



Georgia State University

OVERVIEW

When it comes to higher education, the vision of the United States as a land of equal opportunity is far from a reality. Today, it is *eight times* more likely that an individual in the top quartile of Americans by annual household income will hold a college degree than an individual in the lowest quartile.¹ Nationally, white students graduate from college at rates more than 10 points higher than Hispanic students, and are more than twice as likely to graduate with a 4-year college degree compared to black students.² The United States Department of Education cites a six-year graduation-rate of 39% among Pell-eligible students,³ a rate that is 20 points lower than the national average.⁴

In 2003, Georgia State's institutional graduation rate stood at 32% and underserved populations were foundering. Graduation rates were 22% for Latinos, 29% for African Americans, and 18% for African American males. Pell students were graduating at rates far below those of non-Pell students.

Today, thanks to a campus-wide commitment to student success and more than a dozen strategic programs implemented over the past several years, Georgia State's achievement gap is gone. The graduation rate for bachelor-degree seeking students has improved 22 points—among the highest increases in the nation over this period (**Chart 1**). (See Appendix for all charts.) Rates are up 36 points for Latinos (to 58%), and 29 points for African Americans (to 58%). Pell-eligible students currently represent 58% of Georgia State University's undergraduate student population, and over the past three years have graduated at rates, on average, equal to those of non-Pell students. *In fact, this past year, African-American, Hispanic, first-generation and Pell-eligible students all graduated from Georgia State at rates at or above those of the student body overall—making Georgia State the only national public university to achieve this goal.*

Georgia State also continues to set new records for degrees conferred. With the consolidation with Perimeter College, the university awarded a total of 6,569 undergraduate degrees over the 2015-2016 academic year. The university established new records for total bachelor degrees awarded (4,867), as well as bachelor degrees awarded to Pell-eligible (2,829), black (1,8925), Hispanic (433), and first-generation (1,176) students (**Charts 2 and 3**). Despite steep declines in Perimeter enrollments over the past three years, associate degree conferrals were also up (1,702). Georgia State now graduates more Hispanic, Asian, first generation, and Pell students with bachelor degrees than any other university in Georgia. For four consecutive years, we have conferred more bachelor degrees to African Americans than any other non-profit college or university in the United States (**Chart 4**).

Since the launch of its current Strategic Plan in 2011, Georgia State University has seen a 16% increase in its number of undergraduate degree conferrals, with even stronger gains made with at-risk student populations. Over the past five years, bachelor degree conferrals are up 37% for African Americans, 36% for Pell students, and 44% for Hispanics.

These gains have been the subject of growing levels of national attention:

1 The Pell Institute (2015) Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States : 45 Year Trend Report (2015 Revised Edition). Retrieved from http://www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Indicators_of_Higher_Education_Equity_in_the_US_45_Year_Trend_Report.pdf

2 U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2014) Table 326.10: Graduation rate from first institution attended for first-time, full-time bachelor's degree- seeking students at 4-year postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity, time to completion, sex, control of institution, and acceptance rate: Selected cohort entry years, 1996 through 2007. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_326.10.asp.

3 Horwich, Lloyd (25 November 2015) Report on the Federal Pell Grant Program. Retrieved from <http://www.nasfaa.org/uploads/documents/Pell0212.pdf>.

4 U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2014) Table 326.10.

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- In December 2014, President Barak Obama lauded the exemplary work being done at Georgia State University to assist low-income students through its Panther Retention Grant program in his address at White House Opportunity Day.⁵
- In January 2015, Georgia State received the Institutional Transformation Award from the American Council on Education (ACE), the largest organization for post-secondary education in the nation. Citing Georgia State's exceptional progress in the area of student success and its elimination of all achievement gaps, ACE granted the award for only the second time in its history. (The first award went to Arizona State.)
- In August 2015, Georgia State was invited to provide expert testimony on innovations in increasing student success before the United State Senate.
- In September 2015, Georgia State was awarded a \$9 million grant from the Department of Education to lead a 4-year study to track the impact of analytics-based proactive advisement on 10,000 low-income and first-generation college students nationally.
- In its annual national rankings released August 2016, *U.S. News and World Report* ranked Georgia State 14th in the nation for its Commitment to Undergraduate Teaching and named it the 4th Most Innovative University in the nation. Its First-Year Experience and Freshman Learning Community programs were both listed among the Top 15 in the nation.

