



# Kennesaw State University

\*Includes update data from Southern Polytechnic State University

## INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

On November 1, 2013, USG Chancellor Hank Huckaby announced that Kennesaw State University (KSU) and Southern Polytechnic State University (SPSU) would be consolidating. The Board of Regents subsequently approved the consolidation November 12, 2013. As part of the continuing process of consolidating both institutions, the new institution – Kennesaw State University – developed a new mission statement that was approved by the Board of Regents on Tuesday, April 15, 2014. The new mission became effective on April 16, 2014.

The new mission statement reinforces the consolidated university's commitment to research, scholarship, and public service (see Appendix A for a copy of the new mission statement). It also emphasizes KSU's values, stating:

"The KSU community values open, honest, and thoughtful intellectual inquiry, innovative and creative problem solving, professionalism, expertise, collaboration, integrity and ethical behavior, engaged citizenship, global understanding, sustainability, mutual respect, and appreciation of human and cultural diversity. The University community strives continually to enhance student success, improve institutional quality and respond to public demand for higher education."

It is the three (3) key areas of continuous improvement (underscored in the above paragraph) in the consolidated institution's new mission that influences the priorities of KSU's Complete College Georgia (CCG) Plan. Although both institutions are still in the process of consolidating, we have been given permission to prepare a single CCG update report comprised of information from both the current KSU and the current SPSU. KSU's and SPSU's existing student body profiles continue to reflect strong, diverse student populations (see Appendices B & C for information on the existing KSU and SPSU Student Body Profiles).

KSU's commitment to enhance student success as part of the institution's mission and completion work can be observed in the retention rates of first-time freshmen and transfer-in students. The first-year retention rate of undergraduate first-time degree-seeking students with no prior post-secondary experience has been increasing incrementally over the last five years. Currently, the rate for students entering in fall 2012 is 76% for full-time students and 56% for part-time students. Retention rates for undergraduate non-first-time degree-seeking students with prior post-secondary experience (i.e., transfer-in students) for the same time period is 76% for full-time students and 60% for part-time students. SPSU's retention rates are very similar with 75% of the full-time undergraduate fall 2012 cohort of first-time students being retained, and 66% for part-time students.

Graduation rates are also following an upward trajectory with even larger increases as compared to the retention rates. The three, four, and six-year rates have increased significantly in the last five years at KSU. For the full-time, first-time degree-seeking students entering between fall 2004 and fall 2009, the four-year graduation rate has increased from 10% to 16%. The six-year graduation rate increased from 35% for students entering in fall 2002 to 43% for students matriculating in fall 2006, an 8 percentage point increase. The 6-year graduation rate for full-time, first-time degree-seeking students at SPSU is only slightly behind that of KSU at approximately 39%. For the full-time, transfer-in, degree-seeking students entering between fall 2005 and fall 2010, 31% of KSU students, on average, graduated in three years. The

four-year graduation rate for transfer-in students increased from 42% for students matriculating in fall Semester 2004 to 47% for students entering in fall Semester 2009.

Comparison data was not available from SPSU for transfer-in students. Upon completion of the consolidation process, KSU's robust data collection, data management, and analytical processes will be applied to all populations of students including those, who because of program affiliation, may reside on the former SPSU campus.

As part of the consolidated institution's new mission to enhance student success and respond to the public demand for higher education, KSU's CCG Plan strategies have continued to include programs to provide tutoring, mentoring, and graduation coaching to underserved student populations. These services will be expanded to populations of students on both campuses. The characteristics which define these specific populations include, but are not limited to:

- **Adult Learners** – Traditionally a strong undergraduate student population for KSU, this underserved group has experienced a decline of 8% from fiscal year 2011 to 2014 (Appendix D). A number of the high impact strategies and activities that are part of KSU's completion plan (e.g. prior learning assessment; tutoring, etc.) while serving all students, should have a significant effect on improving both access and success for KSU's adult learners in the consolidated institution.
- **Gender** - The female student population at KSU is nearly 60% (Appendix B). However the female population at SPSU is only 21% (Appendix C). During the consolidation with SPSU, KSU's completion strategies will take into account a student body with closer to even parity between males and females (50/50).
- **First Generation** – KSU first started tracking this student population in fiscal year 2012 at the point of undergraduate admission. Since that time, KSU has experienced a 79% increase in the number of self-declared, unduplicated undergraduate first generation students through the end of fiscal year 2014 (Appendix

D). Data on first generation students at SPSU were not available at the time this report was written. However, post-consolidation, a unified application process, along with the robust tracking system used at KSU will permit tracking of this information and analysis of strategy-mediated impact for the integrated, post-consolidation institution.

