

Graduate Education Subcommittee Report

Submitted March 7, 2016

Committee Members

Catherine Whelan (CoB - Chair), Anthony Boynton (Student), Jeffrey Dowdy (Library), Lisa Griffin (CoHS), Lynn Hanson (CoB), Debby MacMillan (CoHS), Kalina Manoylov (CoAS), Ben McMillan (CoB), Lyndall Muschell (CoE), Marcia Peck (CoE), Costas Spirou (Academic Affairs), Parris Story (Macon Graduate Center)

Overview

Georgia College has a number of highly ranked graduate programs that align well with our vision of a preeminent liberal arts college. For example, the *U.S. News & World Report 2016 Best Online Programs* recently ranked several of our programs very highly. The Georgia WebMBA® at Georgia College was ranked 22nd, our graduate nursing programs were ranked 8th, and the Master of Logistics and Supply Chain Management was ranked 7th in the country. *The Financial Engineer* released its first rankings of graduate accounting programs, and our Master of Accountancy program ranked 2nd in the state of Georgia. The nationally accredited MPA program is ranked 25th in the country in the 2015 list of Top 50 Online Master's Degrees in Public Administration by topmanagementdegrees.com. The Master of Education in Early Childhood is nationally recognized by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education is nationally recognized by the Council for Exceptional Children.

While we've experienced success and our programs have been well received, development of graduate programs at Georgia College has occurred in a decentralized manner. Graduate education is often viewed as peripheral to, rather than integrated with, our undergraduate liberal arts mission. Graduate programs at Georgia College should meet the continuing education needs of our undergraduate students in addition to meeting the current workforce demands. Our liberal arts mission should be evident in the design and delivery of our graduate programs.

Georgia College administrators, department chairs, program coordinators, and faculty members should become better informed about the cost of offering programs, operational efficiencies, and budget constraints. This information should guide them in programming decisions. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that not all graduate programs are the same, and therefore, a "one-size-fits-all" approach is not appropriate when considering the implementation of recommendations in this plan. Georgia College should seek to deliver a sustainable balance of revenue-generating professional graduate programs and resource-intensive, research-based graduate programs.

Current Trends in Graduate Education

National Trends

The following information was obtained from the report *Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 2004 to 2014* which presents the findings of an annual survey of U.S. graduate schools covering all fields of study. The report includes responses from institutions that represent almost 74% of the master's degrees and 93% of the doctorates awarded each year.

Trends in Applications (2009-2014)

- 6.2% average annual increase in application for Master's degrees across all fields
- Largest increases were in Engineering (16.3%), Health Sciences (13.0%) and Mathematics and Computer Sciences (31.9%)
- Education experienced a decline (0.6%) and the smallest increases were in Arts and Humanities (0.4%) and Social and Behavioral Sciences (0.9%)
- Full-time one-year MBA programs and some professional MBA and specialized business master's programs are witnessing flat or declining application volumes.

Trends in Master's Degrees Awarded (2009-2014)

- 1.9% average annual increase in Master's degrees awarded across all fields
- Largest increases were in Health Sciences (11.1%), Biological and Agricultural Sciences (6.7%), and Mathematics and Computer Sciences (7.3%)
- Education experienced a decline in master's degrees awarded (2.5%)

Student demographics

- About 58% of all first-time graduate students in fall 2014 were women
- Women earned 59.1% of the master's degrees awarded in 2014
- 54% of all temporary resident graduate students were enrolled in biological and agricultural sciences, engineering, mathematics and computer sciences, physical and earth sciences. In contrast, only 16.0% of U.S. citizens/permanent residents were enrolled in these fields.
- International students accounted for a significant portion of the applicant pool for many MBA and specialty business programs in 2014.
- Temporary residents (5.5%) and Hispanic/Latino students (4.2%) represent the fastest growing groups for enrollment in master's programs for 2009-2014.

Online Education

Online education has experienced considerable growth over the past decade. Investigation of this trend and the effectiveness of online delivery has focused primarily on undergraduate education. However, the flexibility provided by online delivery is well suited to the demands of adult learners and helps meet the needs of continuing education for those already in the workforce. Graduate programs are taking advantage of new technologies to enhance distance education delivery options, particularly for the working adult population. The decision to develop and deliver online courses and/or programs should rest in the hands of the faculty as some disciplines are more adaptable to online delivery than others; therefore, a "one size fits all" approach would be detrimental to the quality of our graduate programs.