Motivated by a desire to make an impact, not only in the lives of its own students, but also in the lives of students nation-wide, Georgia State University has made a conscious and significant commitment of time and resources to sharing the lessons that we have learned. Over the past two years, Georgia State has hosted teams from almost 200 colleges and universities that sought to learn more about Georgia State programs, including institutions from Holland, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Georgia State University now enrolls more African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, first-generation students, and Pell students than any college or university Georgia. In fact, the University set new records for the number of bachelor-degree-seeking students enrolled in *every one* of these categories in 2015. With Georgia State's January 2016 consolidation with Georgia Perimeter College, the study body has become even more remarkable. Georgia State University now enrolls 51,000 students including, for the first time, 20,000 students pursuing associate degrees on its five Perimeter College campuses. This means that approximately one out of every six students in the entire University System of Georgia this past spring was enrolled at Georgia State. This number includes an amazing 27,000 Pell students. (As a comparison, the entire Ivy League last year enrolled 9,800 Pell students.) We now enroll more than 19,000 African Americans per semester (25% of the USG total enrollment of African American students) and 4,200 Hispanic students (22% of the USG total) (**Chart 5**). According to *U.S. News and World Report*, even prior to consolidation, Georgia State University is one of only two universities to rank in the Top 15 in the nation for both its racial/ethnic diversity⁶ and for the number of low-income students enrolled.⁷

The most foundational principle guiding our efforts has been a pledge to improve student outcomes through *inclusion* rather *exclusion*. In the 2011 Georgia State University Strategic Plan, we committed ourselves to improve our graduation rates significantly, but not by turning our backs on the low-income, underrepresented and first-generation students that we have traditionally served. To the contrary: we pledged to increase the number of underrepresented, first-generation and Pell students enrolled and to serve them better. We committed to achieving improved outcomes for our students not merely at Georgia State but in their lives and careers after graduation. The consolidation with Perimeter College and its tens of thousands of students who fall into federal at-risk categories is the latest example of this deep commitment.

The central goal that we have set for our undergraduate success efforts is highly ambitious, but the words were carefully chosen: Georgia State would

“become a national model for undergraduate education by demonstrating that students from all backgrounds can achieve academic and career success at high rates”⁸

5 President Barak Obama (4 December 2014) Remarks by the President at College Opportunity Summit. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/04/remarks-president-college-opportunity-summit>.

6 U.S. News & World Report (n.d.) Campus Ethnic Diversity: National Universities. Retrieved from <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/campus-ethnic-diversity>.

7 U.S. News & World Report (n.d.) Economic Diversity: National Universities. Retrieved <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/economic-diversity>.

8 Georgia State University (2012). Strategic Plan 2011-2016/21. Retrieved from http://strategic.gsu.edu/files/2012/09/GSU_Strategic_Plan_2016-2.pdf

Our goals included a commitment to raise overall institutional graduation rates and degree conferrals by significant margins—graduation rates for bachelor-seeking students would climb 13 points and undergraduate degree completions would increase by 2,500 by 2021—and to closing all achievement gaps between our student populations. As outlined in this update, we have made great strides already.

The Strategic Plan also outlined key strategies to achieve these goals. We made a commitment to overhaul our advising system, to track every student daily with the use of predictive analytics and to intervene with students who are at risk in a proactive fashion, to expand existing high-impact programs such as freshman learning communities and Keep Hope Alive, to raise more scholarship dollars, and to pilot and scale innovative new types of financial interventions. These programs and their impacts are outlined in the next section.

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS, HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS AND RESULTS

In 2011, Georgia State University committed to reach a graduation rate for bachelor-degree-seeking students of 52% by 2016 and 60% by 2021.⁹ We also committed to conferring 2,500 more degrees annually than we did in 2010 and to eliminating all significant achievement gaps between student populations. We now have committed to *doubling* the graduation rate of our new associate-degree seeking students from the 2014 baseline over the next five years.