- **Hispanic/Latinos and Minorities** - Between fiscal year 2011 and 2014, KSU experienced a 28% increase in the number of unduplicated undergraduate Hispanic/Latino students attending the institution (Appendix D). In fall 2013, KSU's Hispanic/Latino's student population reached its highest level at 7% and nearly 32% of the overall student body were minorities (Appendix B). At SPSU the Hispanic/Latino student population is approximately 8% and nearly 44% of the overall student body were minorities (Appendix C).
- **Part-time students** - The percentage of students attending school on a part-time basis is essentially the same at both KSU (27%; Appendix B) and SPSU (28%; Appendix C). Advising and graduation coaching completion strategies at the consolidated institution are designed to improve the retention and graduation rates for this student group, to include first-time and non-first-time (transfer-in) degree seeking undergraduates.

#### Institutional Completion Goals and Strategies

Of the 8 stated CCG Goals, KSU is pursuing 7 of them. Only the awarding of associate degrees (CCG Goal 5) is not part of the portfolio of goals for KSU in its current configuration or for the post-consolidation institution. In abbreviated form these 7 goals are:

- CCG-1) increase the number of degrees awarded
- CCG-2) increase the number of degrees earned "on time"
- CCG-3) decrease excess credits
- CCG-4) provide intrusive advising
- CCG-6) shorten the time to degree completion through both PLA and dual enrollment
- CCG-7) transform remediation
- CCG-8) restructure instructional delivery

These goals fall into the umbrella of the three institutional goals (IGs) stated in KSU's original campus plan:

- IG-1) Increase the college readiness of students enrolling at KSU through external partnerships with TCSG institutions and K-12 schools. (CCG Goals 1, 2, 6 & 8)
- IG-2) Enhance academic and non-academic support services for targeted subgroups of students (CCG Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 & 7)
- IG-3) Promote excellence and innovation in education to aid student progression to graduation (CCG Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 & 8).

However, of primary importance at KSU are CCG goals 1, 2 & 3. These three goals are interrelated and can be combined into a single sentence: "The primary goal for KSU is to increase the number of degrees awarded and ensure that more of those degrees are earned 'on-time' and within the credit hours allotted to the programs from which the degrees are earned."

From an implementation perspective, at KSU CCG goals 4 (intrusive advising) & 6 (PLA/dual enrollment) are best

considered as strategies for achieving CCG goals 1, 2 & 3 rather than as independent goals. Goal 7, transforming remediation, is important in fostering the success of those students who enter the institution in need of remedial work. However, the number of such students at KSU is relatively low (less than 5% of the student intake each year). Therefore, any increases in the success of these students, while substantively important to those students, will not significantly affect the overall rate of degree completion. Finally, at this point in time it is unclear to what extent restructuring instructional delivery (CCG Goal 8) will affect degree completion. It is assumed, for example, that online courses, in addition to making a college education available to students who might not otherwise be able to attend college, would also allow students who might have stopped out to continue their education without interruption and thereby increase the number of degrees awarded in a more timely manner. However, it is too early to clearly measure such an effect. Other strategies, such as flipped classrooms and emporium style content delivery, while apparently successful where they have been employed, have not been used extensively enough at either KSU or SPSU to be able to determine their effectiveness at increasing student success with a consequent effect on degree completion.

With the foregoing paragraphs in mind, KSU has employed a number of strategies to meet the combined goal (i.e. the combination of CCG goals 1, 2 & 3) as stated above. The following paragraphs highlight five strategies that are projected to have the greatest impact when fully implemented. For each of the strategies listed information is provided as to which of the CCG goals they are associated with, and the challenges associated with implementing that strategy and thereby achieving the goal. It should be noted that all five strategies are projected to have profound effects on the number of degrees awarded and the time-to-completion. Three of the strategies (B - Graduation Coaches; C - implementation of the Student Success Collaborative platform; and D - implementation of Ad Astra Platinum Analytics) should also substantively reduce the accumulation of excess credits. Two of the strategies (A - Supplemental Instruction and E - On line Course Delivery) are expected to have much less effect on the accumulation of excess credits.

#### Strategy A: Supplemental Instruction

Supplemental Instruction (SI) provides structured, student-facilitated help sessions for students enrolled in participating courses. Course participation is faculty-driven. A student who has been previously successful in that course with that instructor is employed as a student facilitator. They conduct help sessions in which they work with students who attend the sessions on learning the material and also on strategies for learning the material based on both course content and instructor delivery style. Courses with high D,F,W,I rates (> 30%) are targeted for SI. Student participation is voluntary. The primary function of SI is to significantly reduce the D,F,W,I rate, thereby fostering improved grade performance as well as retention and progression of participating students. A major challenge associated with this strategy is overcoming the stigma students feel when they feel compelled to ask for help. Other challenges include convincing faculty of the

benefits of participating, identifying an appropriate student to serve as an SI facilitator, and having the financial resources to increase the number of courses/sections participating in the SI program. The voluntary nature of student participation helps alleviate some of the potential stigma. Faculty have been encouraged to participate by seeing the success enjoyed by their colleagues who are participating in the program. At SPSU, SI is not currently employed as an academic success strategy for students in high-risk courses. Increased funding should become available through redirection of savings associated with consolidation. This will allow expansion of the number of sections of high-risk courses that could be served by SI including courses taught on the Marietta campus of the post-consolidation institution.

