

Georgia College Strategic Plan

Committee on Student Quality and University Distinction

Introduction

University-wide participation was included on the Strategic Plan Committee on Student Quality and University Distinction by the following membership:

Suzanne Pittman – Enrollment Management Chairperson
Dr. Cynthia Alby - College of Education
Dr. TM Chiang – College of Arts & Sciences
Mike Augustine - Center for Student Success
Dr. Kendra Russell – Macon Graduate Center
Craig Henry – Information Technology Services
John Bowen - Leadership Programs
Anna Whiteside – Honors Program
Kay Anderson – Office of the Registrar
Ramon Blakley – Office of Admissions
Michael Muller - Student Government Association
Dr. Chris Ferland – Institutional Research (Ex-Officio)

Student Quality and University Distinction are areas that have much overlap at Georgia College. This committee reviewed a great deal of data and reports used to base our recommendations. These reports include but are not limited to IPEDS data, NSSE results, freshmen admission trends as well as competitor analyses. Demographic trend data, provided by WICHE, demonstrates the areas of the country with projected increases in high school graduates as well as the shifts in the ethnicity of our population. While Georgia College is working to increase enrollment from students who reside outside of Georgia, 5,918 of our undergraduate students are currently from Georgia. While Georgia is expected to experience modest growth in high school graduates through 2020, the composition of students will change.

For the state of Georgia:

- In 2008-09, White non-Hispanics accounted for 53% of the class, but projections indicate that will shrink to 47% in 2019-20. 2016-17 will mark the year Georgia will become ‘majority-minority’ with more non-White graduates than White non-Hispanic graduates.
- The share of Hispanics is projected to double to 12% between 2008-09 and 2019-20.

- Asians/Pacific Islanders will also be up 2 percentage points over the same timeframe, to 6%.
- Black non-Hispanics are projected to see their share decline, from 37% to 34%.

Data on competitor institutions within Georgia, peer and aspirational institutions nationally, prove the need for Georgia College to be competitive with a distinct identity in all our markets in order to not only sustain, but to succeed as a preeminent liberal arts university. Efforts should be directed at identifying the one component that Georgia College would like to be known for.

Georgia College has been in an enviable position over the last 10 years of increasing the academic profile of our fall freshmen cohorts, while also increasing the size. Expectations are that as the size of the class increases, the academic quality of students is likely to decrease, but that has not been our experience up to this point. The average SAT score (critical reading and math) has increased over 40 points since 2005 and the average high school grade point average has increased .24 points. After reviewing our competitor analysis, we find that our largest competition for high ability students is the University of Georgia, while Georgia Southern University and Mercer University are also included. Georgia College's competitors for minority students include the University of Georgia as well as Georgia State University and Kennesaw State University.

Georgia College strives to have a national presence as a preeminent public liberal arts university. Acquiring this reputation will require us to have a distinctive identity as well as attracting diverse, academically talented students to our institution. Perceived strengths of the university include our engaged faculty, strong academic programs and learning resources, beauty of our campus, and the strong relationship building that occurs at Georgia College. (Complete SWOT Analysis is included to this report as an addendum.) Our challenges include a shortage of scholarships, growing class sizes in general education, student and faculty diversity, as well as repeated branding changes. Opportunities exist in the growing number of high school graduates in Georgia as well as possibilities in markets outside of Georgia, partnerships with organizations such as HOBY and the 100 Black Men of Atlanta. Recent increases in donor giving may also increase opportunities. External threats include views that liberal arts degrees are not valuable, possible consolidations with the University System of Georgia, and attempts at mission creep from other state universities.

Goals and Objectives

University Distinction and Student Quality

Goal One

Georgia College will study class sizes of appropriate peer institutions to develop class size structure.

Objectives

Over five years, Georgia College will strive to decrease the number of classes with more than 50 students by eight sections each year and will strive to increase the

number of courses with less than 20 students by approximately 50 each year. We believe this may be possible with the addition of five faculty per year.

(ENGL 1101, 1102, GC1Y, GC2Y)

Most courses at Georgia College have an enrollment of less than 50 students per section. However, in recent years, faculty in several disciplines have offered “double sections” of core courses – essentially teaching two classes in one – in order to reduce their overall time in the classroom. We recommend that this practice be discontinued, both to provide students with the opportunity for more in-class, personal attention and to increase the number of courses that meet this key indicator. This change should not require any additional resources and could be implemented immediately. In addition, colleges should investigate reducing other courses with enrollments over 50 students per section (Business, Nursing) and commit to keeping as many future courses as possible under this course size.

Georgia College offers more than 100 ENGL 1101, 1102, GC1Y and GC2Y sections per term that have been hovering at enrollments above 20 students for the past several years. By capping the total enrollment in these classes at 20 students, we will create a critical mass of courses that meet this key indicator and provide students with more personal attention in areas that we consider critical to student success and our liberal arts mission. In the case of the ENGL 1101 and 1102 courses, this may require the addition of extra graduate teaching assistants or hiring in existing, but vacant, faculty lines. The continuing increase in dual enrollment credit for ENGL 1101 and 1102 will also likely be an advantage in lowering these enrollments. Lowering the enrollments in GC1Y and GC2Y may require a reallocation of existing resources or additional hires. However, we believe that the long-term benefit of lower course sizes in these areas will justify the overall cost.