On the surface, attaining these goals seems implausible. Georgia State's demographic trends—characterized by huge increases in the enrollments of at-risk students in recent years—typically would project a steep *decline* in student outcomes. Georgia State University, though, has been able to make dramatic gains towards its success targets even as the student body has become more financially distressed. Aided by the consolidation with Perimeter College, *the 6,569 undergraduate degrees conferred during the 2015-2016 academic year represent a 2,347-degree increase (56%) over the baseline year of 2011 (Chart 3)*. The gains have been greatest for a number of at-risk student populations.

In the 2014-2015 academic year, Georgia State University conferred record numbers of bachelor degrees to Pell-eligible, first generation, Black or African American, and Hispanic students (**Chart 6**). Since the 2010-2011 academic year, the number of bachelor degrees conferred to Pell students by 33% while conferral to African American students has increased by 42% and to Hispanic students has increased by 52%.¹⁰ (See **Chart 7**.) Time to degree is also down markedly—by more than half a semester per students since 2011—saving the graduating class of 2016 approximately \$12 million in tuition and fees compared to their colleagues just three years earlier (**Chart 8**).

Since the launch of Georgia State University's current strategic plan, and the start of our participation in Complete College Georgia, *our institutional graduation rate for bachelor-degree-seeking students has increased by 6 percentage points to a record 54% (Charts 1, 7)*. Early indications are that, in the first two semesters after consolidation, graduation rates for associate-degree-seeking students are also making significant gains.

It is important to note that low-income and first-generation students' families move frequently due to changes in jobs and economic circumstances when compared to middle- and upper-class college students. This phenomenon significantly impacts Georgia State's institutional graduation rates. Using National Student Clearinghouse data to track Georgia State's most recent 6-year bachelor-seeking cohort across all universities nationally, the success rates are even more encouraging. For the current year, a record 76.8% of the students who started at Georgia State six years ago have either graduated from Georgia State or some other institution or are still actively enrolled in college. The numbers for African American (77%) and Latino (80%) students in this category are even higher (**Chart 9**).

This combination of large increases in Pell enrollments and significantly rising graduation rates confounds the conventional wisdom. Nationally, one can track a strong correlation between increases in Pell rates and *decreases* in graduation rates. Georgia State's completion efforts have made us a clear outlier nationally. In fact, among all of our peer institutions as defined by the BOR, Georgia State now has both the highest Pell rates *and* the highest graduation rates.

HIGH IMPACT STRATEGIES

9 Georgia State University (2012) College Completion Plan 2012: A University-wide Plan for Student Success (The Implementation of Goal 1 of the GSU Strategic Plan). Retrieved from http://enrollment.gsu.edu/wp-content/blogs.dir/57/files/2013/09/GSU_College_Completion_Plan_09-06-12.pdf

10 Actual percent increases were much higher in these two categories, but we have controlled for the effects of the University implementing more rigorous processes encouraging students to self-report their race and ethnicity.