**This strategy supports CCG Goals 1, 2 & 8**

### **Strategy B: Graduation Coaches**

Academic coaching is a term that has been used to describe a relationship that goes beyond traditional, academic advising. Coaches provide motivational encouragement, workshops and/or individual meetings to help students develop better study skills, time-management, budgeting habits, etc. They also help identify financial aid possibilities and work with the financial aid office to help students navigate the often difficult, and constantly changing, landscape of the financial aid process. Coaches also help students identify appropriate offices and resources both on-campus and off-campus in order to resolve issues they may have, thereby alleviating the frustration that students often feel when they are shuffled from office to office to office and no one can, or is willing to, find a resolution for their situation. At KSU we have chosen the term "Graduation Coach" for those individuals performing an academic coaching function (although there are some individuals who perform this function who have different titles (e.g. program coordinators; academic success advisors, etc.). Where it is being used, the term "graduation coach" was deliberately chosen to convey to the students the concept that these individuals would work with them from the time they enter the institution until they graduate irrespective possible changes in status (e.g. change of major). By helping students succeed academically and avoid/overcome some of the non-academic barriers they face, graduation coaches can help boost retention rates (and presumably graduation rates, although none have been in place long enough to have had an impact on that particular metric). The major challenge is to be able to hire a sufficient number of grad coaches to move from "pilot" programs for select populations to broad deployment to large numbers of students. Redirected consolidation savings as well as external funding sources (i.e. grant support) have the potential to overcome this challenge. Graduation coaching has been shown to be effective in several pilot programs, targeting specific populations of students (Latino students, HOPE recipients; etc.) These same populations exist on both campuses. Therefore, expansion of the cadre of graduation coaches so that populations of students on both campuses are served is essential to achievement of the overall goals of the consolidated institution.

**This strategy supports CCG Goals 1, 2, 3 & 4. Additionally, this strategy should aid in shortening the time**  
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**to degree completion through the intrusive advising function.**

### **Strategy C: Education Advisory Board – Student Success Collaborative**

KSU partnered with the Educational Advisory Board to implement the Student Success Collaborative (SSC) software. SSC is designed to support data-driven advising efforts that enable proactive, informed interventions with at-risk and off-path students. The system mines ten years of historical data to generate actionable risk assessments for each student allowing for focused attention on issues impeding graduation. Each program will identify program-specific success marker courses that will contribute to an analysis of a student's risk for completion of that program. Program-specific intervention strategies will be developed to aid the student in mitigating that risk or in finding an alternative path to degree completion (i.e. a change of major). The biggest challenge is that the accuracy of the risk assessment is better when the student has taken more courses and especially multiple program-specific success marker courses. This could lead to an accurate risk-assessment only being available at a time when a change of major could lead to the accumulation of excess credits and delay degree-completion. On the other hand, it is better to take a little longer to complete a degree than not complete one at all. KSU is currently piloting the SSC platform in each of the degree-granting colleges. Post-consolidation, beginning Spring 2016, KSU plans to develop pilot campaigns for colleges and degree programs on the Marietta campus.

**This strategy supports CCG Goals 1, 2 ,3 & 4. Additionally, this strategy should aid in shortening the time to degree completion through the intrusive advising function.**

### **Strategy D: Ad Astra Platinum Analytics**

Surveys of students who either stopped out or were taking more than 6 years to complete a degree program indicated that one of the major barriers to timely completion was course availability. Ad Astra's Platinum Analytics facilitates data-informed academic course scheduling by leveraging data in Banner and DegreeWorks. The implementation of this software has helped academic departments better determine course demands and identify course bottlenecks which impede the degree progression of students so that departments can better schedule course and seat availability to mitigate the bottle necks and improve the progression of students toward graduation.

The on-going, re-evaluation of course sections allows academic departments to redirect faculty resources to higher-demand courses. In addition, daily data-snapshots provide an on-demand analysis of general education courses to help absorb the projected increase in fall 2014 new student enrollment. This analysis includes consideration for time conflicts and provides optimal times for additions and reductions in seats offerings. For Fall 2015, Ad Astra will be used to help academic departments determine general education course offerings on both the Kennesaw and Marietta campuses.

Future utilization of the software includes a simulated registration feature to identify course time and scheduling

conflicts and course planning/block scheduling tools for new freshmen.

Challenges to optimum utilization of the tool include availability of faculty, availability of classroom space, and the timely ability to change scheduled offerings. Some space alleviation may be realized post-consolidation.

**This strategy supports CCG Goals 1, 2, & 3; Additionally, it should also help shorten the time to degree-completion by aiding progression through increased course availability in what have been, traditionally, bottleneck courses.**

**Strategy E: Online & Hybrid Course Delivery**

Both KSU and SPSU have made substantial progress in restructuring course instruction through alternative delivery methods. Each has made substantial investment in hybrid and online instruction. For example at SPSU, in spring 2014, 72 (8.8%) of the 818 unique courses offered had at least one section offered in a hybrid format and 189 (23.1%) of the courses offered at least one section completely online. At KSU, in the same semester 190 (11.7%) of the 1,622 courses offered had at least one section taught in a hybrid format and 112 (6.9%) of the courses offered had at least one online section. At both institutions there have been substantial increases from previous years. In addition, SPSU is a participating campus in the USG eCore program and although KSU is not currently a participating campus, the recommendation has been made that the post-consolidation institution be a participating

institution.