Graduate Education at Liberal Arts Institutions

A survey of the top 25 liberal arts institutions in the US revealed that 68% do not have any graduate programs and those that do have a very limited number. The most common programs at these institutions are the MA in Art History, MS, and MAT. A few schools also have 3/2 coop programs in engineering and/or business (MBA).

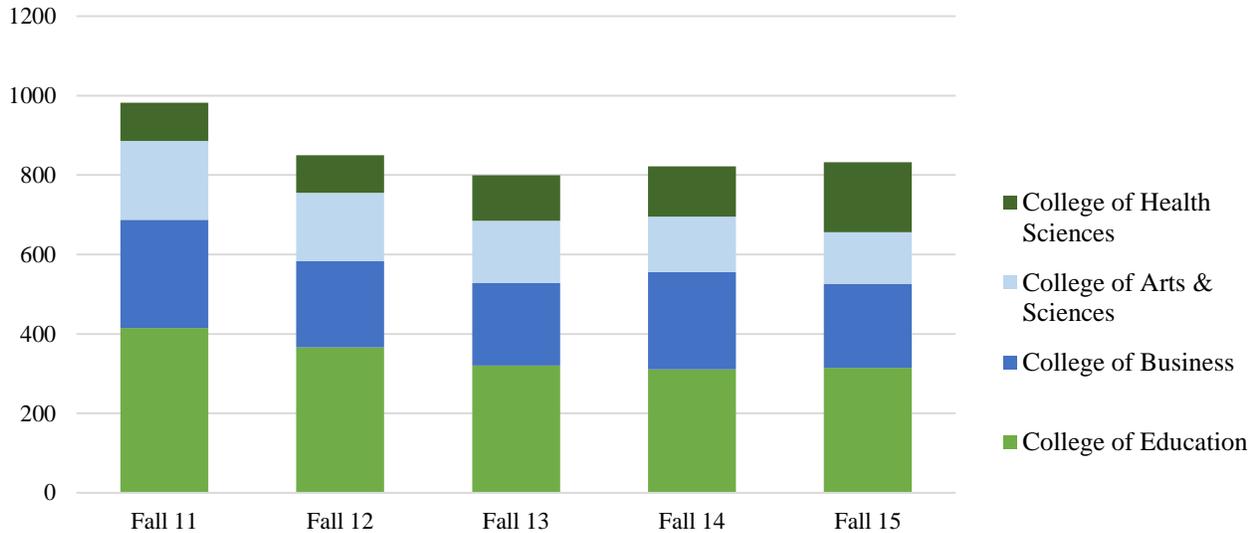
COPLAC institutions also offer a limited number of graduate programs with 17% not offering any. Of those that offer graduate programs, the average number offered is seven. Georgia College currently offers 16 distinct degrees and almost 30 different major areas of study. The most common programs at COPLAC institutions are in business, accounting, education (MAT), public administration, and nursing.

Status of Graduate Education at Georgia College

Over the past five years Georgia College has struggled to maintain a steady enrollment in graduate programs. The most recent academic year has shown some improvement in enrollment numbers but the total number of graduate students is still 15% lower than in Fall 2011.

STUDENTS ENROLLED	Fall 11	Fall 12	Fall 13	Fall 14	Fall 15
College of Education	415	366	320	311	315
College of Business	272	217	208	245	211
College of Arts & Sciences	199	172	157	139	130
College of Health Sciences	96	95	114	127	176
GEORGIA COLLEGE TOTAL	982	850	799	822	832