1. GPS ADVISING

High-impact strategy	Use predictive analytics and a system of more than 800 alerts to track all undergraduates daily, to identify at-risk behaviors, and to have advisors respond to alerts by intervening in a timely fashion to get students back on track.
Goals Supported/ Strategic Impact	<p>Goal #1: Increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG institutions.</p> <p>Goal #2: Increase the number of degrees that are earned ‘on time.’</p> <p>Goal #3: Decrease excess credits earned on the path to getting a degree.</p> <p>Goal #4: Provide intrusive advising to keep students on track to graduate.</p> <p>Close achievement gaps correlated to race, ethnicity, income level and first-generation status.</p> <p>The strategy is high impact because it touches every undergraduate every day and leveraged the power of data to strengthen existing advising protocols.</p>
Summary of Activities	<p>System went fully live in August 2012. This past academic year, the system generated more than 51,000 individual meetings between advisors and students to discuss specific alerts—all aimed at getting the student back on path to graduation. Since Georgia State went live with GPS Advising three years ago, freshmen fall-to-spring retention rates have increased by 5 percentage points and graduating seniors are taking fewer excess courses in completing their degrees.</p> <p>In 2016, Georgia State University consolidates with Georgia Perimeter College. EDUCAUSE, with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust (the Helmsley Trust) and in partnership with Achieving the Dream (ATD), has awarded Georgia State University a grant to facilitate our efforts to deploy our technology solution and adapt our advising strategy in order to increase graduation rates for the 20,000 students seeking associate degrees at GPC. In addition to providing much needed support to students seeking associate degrees, the extension of our GPS to encompass the entirety of the new consolidated university provides us with the opportunity to better understand and support transfer pathways between two- and four- year institutions. The GPS platform will launch at Perimeter during the Fall 16 semester.</p>
Baseline Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six Year Graduation Rate at Launch: 48% Bachelor level (2011) • 6% Associate level (2014) • Degrees Conferred: in the 2013-2014 Academic Year: 4,155 Bachelors (2011) • 1,702 Associates (2015)
Interim Measures of Progress	<p>The numbers we are achieving via the programs are exceptionally strong. We have been tracking the use of the system and gathering interim metrics such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit hours at the time of graduation (which have declined by an average of 8 credit hours per graduating student since 2011) • Percent of students in majors that fit their academic abilities (up by 13 points) • Percent of students with lower academic risk factors (up by 16 points) • Decline in changes of major in the sophomore and junior years (down by 32%)
Measures of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergraduate Six-Year Graduation rates up 6 percentage points since launch • Number of Undergraduate Degree conferrals up 19% since launch • Wasted credit hours have declined by 8 credit hours per graduating student while average time to degree is down by half a semester. • Achievement gaps have been eliminated
Lessons Learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The true potential of predictive analytics comes not from its ability to identify students at risk, but in its ability to support intensive advising

	<p>practices. In order for predictive analytics to make a significant impact in higher education, technology solutions must be accompanied by investment in advising personnel and practices that can most effectively translate data into action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic choices have a significant impact on career aspirations and vice versa. With the introduction of a new career matcher feature into our existing GPA advising platform (powered by data from Burning Glass), students are shown lists of common careers commonly associated with their chosen or prospective majors, as well as information about what skills are sought after by employers in those fields. Advising students with a view to life beyond graduation provides them with a broader perspective about what academic success means, as well as stronger sense of direction and motivation to pursue their degree, not as an end in itself, but as a springboard to future success in life and career.
Primary Contacts	<p>Dr. Timothy Renick (Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success), Dr. Allison Calhoun-Brown (Associate Vice President for Student Success) Carol Cohen (Director of the University Advisement Center)</p>

2. SUMMER SUCCESS ACADEMY

High-impact strategy	Use predictive analytics to identify admitted students for the fall freshman class who are academically at-risk and require that these students attend a seven-week summer session before fall classes.
Goals Supported/Strategic Impact	<p>Goal #7: Increase the likelihood of degree by transforming the way that remediation is accomplished</p> <p>Goal #1: Increase degrees conferred</p>
Summary of Activities	<p>Program was initiated in 2012 as an alternate to deferring weaker freshmen admits to the Spring semester. Students enroll in 7 credits of college-level (non-remedial) courses and are given the support of all of GSU’s tutoring, advising, financial literacy, and academic skills programs at their disposal. All students are in freshmen learning committees. This year’s cohort was the largest ever, with 370 student enrolled. The most recent cohort was retained at a rate of 87%. This compares to an 83% retention rate for remainder of the freshmen class who were, on paper, better academically prepared for college. It is important to note that these same students, when Georgia State was deferring their enrollment until the spring semester (as is the common practice nationally), were being retained at only a 50% clip. This equates to more than 100 additional freshmen being retained via the Summer Success Academy this past year alone than would have been the case under the old model.</p>
Baseline Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior to the launch of the program, students with a similar academic profile had a one-year retention rate of 51% (2010). We are launching the Summer Success Academy at Perimeter College for the summer of 2017. The baseline retention rate for Perimeter students overall is 64.5%; once we identify for the first Perimeter cohort, we will create a more accurate baseline retention rate given the profile of the students enrolled.
Interim Measures of Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention rates Graduation rates Degree completions
Measures of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention rates for the students for the at-risk students enrolled in the Success Academy (87%) exceed those of the rest of the freshman class (83%) and the baseline of 51% in 2011. In summer 2015, the program enrolled 370 students, up 50 from summer of 2011