The availability of both hybrid and online formats facilitates scheduling for students with substantive non-education related obligations (work, family, etc.) that often interfere with a student’s ability to progress in a timely manner. In addition, the online format provides educational opportunities to populations that have difficulty obtaining post-secondary education in the traditional, campus-based approach. These populations include individuals working at jobs with inflexible scheduling, individuals working at jobs where they are expected to travel extensively, military personnel who are deployed out of the U.S., shut-ins, and others. One of the significant challenges with online course delivery is ensuring both quality and accessibility for students with a variety of disabilities. The use of the Quality Matters® certification process for both course design and instructor preparedness aids KSU in meeting both of those challenges.

This strategy supports CCG Goals 1, 2 & 8; This strategy also facilitates degree attainment by populations of students prevented from completing a degree or delayed in completing a degree because of inability of those students to participate in traditional, on-campus, face-to-face education (e.g. active military personnel; students working long, inflexible schedules; student whose employment involves substantial travel, etc.).

**SUMMARY OF GOALS, HIGH IMPACT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES (ORGANIZED BY STRATEGY) – EACH STRATEGY HAS BEEN DESCRIBED IN SECTION 2.**

**Strategy A: Supplemental Instruction**

- Goals*
- 1) increase the number of degrees awarded
  - 2) increase the number of degrees earned “on time”
  - 8) restructure instructional delivery

**Summary of Activities (Progress)**

Supplemental Instruction (SI) was launched as a pilot program in spring 2006 with just 1 section in each of two courses. Currently in serves over 70 sections of nearly 20 different courses with 1,200-1,500 participating students each fall and spring. In addition to the traditional SI program, which is organized through University College, several similar programs have been implemented in specific departments. Most notably, Chemistry is using a modified version called Peer-Lead Team Learning (PLTL) in which student participation is mandatory. KSU’s math department will be implementing in fall 2014 an SI-like program specifically designed for pre-calculus and calculus courses. At SPSU, SI is not currently employed as an academic success strategy for students in high-risk courses. Increased funding should become available through redirection of savings associated with consolidation. This will allow expansion of the number of sections of high-risk courses that could be served by SI including courses taught on the Marietta campus of the post-consolidation institution.

**Interim Measures of Progress**

The traditional measure used in assessing the success of an SI program is a decrease in the D,F,W,I rate for participating students. Over the 7 years that KSU’s SI program has been in operation the D,F,W,I rate in participating courses has decreased from an average of 38% for students who attend no SI sessions to an average of 18% for those who attend one or more SI sessions. Furthermore, the data indicate that when student attendance is subdivided by number of sessions attended (1-3, 4-6, 7-9, or 10 or more) there is a small but significant increase in performance as the number of sessions attended increases.

**Measures of Success**

In light of the stated goals for the Complete College Georgia initiative a project was undertaken this past academic year to directly measure the effect of SI participation on the 1-semester and 1-year retention rates. The calculations indicate that, when compared to students who did not attend any SI sessions, those who attended even a single session had significantly higher retention rates. The

magnitude of the difference ranged from 7-10 percentage points for 1-semester retention and 6-9 percentage points for 2-semester (1-year) retention (Appendix E). Finally, although not statistically significant, the pattern suggests that the more SI sessions attended, the higher the retention rate. Although it has not been possible to calculate a direct effect on degree completion, it is assumed that higher rates of retention and higher rates of progression (by not having to repeat failed or dropped courses) should lead to higher levels of degree completion.

## Strategy B: Graduation Coaches

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### Goals

- 1) *increase the number of degrees awarded*
- 2) *increase the number of degrees earned “on time”*
- 3) *decrease excess credits*
- 4) *provide intrusive advising*

*Additionally, this strategy should aid in shortening the time to degree completion through the intrusive advising function.*

### Summary of Activities (Progress)

An analysis of the relationship between HOPE support and graduation rates (Appendix F) indicates that students who lose HOPE support after their first year of attendance have a significantly lower 6-year graduation rate (32.5%) than students who maintain HOPE support (51.1%). Given this, a pilot program (Thrive) was developed to provide academic support to students who enroll at KSU with HOPE support (H.S. GPA  $\geq$  3.0) but who did not qualify for KSU’s Honors program. Thrive consists of first-semester learning communities featuring a special version of our award-winning, nationally recognized, highly effective first-year seminar, a series of academic success workshops, co-curricular programming, social events and other features designed to connect the student with the institution. One of the key features of the program is the use of a graduation coach assigned to each of the cohorts in the pilot (the fourth cohort will enter in fall 2014). Results from this ongoing pilot are presented below and in Appendix G.

