



Georgia College & State University

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

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

NARRATIVE REPORT

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

HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY#1:

Increase the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG institutions by increasing high school completion from Georgia College Early College.

COMPLETION GOAL:

This high-impact strategy aims to increase high school completion from the GC Early College (EC) program by 5% annually and increase earning of college credits by the time of high school graduation by 5% over the next three years.

DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY:

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

GEORGIA COLLEGE EARLY COLLEGE COMPLETION DATA

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

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

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES:

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

Collaboration and goal setting

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

Highlighting the success of students admitted to college

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

Mentoring EC students

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

Outreach from the GC Male Connection

The MALE Connection is GC's African-American Male Initiative, supported by the USG's African-American Male Initiative (AAMI), which started in 2002. The MALE Connection, an acronym for Mentoring African-Americans for Leadership, Education and Connection, includes over 50 participants, over half of whom are EC and high-achieving male students who are mentored by our undergraduate students. Of the 25 seniors graduating from GC EC, 8 of those students are male, which we attribute in large measure to the success of the mentoring and outreach of the MALE Connection with EC male students.

Collaborations between EC and GC faculty

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

Outreach from GC academic advisors

In an effort to provide additional mentoring outreach and to help in both academic and social preparation for college, GC academic advisors were asked to establish an outreach committee to begin to build long-term advising relationships with EC students in order to help them prepare for admission and successful matriculation at GC. Seven advisors established a committee called the EC Holistic Outreach (ECHO). The ECHO committee has developed a program that includes monthly outreach to seventh, eighth, and ninth grade EC students to help them bond as a cohort and begin early to help them prepare for admission to college. Sessions include getting-to-know-you activities, question-and-answer sessions between students and advisors, and informative discussions on the daily life, resources, and benefits of college. The advisors met with the EC students three times in 2016-2017.

Outreach to EC students enrolled at GC

The academic advisors and faculty members who have established relationships with EC students will continue their mentoring relationships with those students after they enroll at GC. We believe that that an intentional, ongoing institutional commitment to these students throughout their college career will help to ensure their retention and success. Academic advisors welcomed the students in the fall; and at the beginning of the spring semester, academic advisors and the Associate Provost met with all EC students to get an update on their progress and their acclimation to Georgia College. The continued outreach to GC EC students during their time at GC will help with the retention and graduation of these students.

BASELINE MEASURE OF SUCCESS:

In 2011, one EC student was enrolled at GC and only 10 students had graduated from the EC program. The number of students in the EC Program has steadily increased since 2011; and in 2016, Georgia College accepted and enrolled a record nine EC students. While the number of students that will enroll in Georgia College this year is lower, there will be 10 EC students (cumulatively) enrolled at GC overall. This year, 25 students (100% of the EC senior class) graduated from EC in spring 2017. There has also been steady improvement in the overall enrollment at Georgia College from 168 in 2011 to 255 in the fall of 2017. We want to continue to increase that number and to make sure that the students enrolled at Georgia College retain and graduate.

LESSONS LEARNED:

Given the varied backgrounds of EC students, often without a tradition of family members who have attended college, comprehensive mentoring and engagement with them is important in order to ensure their readiness, their acceptance, and their retention in college.

PRINCIPAL POINTS OF CONTACT:

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

HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY#2

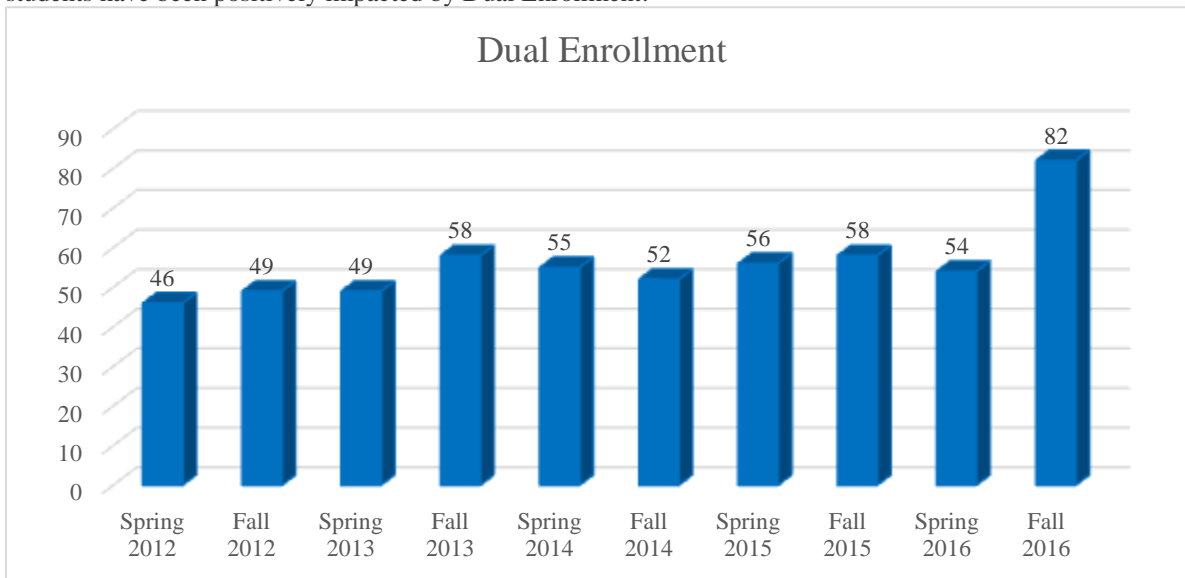
Shorten the time to degree through programs that allow students to earn college credit while still in high school and by awarding credit for prior learning that is verified by appropriate assessment.

COMPLETION GOAL:

No target at this time. We would like to increase the number of students enrolled in the Dual Enrollment Program and increase the number of AP credits accepted as appropriately determined by the Registrar.

DEMONSTRATION OF IMPACT:

Increasing the number of Dual Enrolled students taking GC classes and the number of students earning college credit prior to high school graduation is a High Impact Strategy that can have a positive impact on graduation rates at Georgia College and in the state as a whole. Georgia College experienced an increase in Dual Enrollment students last year which is attributed to changes in the Move On When Ready program that provided additional cost savings to students. For the past five years, 100-150 Georgia high school students have been positively impacted by Dual Enrollment:



In addition to offering Dual Enrollment on our campus to our local area high school students, Georgia College also encourages entering students to enroll in advanced credit opportunities prior to arriving at GC, such as AP courses in high school and dual enrollment/MOWR classes at their local-area colleges. AP score reports received during summer 2017 (so far to-date) indicate that 502 entering freshmen (34.6% of the entering class) received credit from AP exams that equates to 1487 credit hours. Additionally, 394 first year students (27% of the entering class) brought in Dual Enrollment credit totaling 1791 credit hours. Combined, our entire entering first-year class in fall 2017 had a “head start” of 3278 credit hours. With over 800 students impacted by both of these programs that shorten the time to degree, Georgia College has the potential to significantly increase its four-year graduation rate.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES:

1. *Georgia College Office of Admissions has reached out to local schools to offer assistance* for students enrolling dually in high school and college. Admission counselors also work with high school counselors to encourage students all over Georgia to take advantage of dual enrollment opportunities in their local communities to gain advance credit and also improve their admission portfolio when considering application to Georgia College. Georgia College has an advisor specifically designated to work with Dual Enrollment students.
2. *The change in the funding model for dual enrollment from the Accel Program to Move On When Ready* proved to be quite beneficial for increasing the number of Dual Enrollment students. Under Move On When Ready funding, families receive funding for all tuition, mandatory fees, and the use of required textbooks. The Office of Admissions works closely with local schools to explain the benefits of this program.
3. In addition to offering Dual Enrollment, *Georgia College encourages entering students to enroll in Advance Placement (AP) courses in high school* with the intent to exempt college courses by AP exam score. Students are advised of the potential for AP credit through direct mailings, the admissions website, and at recruitment and orientation events.