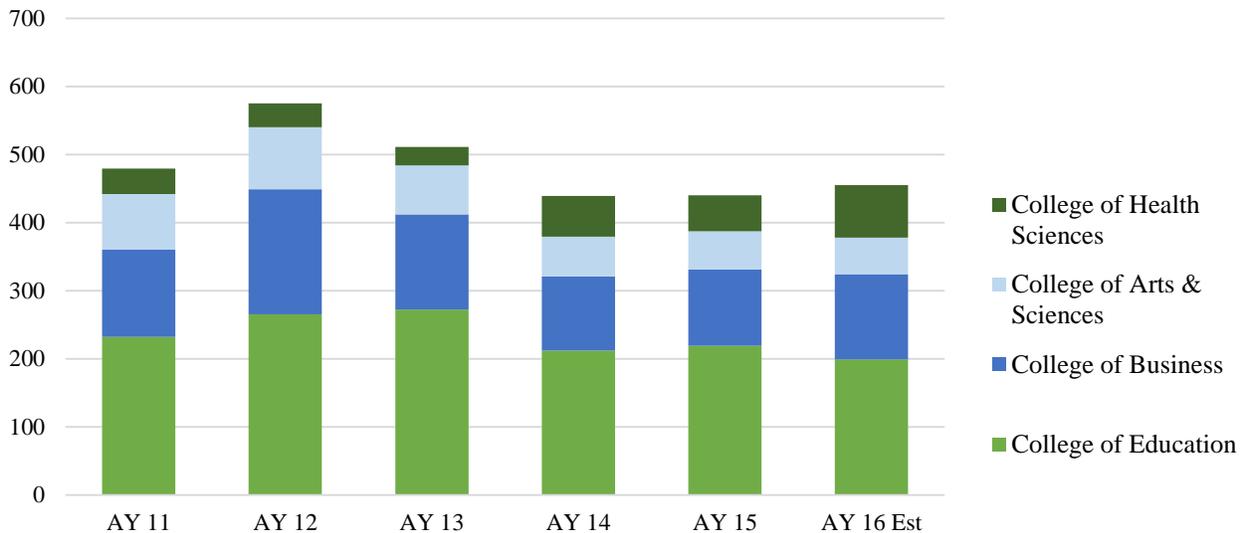
Number of Graduate Students Enrolled: Fall 2011 to Fall 2015



The number of degrees conferred is only 5% down on AY 2011 but almost 21% lower than AY 2012. Obviously there is a lag between number of students enrolled and number of degrees conferred. The projected increase in degrees conferred for AY 2016 reflects the slight increase in enrollment in recent years. The 3% increase nationally for graduate degrees awarded are primarily in areas in which Georgia College does not offer graduate programs. The main exception is in health sciences which is reflected in the growth experienced by the College of Health Sciences.

DEGREES CONFERRED	AY 11	AY 12	AY 13	AY 14	AY 15	AY 16 Est
College of Education	232	265	272	212	219	199
College of Business	128	184	140	109	112	125
College of Arts & Sciences	82	91	72	58	56	54
College of Health Sciences	37	35	27	60	53	77
GEORGIA COLLEGE TOTAL	479	575	511	439	440	455

Number of Graduate Degrees Conferred: AY 11 to AY 16



Environmental Analysis

Strengths

- Georgia College's reputation
- Nationally ranked graduate programs in select disciplines
- Established graduate programs tied to a brick-and-mortar institution
- Accreditation – SACS and program specific (e.g. AACSB)
- Low cost / tuition + fees
- Academic program support (e.g. library, IT)
- Infrastructure for graduate programs (e.g. graduate admissions office, program directors, graduate council, Radius CRM)
- Placement rates of graduates

Weaknesses

- Identity / Brand is “Liberal Arts” – does not translate well when recruiting for graduate programs
- Marketing of graduate programs - One-size-fits all approach
- Location (limited appeal for face-to-face programs)
- Lack of visibility of graduate students and programs to undergraduate students (in some disciplines)
- Lack of connection with campus for students in some online programs
- Graduate assistantships - Too few; Low stipends; Allocation across programs
- Too many programs – can't be everything to everyone
- Faculty support
 - No course relief or financial support for development of online or hybrid courses
 - No course relief or financial support for supervision of theses and non-thesis students
 - Lack of consideration for faculty who teach weekends, expectation of being on campus M-F remains in some programs
- Inconsistencies across colleges with respect to the role of graduate coordinators, faculty workload, role of GAs (teaching, lab assistant, research)
- Graduate students are treated the same as undergraduate students despite having different needs
- Limited support for graduate international students
- Recruitment efforts in some colleges and/or across the university need to be supported