A major interest, and an associated goal for the CCG initiative is the desire to increase both the enrollment and the success of the Hispanic/Latino population. Two external grants totaling nearly \$1.7M were obtained from The Goizueta Foundation to first study the life-cycle of Latino students and then create a pilot program to increase their success. Like the Thrive program, the Recruitment, Retention and Progression to Graduation program for Hispanic/Latino students (HL/RRPG) is multifaceted with academic success workshops, financial aid guidance, co-curricular and social programming and other features designed to enhance the students’ connection to the institution. As with Thrive, a key feature is the employment of a graduation coach to provide motivational and other support throughout participating students’ university experience. Results are presented below and in Appendix H.

Over 50% of KSU’s intake of new students each year comes from transfers into the institution from other institutions. A large number of them are from KSU’s three largest feeder institutions are Georgia Perimeter College (GPC), Georgia Highlands College (GHC) and Chattahoochee Technical College (CTC), a TCSG institution. Many are from underrepresented/underserved populations and/or from economically disadvantaged populations. KSU has recently received a \$3.2 M grant from the Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) – First in the World (FITW) initiative. The key feature of the proposed program is to provide graduation coaches to serve this population. Support letters were obtained from the respective presidents of GPC, GHC & CTC to provide space on their campuses for the graduation coaches to meet with prospective transfers to KSU to better prepare these students for transfer and aid in pre-transfer course selection to increase the probability of post-transfer success. With these funds, KSU will be able to provide adequate resources to serve all of the students transferring to KSU who are in the targeted populations from these three institutions in both the pre-transfer and post-transfer stages as well as students from other institutions in the post-transfer stage.

Graduation coaching has been shown to be effective in several pilot programs (see below), targeting specific populations of students (Latino students, HOPE recipients; etc.) These same populations exist on both campuses. Therefore, expansion of the cadre of graduation coaches so that populations of students on both campuses are served is essential to achievement of the overall goals of the consolidated institution.

### Interim Measures of Progress

Results from the Thrive program are provided in Appendix G, Table 1. In each of the first and second cohorts, first-to-second year retention was significantly higher for Thrive participants than for

students in an academically and demographically matched control group (5 percentage points for cohort 1 and 16.4 percentage points for cohort 2). The increase held through the second year of the program for cohort 1 with first-to-third year retention being 7.4 percentage points higher than the control group. Of greater interest, with respect to potential graduation rates, given the relationship between maintenance of HOPE support and graduation rates, is that the percentage of Thrive participants maintaining HOPE support after earning 30 credit hours was 19.7 percentage points higher than the control group for cohort 1 and 16.3 percentage points higher for cohort 2. The increase in the percent of students in cohort 1 maintaining HOPE support extended to the 60 credit hour checkpoint with Thrive participants maintaining HOPE at a rate of 67.3% compared to 50% for the control group.

An unanticipated bonus in the Thrive program is that participating minority students (mostly African-American) showed even greater results than Thrive participants as a whole (Appendix G, Table 2) with first-to-second year retention rates of nearly 95% even greater effects on maintenance of HOPE support. While minority students fared slightly better (78.8%) than Thrive participants as a whole (71.9%) in maintaining a GPA  $\geq$  3.0 the differential from the control group was dramatically better since only 31.4% of the minority students in the control group achieved that level of success (Appendix G).

Partial results from the first three cohorts in the H/L RRPg program as presented in Appendix H. Table 1, show first-to-second year retention rates over 90% for cohorts 1 and 2 and projected to be over 90% for cohort 3 while the retention rate for all KSU students is 76% and for all Hispanic/Latino students is 78%. The advantage continues when analyzing first-to-third year retention (80% for H/L RRPg Cohort 1 vs. 61% for all students and 67% for all Hispanic/Latino students). Table 2 shows that progression rates, to both sophomore status and to junior status, for program participants are also higher than for all KSU students, and higher still than that observed for non-participating Hispanic/Latino students. Furthermore, many of the students are currently on-track to graduate in 4 years

Both the Thrive program and the H/L RRPg program are multi-faceted making it difficult to determine which features, either singly or in combination, are responsible for the observed success of students in the program. However, structured interviews of participants in both programs indicate that: a) the programs engendered a desire to graduate from KSU; b) a majority of students felt “comforted” knowing that a graduation coach was available to them; and 3) those students who used the services of the graduation coach frequently attributed their success primarily to the coaching (“it kept me on track”).

**Measures of Success**

The ultimate measure of success of these programs and of the graduation coach model of integrated service delivery will be the effect on the 4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation rates and on the number of degrees conferred. The average time to degree-completion will also be a measure of success. Neither these particular programs nor the use of graduation coaches (in name or function) has been around long enough to measure the effect on graduation. In the interim, other measures such as retention and progression rates provide a measure of program effectiveness.