<p>Lessons Learned</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the Summer Success Academy is a program that would most certainly be of benefit to all students, it is important to ensure that the size of the program does not outstrip resources. The amount of personalized attention that students receive in the program is a significant reason for the program’s success, not only because of the level of academic coaching required for our most at-risk students, but also because mentoring by peers and professionals also provides academy students with a sense of self-efficacy and the ‘soft’ skills necessary to ‘do college.’ • Georgia State currently has a grant from the Kresge and EMCM Foundations to expand our current program, while at the same time collecting validation data that would allow the Foundation to help promote the Success Academy as a national best practice for closing the achievement gap for at-risk populations. We have a proposal pending before a third foundation to help accelerate implementation at Perimeter College.
<p>Primary Contacts</p>	<p>Dr. Allison Calhoun-Brown (Associate Vice President for Student Success) Dr. Eric Cuevas (Director of Student Success Programs)</p>

3. PANTHER RETENTION GRANTS

<p>High-impact strategy</p>	<p>Provide micro grants to students at the fee drop each semester to help cover modest financial shortfalls impacting the students’ ability to pay tuition and fees to prevent students from stopping/dropping out. This past fall, more than 18,000 of Georgia State’s 25,000+ bachelor-seeking students (72%) had some level of unmet need (we are using Fall 16 data to set a baseline for our associate-seeking students), meaning that even after grants, loans, scholarships, family contributions and the income generated from the student working 20 hours a week, the students lack sufficient funds to attend college. Each semester, hundreds of fully qualified students are dropped from their classes for lack of payment. For as little as \$300, Panther Retention Grants provide the emergency funding to allow students who want to get their degrees the opportunity to stay enrolled. Last year, nearly 2,000 Georgia State students were brought back to the classroom—and kept on the path to attaining a college degree—through the program. 61% of the seniors who received PRG support last academic year graduated within two semesters of receiving the grant and 82% either had graduated or were still enrolled one year after receiving the grant. With more than 5,000 grants awarded over the past four years, the program has prevented literally thousands of students from dropping out of Georgia State.</p>
<p>Goals Supported/ Strategic Impact</p>	<p>Goal #1: Increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG institutions</p> <p>Goal #10: Mitigate the detrimental effects of financial need on student recruitment, retention, and graduation</p> <p>This is a high-impact strategy because it takes scarce financial resources and targets them using the power of data and analytics. It has been able to be scaled quickly, and is now impacting 2,000 students per year.</p>
<p>Summary of Activities</p>	<p>Staff examine the drop lists for students with genuine unmet need, who are on track for graduation using our academic analytics, and who have modest balances for tuition and fees. Students are offered micro grants on the condition that they agree to certain activities, including meeting with a financial counselor to map out plans to finance the rest of their education. Last academic year, 2,000 grants were offered. This included the first grants awarded to Perimeter College students during the Spring 2016 and Summer 2016 semesters.</p>
<p>Baseline Status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A California State University study found that, among students who stop out for a semester, only 30% ever return and graduate from the institution. The PRG program is designed to prevent stop out and the negative impact on