BASELINE MEASURE OF SUCCESS:

The 2015 number of first year students with AP credit was 566 students. For fall 2016, it rose to 635. At the time of this report, for fall 2017, we have 502 freshmen with AP credit. We are working to appropriately increase these numbers in the coming years.

LESSONS LEARNED:

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

PRINCIPAL POINTS OF CONTACT:

Suzanne Pittman, Associate Vice President for Enrollment; Kay Anderson, Registrar; and Mike Augustine, Advisor of Dual Enrollment Students

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGY #1:**Conducting Targeted, Intrusive Advising in a Senior Progression Pilot.**

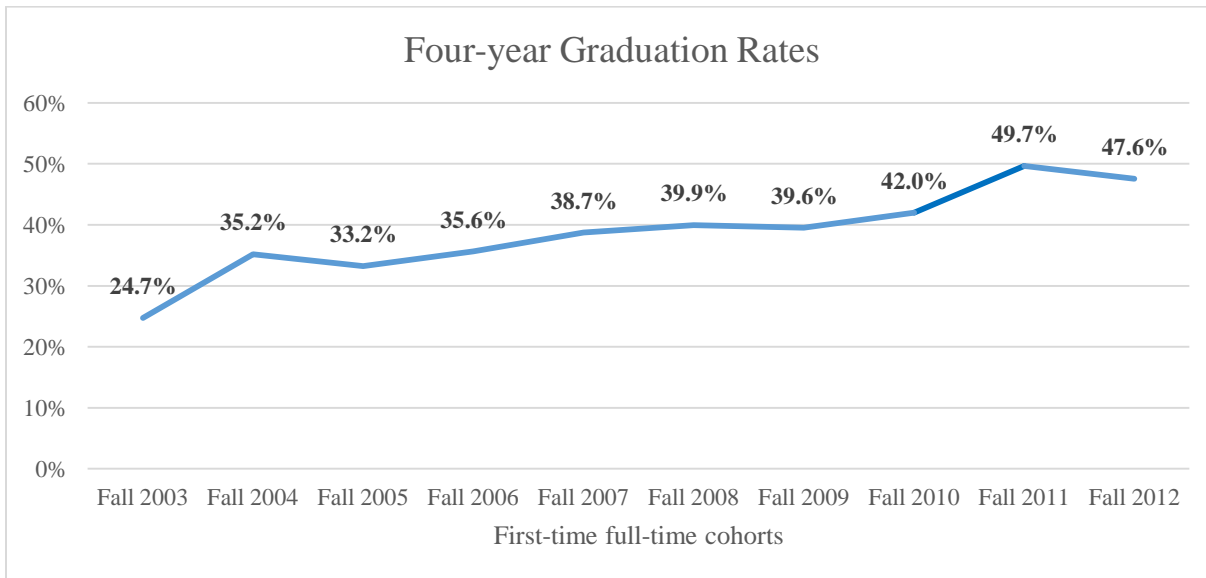
In the summer of 2016, the Associate Provost for Student Success launched a Pilot to aggressively monitor and intervene as necessary the progression of seniors to graduation. This effort, called the Senior Progression Pilot, was achieved through a series of activities implemented by academic advisors and led by the Provost Fellow in the Center for Student Success. It included interviews, surveys, and continuous review of the progression of students who had achieved 90+ hours at the beginning of the fall 2016 semester. The goal of the Pilot was to ensure that students with 90+ hours were meeting the final senior year requirements in time to graduate in the spring 2017 semester. The Pilot was also launched to determine what obstacles were preventing seniors from progressing toward graduation and to establish intervention strategies to make sure obstacles could be overcome. The intervention strategies would become best practices for academic advisors in their future work with students who entered each fall semester with 90+ hours.