**Strategy C: Education Advisory Board – Student Success Collaborative**

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*Goals*

- 1) *increase the number of degrees awarded*
- 2) *increase the number of degrees earned “on time”*
- 3) *decrease excess credits*
- 4) *provide intrusive advising*

*Additionally, this strategy should aid in shortening the time to degree completion through the intrusive advising function.*

**Summary of Activities (Progress)**

KSU has completed the technical implementation of the software and has identified eight pilot programs as early implementers. Academic department chairs, graduation coaches and/or lead academic advisors for each pilot program have participated in multiple training sessions on the software platform, including the use of predictive analytical workbooks to identify student success markers. All eight pilot programs are currently developing program-specific intervention strategies/campaigns for at-risk and off-path students to improve retention and enhance degree progression. Final “Go-Live” training for pilot program graduation coaches and academic advisors will occur in September 2014. Pilot Programs will begin actively using the SSC platform beginning in

October 2014. Post-consolidation, beginning Spring 2016, KSU plans to develop pilot campaigns for colleges and degree programs on the Marietta campus.

The full implementation of the SSC software is scheduled to be completed by August 2015 on the Kennesaw campus. Full implementation on the Marietta campus is slated for either Fall 2016 or Spring 2017. KSU plans to make SSC an integral part of the advisement process to help identify at-risk/off-path students and apply early interventions to improve student retention and enhance degree progression. University-wide intervention strategies / campaigns will be identified and implemented, including a “Day One” readiness assessment and early-alert program. An audit of current advising processes for improving workflow, practice, and systems integration will also occur.

**Interim Measures of Progress  
Measures of Success**

Because we are in the early stages of “pilot” implementation, no interim success metrics are available yet.

The following are suggested metrics for tracking the successful usage of the EAB SSC software in improving retention and graduation. Usage of the platform in theory should enhance advising best practices that help build a stronger connection between KSU and the student as well as enables advisors to better mentor students based on the pathways of success used by prior students who graduated. To align this metric with the Noel-Levitz Strategic Enrollment Planning (SEP) engagement, tracking should occur using all primary intake groups using existing and forthcoming IPEDS cohorts:

- Full-time and Part-time, First-time (no prior postsecondary experience) Degree Seeking Students
- Full-time and Part-time, Non-First-time (prior postsecondary experience) Degree Seeking Students

These intake groups will be further categorized based on first-generation, Pell Grant recipient, and adult learner student populations. In addition, they can be filtered by their discipline area using a 2-digit CIP (classification of instructional program) code.

First Semester (fall-to-spring) Retention Rate

First-year (fall-to-fall) Retention Rate

Graduation Rate – three-year (for transfer students), four, five, and six years (for all students).

Finally, because implementation of this platform is not without substantial cost, it is imperative that a return on investment (ROI) be measured. KSU currently admits approximately 3,500 new first-time, full-time, first-year students each year. Each percentage point increase in retention, therefore represents 35 students retained that would not have been retained otherwise. At a conservatively estimated average revenue of \$4,000 per retained student, each percentage point increase in retention brings in approximately \$140,000 of additional revenue. Therefore, a retention increase of 2 or 3 percentage points should pay for the cost of the platform. Increases in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year retention will provide additional revenue as will increases in retention of transfer-in students. Thus, even modest increases in retention should justify the cost of the platform implementation. However, these calculations are complicated by the, as yet unknown, total cost of implementation that includes the possible necessity for additional personnel to fully implement the platform in a way that would maximize the potential for positive impact.

**Strategy D: Ad Astra Platinum Analytics**

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*Goals*

- 1) *increase the number of degrees awarded*
- 2) *increase the number of degrees earned “on time”*
- 3) *decrease excess credits*

*Additionally, it should also help shorten the time to degree-completion by aiding progression through increased course availability in what have been, traditionally, bottleneck courses.*

**Summary of Activities (Progress)**

KSU used Platinum Analytics to inform academic departments of course demands/bottlenecks when building the course schedules, based on historical trends in student enrollment, evaluation of degree requirements and completion of course prerequisites, and historical preferences in course selections.

**Interim Measures of Progress**

In the initial deployment of this tool, the following adjustments were made to the fall 2014 course schedule.

- 196 courses were identified as addition candidates (more seats were needed to meet student demand). For these courses, 2,500 additional seats are being offered when compared to fall 2013.
- 39 courses were identified as reduction candidates (fewer seats were required to fulfill student demand). 500 seats are being removed from these courses when compared to fall 2013.
- 19 courses were identified as elimination candidates (low demand for the course).
- For Fall 2015, Ad Astra will be used to help academic departments determine general education

course offerings on both the Kennesaw and Marietta campuses.

**Measures of Success**

Since the Ad Astra Platinum Analytics software in theory utilizes degree audit data from Ellucian DegreeWorks and scheduling data from Banner to improve course offerings, measuring the successful impact of the software would best be served through metrics for tracking progression and graduation rates. To align this metric with the Noel-Levitz Strategic Enrollment Planning (SEP) engagement, tracking should occur using all primary intake groups using existing and forthcoming IPEDS cohorts:

- Full-time and Part-time, First-time (no prior postsecondary experience) Degree Seeking Students
- Full-time and Part-time, Non-First-time (prior postsecondary experience) Degree Seeking Students

These intake groups will be further categorized based on first-generation, Pell Grant recipient, and adult learner student populations. In addition, they can be filtered by their discipline area using a 2-digit CIP (classification of instructional program) code.