	completion rates that follow.
Interim Measures of Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of freshmen who were offered Panther Retention grants in fall 2013, 93% enrolled the following spring, a rate higher than that of the student body as a whole. 83% of freshman PRG recipients returned to class in fall 2014. The retention rate for freshmen who were offered the grants in fall 2014 was 88%. • We are also tracking the rate of “returnees” to the program, which we have been able to keep under 25% • Since the first awards of the grants to Perimeter students did not occur until Spring 16, we do not have one-year data yet. We will report of these data in next year’s report.
Measures of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ultimate measure of success is college completion. The largest group of recipients last year were seniors, who often are running out of Hope funding or exhausting other aid. 68% of seniors who receive the grant have graduated.
Lessons Learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A data-driven approach to award dispersion ensures that support is given to students who are both in need and who are likely to succeed when their need is met. This represents a shift in perspective, away from distributing funds as a response to financial need alone, and toward an approach that is first and foremost motivated by an interest in eliminating non-academic barriers to student success. • Many students lack the financial literacy necessary to ensure that an otherwise sustainable amount of financial support is managed effectively through to the end of their degrees. The Panther Retention Grants are an excellent way to respond to the financial needs of student who are on track to degree, but who encounter financial shortfalls as they near graduation. In an effort to be more proactive, GSU has added a set of financial indicators to its predictive analytics and has also committed to establishing a dedicated financial counseling center by the end of Spring 2016. Through proactive interventions like these, GSU expects to see fewer of its students run into financial problems later in their degree, while at the same time providing tis students with the tools necessary for financial security in career upon graduation.
Primary Contacts	Mr. Louis Scott (Director of Financial Aid) Dr. Allison Calhoun-Brown (Associate Vice President for Student Success)

4. KEEP HOPE ALIVE (KHA)

<p>High-impact strategy</p>	<p>With 59% of Georgia State students coming from Pell-eligible households (where the annual household income last year was less than \$30,000), the Hope scholarship can be a mixed blessing. The \$6,000+ scholarship provides access to college for thousands of Georgia State students, but for the student who does not maintain a 3.0 college GPA, the loss of Hope often means the student has to drop out for financial reasons. In 2008, the graduation rates for students who lose the Hope scholarship were only 20%, 40-points lower than the rates for those who hold on to it. Gaining the Hope Scholarship back after losing it is a statistical longshot: only about 9% of Georgia State students pull this off. Keep Hope Alive provides a \$500 stipend for two semesters to students who have lost Hope as an incentive for them to follow a rigorous academic restoration plan that includes meeting with advisors, attending workshops, and participating in financial literacy training—all designed to help students improve their GPAs and to regain the scholarship. Since 2008, the program has helped to almost <u>double</u> the graduation rates of Georgia State students who lose the Hope scholarship.</p>
<p>Goals Supported/Strategic Impact</p>	<p>Goal #1: Increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG institutions</p> <p>Goal #10: Mitigate the detrimental effects of financial need on student recruitment, retention, and graduation</p>
<p>Summary of Activities</p>	<p>By signing a contract to receive \$500 for each of the first two semesters after losing Hope, students agree to participate in a series of programs and interventions designed to get them back on track academically and to make wise financial choices in the aftermath of losing the scholarship.</p> <p>Scholarship Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program is open to freshman and sophomore students with a 2.75 – 2.99 HOPE grade point average. • Student must pursue a minimum of 30 credit hours within the next academic year (fall, spring, and summer semesters). • Students must attend Student Success workshops facilitated by the Office of Undergraduate Studies. • Students must meet with their academic coach on a regular basis. • Students are required to attend mandatory advisement sessions facilitated by the University Advisement Center. <p>During the coming academic year, we are exploring models for the use of KHA for our associate-degree seeking students.</p>
<p>Baseline Status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention rates for students receiving the HOPE scholarship were 50% in 2008. • Six-year graduation rates for students who lost their HOPE scholarship at some point in their academic career were 21% in 2008
<p>Interim Measures of Progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For students in KHA in the period from 2011 to 2015, better than 55% gained the scholarship back at the next marker, in the process leveraging our \$1,000 scholarship investment by gaining between \$6,000 and \$12,000 of Hope dollars back again.
<p>Measures of Success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2008, institutional HOPE retention rates have increased by 50%, from 49% to 75% in 2015. • Compared to 2008, the six-year graduation rate for students who lost their HOPE scholarship at some point in their academic carrier has almost doubled, from 21% in 2008 to 38% in 2015.
<p>Lessons Learned</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Losing the HOPE scholarship puts students far more at risk than losing a 3.0 GPA.

