate Level Headcounts, Credit Hours, and Full-Time Equivalency by College, Department, Degree, Major, and Delivery Mode – AY 2000 to 2013 (This includes the history of students completing degrees in STEM fields.)

GOAL

RESTRUCTURE INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND STUDENT SUCCESS

High-Impact Strategy

Increased availability of online course spaces in the Bachelor of General Studies program and actively recruited former students with some credits towards their degree

Summary of Activities

The activities supporting the increase in the availability of the Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) program included:

- Expanded recruitment of BGS students through the BGS Online Support Office
- Expanded the number of available sections/seats in BGS core and emphasis courses
- Began an analysis of other emphasis areas sought by potential online BGS students and investigated programs of study for emphasis area program development

Interim Measures of Progress

The online Bachelor of General Studies Program (Initiated in 2011-2012) was designed to attract non-traditional students who have prior college credits. Many are part time students.

- BGS – 2012-2013 admitted new 213 students, total enrollment 355
- BGS – 2013-2014 admitted new 229 students, total enrollment 432

Course completion rates have improved since the inception of the online BGS program. Fall 2013 BGS students attempted 1358 courses (compared to 1065 courses in Fall 2012), a 22% increase. The successful completion rate for Fall 2013 courses was 83.14% (compared with 80.19% in Fall 2012). This marks a three year completion rate increase from 78.82% in Fall 2011 (the onset of the program) to the

present Fall 2013 rate of 83.14%.

The online first year retention rates for online BGS students showed improvement, but remained lower than the University's overall retention rates at 62.6% in Fall 2013 (54% in Fall 2012). The graduation rates for this population are also lower than the University's overall graduation rate at 37.9%.

- Measures of Success**
- Bachelor of General Studies Students: Enrollment, Retention/Progression, and Graduation Rates – AY 2011 to 2014
 - Undergraduate and Graduate Level Headcounts, Credit Hours, and Full-Time Equivalency by College, Department, Degree, Major, and Delivery Mode – AY 2000 to 2013
 - Annual Report Data for Each College/Department: Fall Semester Enrollment, First Year Retention Rates, Six Year Graduation Rates, Degrees Awarded, Course Completion Rates – AY 2011 to 2014

GOAL	RESTRUCTURE INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND STUDENT SUCCESS
High-Impact Strategy	<p>Refocused efforts to provide services that have been high priority requests from surveyed military and military supported students including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support with securing financial aid and military benefits • Admission and enrollment assistance • Tutoring or other special service needs including assistance in securing mental and physical health care
Summary of Activities	<p>This academic year, our Military Affairs Center was relocated to the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, with newly recruited leadership (Assistant to the Dean for Military Affairs) placed under the Dean of Students. The Center has been refocused to provide the services that have been high priority requests from surveyed military students Recruitment activities continued with direct contacts at local area/regional military bases.</p>
Interim Measures of Progress	<p>This year, we actively tracked the number of military or military supported students enrolled at Georgia Southern. In 2014, 737 military related students were enrolled as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active military – 32 • Reservists – 139 • Veterans – 203 • Dependents receiving military or veterans education benefits – 316
Measures of Success	<p>The Registrar's Data Report of enrolled military/military benefited students represented the first data record obtained exclusively for this population. Next year, the data analysis will include an analysis of the following additional data for this population:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of courses successfully completed • Number of credits attempted from alternative delivery methods • Retention rates, graduation rates, and number of degrees conferred
<p>Georgia Southern University is interested in implementing additional high impact strategies including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering incentivized tuition rates for students graduating in 4 years • Increasing the faculty's use of "free" electronic textbooks and supplemental learning resources • Increasing Sophomore retention efforts through expanding the Early Alert System to this population and increasing aggressive interventionist advising of students at this level • Initiating a peer mentor system, linking upper classmen mentors with Freshman students identified by demographics and Noel Levitz/NSSE surveying as potentially at risk. • Increasing aggressive outreach to students who have not registered but are eligible to register, including students who have been out of school related to academic exclusion/financial reasons and special population students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding online program offerings (and space in online programs) for non-traditional adult learners; Developing on-line TKES and ACE related modules to address changing performance evaluation requirements for Pre-K to 12 educators • Expanding restructured educational systems to include more innovative approaches to deliver support services and supplement instruction, particularly for students at risk for progression • Increasing faculty development opportunities in the areas of online course development and online teaching pedagogy, quality improvement assessment of online courses, innovative uses of new teaching strategies and resources • Expanding transfer and reverse transfer MOUs with TCSG Institutions and USG State Colleges

OBSERVATIONS

Georgia Southern University has experienced the most success with strategies that support and intervene with students identified as at-risk for completion. The expansion of intensive advising and early intervention efforts for undergraduate students and the increase in supplemental instruction delivery and support resources have demonstrated proven gains in retention and graduation rates.

While we have increased strategies to shorten the time to degree by intensifying efforts to increase the number of credits students take per semester, this continues to be a challenging area. We hope to implement new strategies related to offering incentivized tuition rates for students graduating in 4 years. We continue with aggressive efforts to shorten time to degree by encouraging summer enrollment as a recommended part of program course planning.

We have had minimal success in continued outreach to non-traditional student populations, particularly those

students who have some credits towards their degree and those whose academic needs are changing due to economic or educational requirement demands. We have had some success in increasing opportunities for undergraduate online degree courses and programs, particularly our Bachelor of General Studies program. However, we have experienced decreases in out of state online student enrollments in some programs, particularly at the graduate level. These decreases are directly related to difficulties in securing state authorizations to offer courses in a number of high cost/high requirement states. We continue to pursue authorizations and hope to increase access to more online out of state students next year. We are expanding programs to meet the needs of special populations such as active military and veteran populations, Pre-K -12 educators, adult learners, and Eagle Incentive Program students (i.e., students seeking admission below the entry requirements).