Undergraduate Progression Rate from one undergraduate classification (i.e., freshmen, sophomore, etc.) to the next. Positive changes to the course offerings at KSU based on actual student need using a degree audit should in theory result in faster rates of attainment from one year to the next.

Number of credits attempted. Improvements in course offerings could potentially result in students carrying higher course loads.

Number of credits earned. Again, improvements in course offerings could potentially result in students earning more hours as they attempt more hours, and could also reveal potential student support needs through hours withdrawn.

Graduation Rate – three-year (for transfer students), four, five, and six years (for all students).

**Strategy E: Online & Hybrid Course Delivery**

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**Goals**

- 1) *increase the number of degrees awarded*
- 2) *increase the number of degrees earned “on time”*
- 8) *restructure instructional delivery*

*This strategy also facilitates degree attainment by populations of students prevented from completing a degree or delayed in completing a degree because of inability of those students to participate in traditional, on-campus, face-to-face education (e.g. active military personnel; students working long, inflexible schedules; student whose employment involves substantial travel, etc.).*

**Summary of Activities (Progress)**

KSU has made a substantial commitment to online education and to the use of alternative formats such as hybrid course offerings. Looking at the last 5 years enrollment in online courses has risen from 3,996 students enrolled for 11,979 credit hours in fall 2009 to 8,581 students enrolled for 25,539 credit hours in fall 2013, more than doubling online enrollment in that time frame. Projections are for another increase in fall 2014. Similar results are seen when looking at enrollments for spring or summer terms. Enrollments in courses taught in hybrid format have also seen increases, although hybrid courses were not readily identifiable in Banner until spring 2011. Currently enrollment in hybrid sections is approximately equal to the enrollment in online sections except in summer terms when online enrollment substantially exceeds enrollment in hybrid sections. There are now several degree programs at both the undergraduate and the graduate levels that are offered completely online. SPSU has also made online and hybrid format delivery of instruction a high priority. Enrollment in hybrid format courses has increased from 3,562 credit hours in fall 2009 to 5,226 in fall 2013 while enrollment in online courses has increased from 7,859 in fall 2009 to 17,952 in fall 2013. As with enrollments at KSU. Similar increases are seen when looking at spring and summer terms.

**Interim Measures of Progress**

The increase in enrollment in online and hybrid format courses suggests that students are availing themselves of opportunities to pursue their education in ways that provide flexible access, thereby mitigating some of the barriers faced by students with family and work obligations that hinder their educational progress. However, no direct measure of an effect on retention, progression or degree completion has been determined at this time.

**Measures of Success**

The success of this strategy can be measured by continued monitoring of enrollments in online and hybrid format courses. In addition surveys and interviews should be conducted to determine if graduates attribute their success in completing a degree program either wholly or in part to the availability of courses in these alternative formats. Finally, the demographic characteristics of students enrolled in hybrid and, most especially, online courses should be monitored to determine if the availability of courses offered in those formats is indeed opening up new markets (e.g. military personnel) as projected.

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Both KSU and SPSU have utilized, and continue to utilize a number of strategies to increase degree-completion and to shorten the time to degree-completion for students attending the respective institutions. These include outreach programs to high school and middle school students. SPSU has concentrated on the STEM fields while KSU has had a broad spectrum of programs including some in the STEM disciplines. KSU also has a large Dual Enrollment Honors Program (DEHP) that will have nearly 380 participants, mostly high school seniors with some juniors, in fall 2014. Almost 100% of DEHP participants attend college somewhere with approximately 30% continuing at KSU. The wider array of major options that will be available to them post-consolidation should increase that percentage. Many of the students who do continue graduate in 4 years, or even less, because of the accumulation of college credits as a DEHP participant.

SPSU is a member of the Adult Learning Consortium (ALC) and has a process in place for portfolio-based prior learning assessment (PLA). It has been recommended, and approved by the Consolidation Implementation Committee that the post-consolidation institution continue membership in the ALC and adapt SPSU's PLA process to meet the needs of a larger, comprehensive institution.

KSU has been investigating possible software platforms (e.g. Starfish, GradesFirst, etc.) for implementing an early alert process for identifying students at risk for failure in the extreme early stages of a semester (first 3-4 weeks). Personnel and fiscal limitations as well as the existence of other priorities have delayed purchase and implementation of a specific platform. SPSU has an internally-developed early alert system that works on the relatively small scale of an institution of 5,000-6,000 students, but which may or may not be scalable to the post-consolidation institution of more than 31,000 students. As part of the consolidation planning process, however, it has been recommended to continue exploration of possible early alert functionality.

KSU has made extensive use of first-year seminars and learning communities and both have been successful in increasing retention. KSU's first-year experience program has been recognized as one of the best in the country for 11 consecutive years by *U.S. News & World Report*, and in 2010 the program was the recipient of the Regents Excellence in Teaching Award for Departments or Programs.

Both KSU and SPSU have made extensive use of peer mentors to help students become acclimated to and engaged with their institutions. KSU makes extensive use of peer mentors in the first-year seminars because a study conducted in 2007 showed significant performance and retention gains for students in sections with peer mentors assigned.