COMPLETION GOAL:

Increase Four-Year Graduation Rate at Georgia College to 60% by 2020.

DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY:

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



SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES:

The Senior Progression Pilot (SSP) included a series of activities over fall and spring designed to assess, monitor, and intervene in senior progression.

Interviews with Academic Advisors.

The first activity of the Pilot was to get qualitative feedback from advisors who could recount, based on their advising experience, the common roadblocks that students experienced that prevented their on-time graduation. The Provost Fellow who led the effort held interviews with each academic advisor and asked a series of open-ended questions such as: “What are the departmental practices and process that impact student progress to graduation?”; “Are there student populations that face particular obstacles?”; and “What are current advising practices related to seniors?” This data was recorded to determine patterns and future interventions. The goal of this activity was to get an assessment from those professionals who had the best on-the-ground knowledge of the obstacles that students routinely face in meeting graduation requirements.

Senior Survey.

This activity was created to complement the feedback from the advisors by surveying the students to determine their awareness of the status of their progression and to see to what degree their reporting matched the feedback from their advisors. A fifteen-question Senior Survey was designed to help identify common barriers to graduation. The instrument surveyed seniors in three broad categories of experience or awareness: 1) graduation requirements (such as exit exams, legislative requirements), 2) student proactivity (planning and awareness of their own progress, and 3) practical circumstances (such as the impact of work and living arrangement on their goals as students). We captured responses from 144 seniors. While this was not a statistically significant number of responses, an examination of the composition of the student respondents relative to race, gender, and major distributions matches the composition of the general student population. This led the authors of the survey to believe that the survey respondent population is reflective of the GC student population in general and could be useful in pointing to common barriers to graduation.

Senior Information Sessions.

In September, all seniors were invited to an information session to advise them of all graduation deadlines and requirements and to inform them about post-graduation scholarship opportunities. Seventy-five (5% of all student with 90 plus hours) seniors attended the session.

Manual Checks by Advisors.

The Senior Information Session in September was followed in October by manual checks by advisors of students' status, including direct calls when necessary, of all 1354 students with 90+ hours. These calls revealed students who had not completed graduation applications, who needed to complete course petitions, and who needed to complete legislative exams. Advisor conversations with students also shed light on structural obstacles resulting from scheduling difficulties in majors that have course requisites that must be complete before students can register for required practicums or internships for graduation. All of these lessons will guide future advising practices and interventions.

Advisor Follow-Ups.

In December near the end of the fall semester, advisors were tasked with checking the progress and status of the students with 90+ hours completed. Using the data provided by the Office of the Registrar, each student was evaluated for proper registration for spring registration, completion of testing requirements, satisfaction of institutional and major credit-hour requirements, and completion of internships and graduation applications. Students were again contacted if they had not met requirements.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS:

The success of the SPP was measured in the following ways: 1) by the number of seniors who graduated in 2017 versus 2016, 2) by identifying obstacles preventing students from progressing, and 3) by the efficacy of the strategies that advisors need to employ going forward to prevent obstacles in senior progression from continuing. Of the 1358 students with 90 or more hours at the beginning of the fall of 2016, 1076 or 79.2% of those students graduated; 685 (49.1%) of those students were members of the entering cohort of 2013 or four-year graduates. The other graduates were from a number of cohorts dating back as far as 2010. 191 of those 1358 students are still enrolled. The number of students who graduated in four years represented an increase of nearly 2 percentage points over the previous year's four year graduation rate of 47.7 percent. While the 685 seniors who graduated in four years represents 49.1% of the full number of students who entered in fall 2013, those 685 seniors represent 79% of the number of seniors (893 or 64%) who still remained at the university at the beginning of their senior year. *Note: Spring graduation rates are "unofficial and will be "official in mid-October.*

LESSONS LEARNED:

While all of the students with 90+ hours did not graduate and the overall four-year graduation rate only increased by 1.4%, we did graduate nearly 80% of all the students who had 90 plus hours at the beginning of the fall of 2016. This illustrates that the more aggressive intrusive advising implemented during the Pilot clearly has the potential to positively affect the overall number of seniors who graduate. We learned important information about the student profile and the obstacles that prevent these students from graduating. We also learned the new best practices that we needed to establish for advising students with 90+ hours in the fall semester and who are eligible to graduate by the spring or summer of the following academic year. Advisors learned areas where they need to intervene early with seniors to avoid delays later in the year.

PRINCIPAL POINTS OF CONTACT:

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

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGY#2:

Conduct an in-depth analysis of the obstacles that prevent higher retention of sophomore students into their junior year with recommendations for addressing those obstacles.

COMPLETION GOAL:

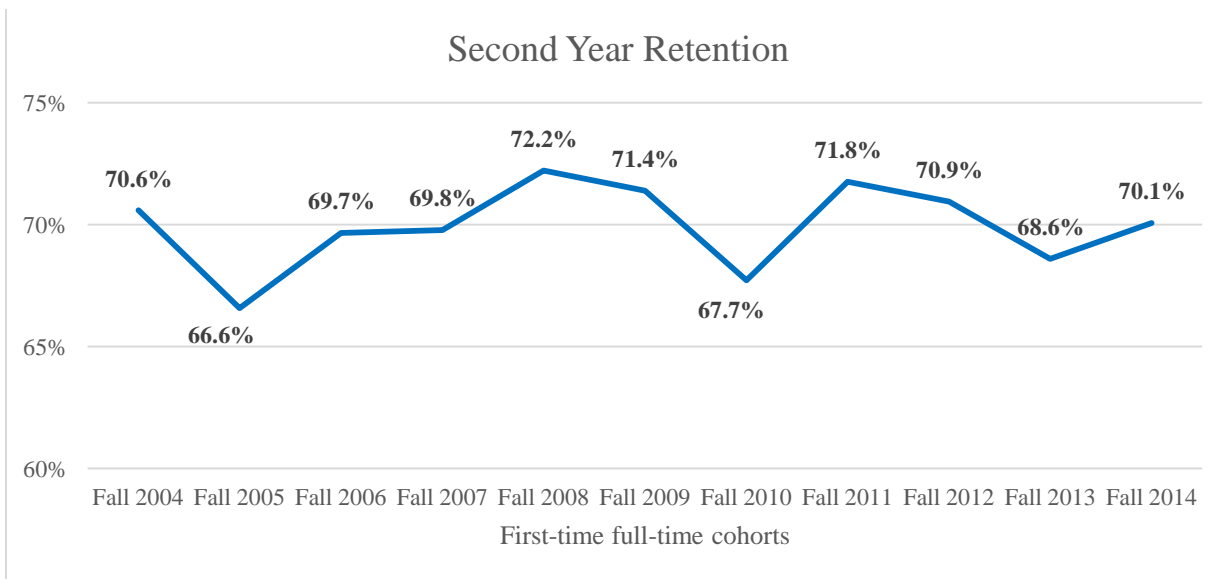
To increase second-year retention at Georgia College to 75% by 2020.

DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGY:

An in-depth analysis of the reasons second-year students do not return to Georgia College their junior year was completed by a subcommittee of the Strategic Enrollment and Retention Committee established by the Provost in January 2016. The Sophomore Retention Subcommittee included stakeholders from the Advising Center, Housing, Campus Life, Faculty, the Office of Institutional Diversity, Student Affairs, and Academic Affairs who were all members of the full committee. The work of the subcommittee was to research and identify the obstacles that prevent sophomores from returning to Georgia College their junior year and to make recommendations that would address each obstacle.

DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY:

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



MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS:

Our baseline second-to-third year retention rate is roughly 68%. In 2016, that rate increased to 70%; but by the beginning of the spring semester, the number who returned slipped to 68%. The interim measures of success for this strategy would be the implementation of the recommendations made by the subcommittee over the next three years and, finally, the increase of second year retention to 75% by 2020.

LESSONS LEARNED.

We learned that over 90% of the students who leave Georgia College after their second year are students with GPAs above 3.00. Factors contributing to their withdrawal from the institution were the limited availability of spaces in second-tier admission programs like nursing; familial connections to other Georgia institutions that they wanted to be part of; perceived higher prestige of Georgia's flagship research institutions that they believed increased their chances for employment and acceptance into graduate programs; lack of qualitative engagements with the institution that made them want to stay including engagement with faculty, high impact programs, and student organizations; a lack of a full appreciation of the regional and national reputational prestige of Georgia College, and a limited understanding of the professional and personal value of a liberal arts education. We also learned that there are some factors that Georgia College cannot remedy - for example, the large number of students who would like to be admitted to the Nursing Program. Each year, close to 200 students enter Georgia College as "pre-nursing students." We know that we can only accommodate 112 of those students (56 per cohort). As a result of the limited number of students we can accommodate, Georgia College will always lose a large number of pre-nursing students to other state nursing programs who have greater capacity to accommodate them.

We know that Georgia College has many attractive opportunities for just the kind of students who are leaving the institution and that we want to keep them. Our challenge, in our effort to increase sophomore retention that would lead to higher institutional graduation rates, is to find ways to communicate to these students what they did not know about Georgia College's reputation and the qualitative reasons that they should continue and graduate from Georgia College.

PRINCIPAL POINTS OF CONTRACT:

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

OBSERVATIONS

Georgia College is participating in the larger efforts of the state to increase college completion rates in Georgia while also paying close attention to the ways that it can increase its institutional graduation rates.

Georgia College's Early College Program is providing a college pipe line to at risk high school students who without the intervention of the EC Program would not attend college at all. While many of the EC students do not get accepted as college students at Georgia College, the institution plays an important role in the success of these students who do attend other colleges in Georgia; and we consider the role we play and the resources we provide to be a significant contribution to the effort to have as many Georgia students as possible enter and complete college. Georgia College also plays an important role in the success of students who enter and progress in college as a result of Dual Enrollment and AP credits. In addition to awarding the credits, the university also seeks through advising to help these students make the social adjustments they must make because of their younger age. At Georgia College, we know that it is not just college credits that are needed to retain students

and to continue at a regular pace to finish college on time. We seek to provide that social support. In the future, we hope to begin more robust initiatives that address the social adjustments that these younger students must make in order to succeed.

Georgia College is also focusing proactively and intentionally on increasing its institutional graduation rates. For the last three years, we have begun to systematically examine the factors that drive our college completion numbers. Our research has shown that a large number of students (slightly over 30%) transfer and complete their college education at research universities in Georgia and throughout the nation because of a perceived higher reputational value of a research institution. The ripple effect of these students leaving Georgia College after their sophomore year is the impact of the loss of these students on the four year graduation rate. We also realize that readiness for graduation at Georgia College requires that students complete many significant and varied requirements: legislative tests, capstone projects, residency terms, major and residential hours, and managed course progressions - even as they complete the daily assignments for regular courses and high impact co-curricular opportunities outside of class. Centralized advising is helping students manage these requirements, and we hope in the future - with expanded use of EAB's Success Campus Platform and its new mobile App, "Guide" - to help students manage requirements successfully and graduate in four years. Our work this year with the Senior Progression Pilot and the Sophomore Retention Project has shown us the distinctive challenges we face as an institution with largely high-achieving students in our effort to increase our four year graduate rate. That knowledge and the recommendations that we have received from faculty, academic advisors, staff, and the students themselves on ways to address our challenges will inform our goal setting for the next five years and constitute the next phase of our institutional work for Complete College Georgia.