Primary Contacts	Dr. Eric Cuevas (Director of Student Success Programs)
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5. META-MAJORS

High-impact strategy	At a large public university such as Georgia State, freshmen can feel overwhelmed by the size and scope of the campus and choices that they face. This fall, Georgia State is offering 90 majors and more than 3,00 courses. Freshmen Learning Communities are now required of all non-Honors freshmen at Georgia State. They organize the freshmen class into cohorts of 25 students arranged by common academic interests, otherwise known as “meta majors” (STEM, business, arts and humanities, policy, health, education and social sciences). Students travel through their classes together, building friendships, study partners and support along the way. Block schedules—FLCs in which all courses might be between, for example, 8:30 AM and 1:30 PM three days a week— accommodate students’ work schedules and help to improve class attendance. FLC students not only are retained but graduate at rates 4 points above those of non-FLC students. Almost 80% of this fall’s freshmen class are in FLCs. Requiring all students to choose a meta-major puts students on a path to degree that allows for flexibility in future specialization in a particular program of study, while also ensuring the applicability of early course credits to their final majors. Implemented in conjunction with major maps and a suite of faculty-led programming that exposes students to the differences between specific academic majors during their first semester, meta-majors provide clarity and direction in what would otherwise be a confusing and unstructured registration process.
Goals Supported/Strategic Impact	Goal #2: Increase the number of degrees that are earned ‘on time’ Goal #3: Decrease excess credits earned on the path to getting a degree
Summary of Activities	Upon registration, all students are required to enroll in one of seven meta-majors : STEM, Arts & Humanities, Health, Education, Policy & Social Science, and Exploratory. Once students have selected their meta-major, they are given a choice of several block schedules , which are pre-populated course timetables including courses relevant to their first year of study. On the basis of their timetable selection, students are assigned to Freshman Learning Communities consisting of 25 students who are in the same meta-major and take classes according to the same block schedules of 5 – 6 courses in addition to GSU1010, a 1 credit hour course providing students with essential information and survival skills to help them navigate the logistical, academic, and social demands of the University. Academic department deliver programming to students—alumni panels, departmental open houses—that help students to understand the practical differences between majors within each meta major. A new career-related portal allows students in meta majors and beyond to explore live job data including number of jobs available in the Atlanta region, starting salaries, and correlative to majors and degree programs. The portal also suggests cognate careers that students may be unaware of and shared live job data about them.
Baseline Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48% FLC participation with opt-in model (2010) • Retention rates of 81% for non-FLC students (2011). • Average bachelor-degree graduate going through 2.4 majors before graduating (2008). In the 2013-2014 academic year, enrollment in a Freshman Learning Community according to meta-major resulted in an average increase in GPA of 8%. • In the 2013-2014 academic year, enrollment in a Freshman Learning Community by meta-major was found to increase a student’s likelihood of being retained through to the following year by 5%.
Interim Measures of Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopting an opt-out model has meant that over 80% of freshmen no participate in FLCs.

Measures of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-year retention rates reached 84% for FLC freshmen (2015) • Changes in majors at GSDU are down by 32% since 2011.
Lessons Learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time is money, and students who switch between majors, especially after the freshman year, accumulate wasted credits. With large numbers of low-income students who have strictly limited resources, mistakes in choosing majors can equate to college attrition. • Meta-majors, block scheduling, and freshman learning communities have all been shown to significantly improve the chances of student success. GSU has introduced each of these approaches at different times in its history. Bringing each of these best practices together as part of an integrated admissions strategy has produced a synergy, with power greater than the sum of that of its parts.
Primary Contacts	Dr. Allison Calhoun-Brown (Associate Vice President for Student Success) Dr. Eric Cuevas (Director of Student Success Programs)

OBSERVATIONS

Georgia State University is testimony to the fact that students from all backgrounds can succeed at high rates. Moreover, our efforts over the past few years show that dramatic gains are indeed possible—not through changing the nature of the students served but through changing the nature of the institution that serves them. How has Georgia State University made the gains outlined above? How do we propose to reach our ambitious future targets? In one sense, the answer is simple. We employ a consistent, evidenced-based strategy. Our general approach can be summarized as follows:

- Use data aggressively in order to identify and to understand the most pervasive obstacles to our students’ progressions and completion.
- Be willing to address the problems by becoming an early adopter. This means piloting new strategies and experimenting with new technologies. After all, we will not solve decades-old problems by the same old means.
- Track the impacts of the new interventions via data and make adjustments as necessary to improve results.
- Scale the initiatives that prove effective to have maximal impact. In fact, many of the programs that we offer are currently touching 10,000 students or more annually.