Goal Two

Increase Alumni giving by 10% each year by promoting \$1 giving at graduation, making alumni giving part of the regalia purchase process, and increasing mailings and phone-a thon solicitations.

Graduating students may not realize why alumni giving is important to the institution or the overall impact that even the smallest gift has on our alumni giving percentage. By promoting the benefits of giving and by actively providing simple opportunities for small gifts, we believe we can dramatically increase giving by recent graduates. We recommend that as many of these efforts as possible be directed to students just prior to graduation.

Goal Three

Expand graduation requirements to require traditional, high impact components of a liberal arts education for all students entering Georgia College summer or fall 2017.

Objectives

Require an out of the classroom experience for all graduates included from the following: undergraduate research, study abroad, internship, community engagement/service, leadership experience.

These five experiences have been repeatedly identified as integral to a holistic, liberal arts experience. Initial data suggests that most of our students do complete at least one of these experiences before graduation, and many complete more than one. Tracking processes already exist for for-credit undergraduate research, study abroad, service, and for-credit internships. We recommend the immediate implementation of tracking processes using our Banner information system for areas that do not have such processes in place. We also recommend that the completion of at least one experience be established as a graduation requirement of all students, beginning with freshmen who enter in summer or fall 2017. In addition, public relations materials highlighting this type of involvement should specifically address the uniqueness of our students' experiences in these areas to differentiate us from other institutions that offer these same opportunities (i.e., performing undergraduate research with a tenured faculty member, not a master's student).

Provide options for students to prepare a digital portfolio of academic work under the direction of their faculty mentor/ academic advisor as well as an experiential transcript of campus involvements.

Portfolios provide students with an opportunity to showcase their work and can serve as a valuable assessment tool for the university. A digital portfolio, particularly when developed under the guidance of a mentor, can also help students reflect on their learning over time and better integrate aspects of their liberal arts experience. It can also be a valuable resource for students as they seek admission to graduate programs or apply for their first jobs. We recommend the implementation of a portfolio that highlights students' work in both general education and major courses as a graduation requirement for all undergraduates, beginning with freshmen who enter in summer or fall 2017. This portfolio should be introduced in first-year seminars and completed as part of the senior capstone.

The experiential transcript provides students with an opportunity not only to record key out-of-class learning experiences, but also to make informed decisions about their involvement. It also provides the institution with valuable data on student involvement. We recommend that the existing format of the experiential transcript be reviewed to ensure that current categories of participation and recognition continue to align with the university's mission and goals, and then that the experiential transcript be reestablished it as an expectation for all students. Instruction on the transcript and on intentional, holistic out-of-class involvement should be given in both freshmen seminars, during advising and mentoring appointments, and through capstone classes.

Goal Four

Working with the Georgia College Scholarship Office, work to receive a national scholarship within 10 years.

Objectives

Submit at least one application for each year for the following scholarships: Rhodes, Marshall, Fulbright, Truman, Goldwater, Boren, the National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship, and Udall. Three scholarship applications should be submitted annually for Fulbright.

National scholarship awards are a symbol of an institution's "arrival" as a nationally-recognized institution with a competitive student body. Scholarship reviewers are generally selected from prestigious institutions, and publicity surrounding such awards is widely circulated to individuals within the higher education community. Further, publicity on award recipients highlights an institution's educational opportunities and its ability to prepare students for graduate school and competitive professional careers. Georgia College has already committed to this goal by hiring a staff member to serve as our national scholarship coordinator

Goal Five

Increase the average SAT score to 1200 (Critical Reading and Math) with incremental increases each year (subject to adjustment based on changes to the SAT).

Objectives

Increase the number of merit and need-based institutional scholarships available to incoming students.

In order to be competitive with our peers, Georgia College must increase the number of available scholarships for students. Academically talented students expect to be recognized for their accomplishments through awards. These should include both endowed scholarships and out-of-state tuition waivers as those markets yield greater numbers of students.

Increase early engagement programs.

As Georgia College strives to attract students, it will become important to bring students to campus at earlier stages. These can be done through summer engagement programs for those in middle school to help them start preparing for the college selection process and summer camps for high school students with an intentional interest in areas of our strong programs such as creative writing or the sciences.

Goal Six

Increase the diversity of the freshmen class to achieve 25% identifying as non-White by 2020.

Objectives

Increase programs to attract students from underrepresented populations such as Glimpse Days and Weekends and Infinite Scholars Fairs.

Both Glimpse events, where minority students are able to visit campus, and Infinite Scholars Fairs have proven tremendously effective. These fairs introduce minority students from outside of Georgia to Georgia College. Increasing the number of these events that the university participates in will yield a higher number of students through

the admissions funnel. Continuing to offer the institutional ACT to prospective students may also assist in attracting first generation students who may have missed the opportunity to test before deadlines. . Georgia College can gain stronger visibility with high school students and their families by assisting them in applying for external scholarships (Gates Scholarship).

Increase the number of high school counselor visitation events.

High school counselors are vital in the promotion of Georgia College to high school students both in underrepresented markets and target markets. Exposing the Georgia College experience and campus to them will increase knowledge of the in and outside of the classroom experiences Georgia College offers.