Opportunities

- Leverage GC's undergraduate reputation to promote graduate programs
- Growing market for quality online programs
- Growing demand for face-to-face programs for international students
- Increase graduate research/thesis offerings in face-to-face programs to attract students who may want to pursue doctorates in the future
- Be more intentional about program offerings to ensure a distinctive set of programs
- Increase flexibility in admission criteria for professional programs (without lowering standards)
- Differentiate ourselves from other online programs (liberal arts, GC's reputation)

Threats

- Growing number of online programs available
- Potential graduate program offerings by Middle Georgia State University
- Changes to tuition reimbursement programs in some industries (e.g. health care, education)
- Pressure from USG to eliminate low enrolment programs
- Fewer “perks” for students to get advanced degrees (e.g. pay increase for advanced degrees in education) thereby weakening demand from traditional markets

Strategic Goals

The following guiding principles provide a basis for the strategic goals and objectives outlined in this document.

Graduate education at Georgia College will be

- informed and enriched by a foundation in a liberal arts education;
- managed with clear lines of responsibility and accountability on the part of individual Colleges and the Office of Academic Affairs with data-driven decision making; and
- supported by dedicated and highly qualified faculty members, as well as knowledgeable and caring professional staff.

Strategic Goal 1:

Georgia College will offer a limited selection of high-quality market-relevant graduate programs.

Objective 1-1: Each graduate program will have a sustainable level of enrollment.

Action Item 1-1-A: Programs will complete a self-study to assess sustainability.

Measures: Number of students, number of degrees conferred, credit hour generation, proportion of students receiving tuition assistance (e.g. TAP, Graduate Assistantship).

Benchmarks should be set for these measures in collaboration with program directors, deans, and academic affairs to ensure sustainability.

Action Item 1-1-B: Programs will examine alternative delivery methods (e.g. online, hybrid, face-to-face) to increase student enrollment.

Measure: Number of students

Action Item 1-1-C: Develop, implement, and support program-specific recruitment/marketing plans to increase number and diversity of student enrollment.

Measures: Funds allocated to graduate recruitment, number of students, student diversity

Objective 1-2: Enhance the quality of graduate programs.

Action Item 1-2-A: Review admission criteria for each program with the aim of maintaining competitive admission standards.

Measure: Profile of admitted students (e.g. undergraduate GPA, admission test scores, graduate academic standing)

Action Item 1-2-B: Review curriculum of each program for relevance and rigor.

Measure: National / State rankings, placement rates, pass rates on professional certifications, accreditation and national recognition, graduation rates, time to graduation

Strategic Goal 2:

Georgia College will support graduate education as an integral part of its liberal arts mission.

Objective 2-1: Strengthen the administrative structure that supports graduate education.

Action Item 2-1-A: Clarify the role and responsibilities of graduate coordinators and program directors.

Measure: Development of job description and graduate coordinator's handbook

Action Item 2-1-B: Improve communication between the colleges, programs, and administration.

Measure: Enhance the role of the graduate coordinators' meetings for communication purposes

Action Item 2-1-C: Clarify policies and procedures relating to graduate courses and programs.

Measure: Create a single source (web portal) for all documents relating to the administration of graduate programs.

Objective 2-2: Improve service to graduate students.

Action Item 2-2-A: Survey graduate students to assess their needs and expectations.

Measures: Create and deliver survey, evaluate survey results

Action Item 2-2-B: Provide program specific orientation in addition to a general online orientation for new graduate students.

Measure: Delivery of orientation programs, creation and implementation of online orientation modules

Action Item 2-2-C: Provide official communication to graduate students in a relevant and timely manner.

Measure: Development of a communication plan that identifies the different needs of graduate students versus undergraduate students. e.g. messages from Registrar's Office regarding registration and graduate commencement

Objective 2-3: Provide dedicated financial support for graduate programs.

Action Item 2-3-A: Enhance endowments and foster donor development directly related to graduate programs.

Measures: Number of new scholarships for graduate students, endowments specific to graduate education

Action Item 2-3-B: Review of graduate assistantship program to ensure competitiveness with peer institutions and program sustainability.

Measures: Stipend amount, number of assistantships, proportion of students with assistantships