The work we have been doing to promote student success at Georgia State University has steadily increased graduation rates among our traditionally high-risk student populations, but it has also served to foster a culture of student success among faculty, staff, and administration. As the story of Georgia State University demonstrates, institutional transformation in the service of student success does not come about as a result of a single program, but grows from a series of small changes that undergo continue reevaluation and refinement. What it also shows is how a series of initially small initiatives, when scaled over time, can significantly transform an institution’s culture (**Chart 10**). As we have seen improvements in the success of our students, the campus community has come to be driven by a shared vision.

This process is an iterative and continuous one. In addition to the well-established and high-impact strategies described above, Georgia State University continues to employ data analyses to identify and understand the obstacles that our students are facing, and it continues to test innovative new solutions to facilitate efficient pathways to the attainment of high quality degrees. Here are a few:

I. Optimizing Course Scheduling using Predictive Analytics

As a result of an analysis conducted by our Office of Institutional Research, we have shifted our course scheduling policy so as to balance faculty preference with other important factors like room availability, student demand, and academic program requirements. We employ the aggregate data that we are collecting on the major maps and progression of each individual student to predict what courses are needed and in what numbers each semester. These efforts are led by a new, university-level Strategic Course Scheduling Committee, with representation from all colleges as well as major functional areas such as the Registrar and advising. As a result of our new policy framework, we expect to see marked improvements in our rates of student progression, along with a resulting decrease in average time and cost per degree and an increase in student satisfaction. With help from Ad Astra, we are implementing a predictive analytics solution that will allow us to consistently execute our new, a scheduling model more conducive to student progression.

II. Establishing a Financial Counseling Center

In an effort to mitigate the financial risks to student retention that are created by non-academic collegiate expenditures, GSU has used ten years of student financial data and more than 140,000 Georgia state student records to develop predictive analytics identifying when students make financial decisions that put them at risk of attrition. These enhanced predictive analytics include information about student housing choices and past due histories to target

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students for financial counseling. GSU has been awarded a \$2 million gift from SunTrust to implement the model and then diffuse it to other universities. The new center opens fall 2016.

III. Empowering Students through Mobile Application Development

In collaboration with the Education Advisory Board, GSU has helped to develop and launch a student-facing tool for smart devices that incorporates data analytics to provide students with major and career guidance, best-fit courses and schedules, time management tools, and smart resource recommendations about student support that is relevant to their specific needs.

IV. Scaling Hybrid, Adaptive Learning Courses

Building on our success in the use of adaptive learning technology in introductory mathematics courses, we have received a grant from the Gates Foundation to scale up the use of adaptive technologies in high-enrollment Economics, Psychology and Political Science. By year three of the project, Georgia State will deliver 20,000 seats annually of hybrid, adaptive-learning-assisted classes.

V. Creating Pathways from College to Career

We are launching a multi-year initiative supported by the Goizueta Foundation to combine the latest data research and student-facing technologies to deliver a four-year program of career development for students from the freshman year through graduation.

VI. Implementing Student Success Programs at Perimeter College

We already have launched at Perimeter College GPS Advising, Panther Retention Grants and several other programs that were pioneered and have proven transformative at the Atlanta campus. We are about to announce a \$4.5 million gift to help in the effort to extend a range of eight additional high-impact student-success practices to Georgia State's Perimeter College.

The year ahead will be an exciting and challenging one, as Georgia State University builds programs to serve 51,000 students, including 20,000 new associate-degree-seeking students as a result of our consolidation with Perimeter. If the lessons we have learned, the initiatives we have implemented, the technologies we have developed, and the results we have achieved can be transferred to the context of Perimeter, the ultimate winners will be the students of the state of Georgia. (See **Charts 11-15** for Perimeter College baseline data.)

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