Finally, KSU is piloting both the stretch-format and co-requisite approach to remediation promoting enrollment in special sections of credit-bearing math courses rather than in traditional non-credit remedial courses. In pilot studies, both performance and self-efficacy in the new formats were at least as good as that observed in traditional remedial courses with the added benefit of not having to take extra time to complete remedial work, thereby keeping the students on track for a

more timely graduation. Although the population of students needing remediation in the traditional sense is small at KSU (and non-existent at SPSU since students needing remediation are not admitted) and is likely to be even smaller post-consolidation if the recommended changes in admissions standards and processes are implemented, the new formats will be used for those few students who need remediation and may even be extended to courses outside of the traditional remediation portfolio. For example, engineering students at SPSU should be taking calculus as their first math courses. Some however, need pre-calculus and would likely benefit from the use of the new formats in teaching precalc.

## OBSERVATIONS

### Most Successful Strategies

Among the most successful strategies for promoting student success are supplemental instruction, first-years seminars and learning communities. KSU implemented first-year seminars over 30 years ago and learning communities over 10 years ago. Accumulated data indicates that students success, as measured by first-to-second year retention is 6 percentage points higher for students enrolled in a first-year seminar and 9 percentage points higher if that seminar was part of a learning community. SI has also been shown to be highly effective (Appendix E) although the extended effects on graduation metrics are difficult to measure.

Preliminary results presented in this report for Thrive (Appendix G) and for the H/L RRRPG program (Appendix H) suggest that the use of graduation coaches is also highly successful although the true measure of success will only be realized when the use of graduation coaches can be extended to all, or nearly all, undergraduates and when they have been in position long enough to measure their effect on degree-completion not just on retention.

### Least Successful Strategy

A few years ago, KSU attempted to implement a mandatory 1-credit pass/fail study skills/academic success courses for students on probation. By examining historical data prior to the implementation of the requirement, it became readily apparent that no performance benefit was going to be realized by using this strategy for those students. Instead it is hoped (and projected) that implementation of an early alert process will reduce the number of students placed on academic probation.

### Changes in Completion Activities

Given the longitudinal nature of post-secondary education it takes several years to determine the effect of any strategy on degree completion rates and average time to completion. However, interim effects (retention) can be measured in as little as a semester or a year. Institutions, therefore, must be patient enough to give strategies sufficient time to have their effects clearly determined. However, institutions should also be nimble enough to adapt and adopt new strategies that have been demonstrated, usually by implementation elsewhere (although sometimes by partial implementation at the

adapting/adopting institution), to have a high potential for success. KSU is making two such major changes to its CCG implementation plan. The first has already been described in this report. The Education Advisory Board's Student Success Collaborative has shown significant success at other institutions, including Georgia State University. The level of success observed at those institutions, as well as the potential for success inherent in the concept, warranted investment in the platform and inclusion in a revised CCG implementation plan.

The second major change in strategy is the adoption of a policy requiring all first-year students (with some exceptions, including for those who are married and for those living at home with their parents within a certain commuting distance) in the post-consolidation institution to live in campus housing for their first academic year. Living on campus helps students connect with the institution. That ability to connect has been shown in numerous studies to boost retention and/or graduation rates. Furthermore, in examining historical data, it has been observed that KSU experienced a noticeable increase in retention rate and in graduation rate after campus housing was first constructed in 2002. It is expected therefore, that this new requirement should have a significant effect on retention and graduation rates in the post-consolidation institution.

### **Lessons Learned**

The major lesson to be learned from all of the work that KSU has done in the area of student success, as measured by retention rates, graduation rates and degree completion data is that the influencing performance outcomes is a multi-factorial, multi-faceted phenomenon. In controlled pilots it is

sometimes possible to determine the effect of a single strategy (e.g. Supplemental Instruction) on the measured outcome. However, when bringing piloted strategies to scale it is generally true that multiple strategies are employed simultaneously and therefore, the effects of a single strategy cannot be readily ascertained. Extrapolating from the single-factor pilots is likely to be non-informative because the effects of multiple strategies may not be simply additive. It is equally plausible to project that the whole could be less than some of its parts as that it could be greater than the some of its parts. That is, synergistic effects of multiple strategies on a given population could be either negative, neutral, or positive. Since implementation of any of these strategies is not without substantial costs, including but not limited to third-party costs, personnel costs, internal implementation costs and opportunity costs, calculation of a ROI for any individual strategy may be difficult, or even impossible. Instead, it may be more informative to look at the cost of all strategies implemented in a given timeframe and calculate a time-based ROI. One must be careful of the parameters used to make such a calculation. For example, is the ROI to be institution based, system based, or even beyond to consider economic impact on the broader community. It should also be pointed out that the less tangible benefits that accrue from having a more educated population may not be readily measured in financial or economic terms. Therefore, calculation of a ROI may be useful in determining the value of an investment but it may not be deciding factor in determining whether a particular investment should or should not be made.