



Armstrong State University

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Armstrong’s strategic plan, Charting Excellence Together, reaffirms our commitment as a teaching-first university where student-focused and transformative education is valued, with the primary goal of fostering student success. The strategic plan serves as the lens through which faculty members, staff, administrators, and students view their roles, responsibilities, interactions and performance.

Our Complete College Georgia-Armstrong (CCG-A) plan is consistent with our institutional mission of providing diverse and transformative learning experiences that support student success, with the overarching goal of assisting students from matriculation through graduation. Armstrong has a history of service to the 6-county coastal Georgia region and to students who desire to enter college from a variety of pathways: traditional freshmen, transfer students, and non-traditional students who enter Armstrong to pursue new opportunities in their lives and careers. Slightly more than 30% of our first-time, full-time students self-identify as first-generation college students and may not have had the benefit of parents, siblings, or mentors to help them understand the college experience. More than one-third of Armstrong students are non-traditional adult learners who need flexible course offerings, support services and career counseling. The number of potential non-traditional students in this area, including veteran and active duty military (there are 47,000 veterans and over 22,000 active duty personnel in the region), is large and drives many of our initiatives. We have had a renewed focus on service to our adult and military students. Recognizing that students need guidance in preparing for college success, Armstrong has developed strategies to increase awareness of the college application process and we provide assistance to potential students and their families to accomplish this task. Students also need assistance with financial aid and payment procedures, such as completing the FAFSA, submitting and signing necessary documents, understanding the variety of financial aid available, and managing money for college and personal expenses. We provide numerous workshops on campus and in the community to meet this need.

Appendix 1 contains the Fall 2012 and Fall 2013 Armstrong undergraduate student demographic profile. Our population tends to be full-time, female students who are Pell eligible and more often than not, an adult learner. In addition, we have growing populations of military and minority students. Our programs must be geared to service these populations and assure that they are progressing to their degree in a timely fashion.

Table 1 highlights the most recent data on 6-year graduation rates for our students. It is evident that our graduation rates are trending significantly higher for all populations of students, except Pell eligible (flat), adult learners and learning support students (mostly the same population, decreased). Male, adult, and learning support students graduate at a much lower rate and their needs are being addressed going forward. We have significantly higher and increasing graduation rates for our female, African-American and military students, which is most likely a direct reflection of the effort that is devoted to the success of these students.

TABLE 1: ARMSTRONG, 6-YEAR GRADUATION RATES

	% Graduated within 6 Years, 2007 Cohort	% Graduated within 6 Years, 2006 Cohort
Fall 2007 First-Time Full-Time Cohort	33.6%	31.0%
Male	24.2%	23.1%
Female	40.7%	35.8%
Black or African American	43.9%	35.2%
Latino/Hispanic	35.7%	20.6%
Multiracial	35.4%	26.7%
Pell Eligible	31.3%	32.3%
Adult Learners (Age 24 and Older)	27.6%	33.3%
Veteran or Military Affiliated	50.0%	27.3%
Learning Support	21.7%	25%

Table 2 below shows the total degrees conferred for the last 3 years, plus the estimated degrees to be conferred for Fall 2015. Our largest increase is in our awarding of bachelor’s degrees, with other degrees remaining mostly stable.

TABLE 2: DEGREES CONFERRED

	FY 12	FY 13	FY 14	FY 15 December Graduation Only
Associate's Degrees	55	64	49	34
Bachelor's Degrees	881	975	1024	552
Master's Degrees	227	270	215	174
Doctoral Degrees	18	21	16	20

develop appropriate goals for college and a plan for completing degree programs which can help a student establish and work a plan that enables them to graduate in four-years.

Educating and helping students make good decisions regarding where to apply to college, how to successfully complete applications, what is involved in financing a college degree, and planning financially for college may alleviate the financial strains that often lead to delayed graduation or stopping out of school.

Finally, by establishing better and more flexible pedagogical practices, such as more online, hybrid and flipped classrooms, or laboratories designed to reduce high DFW rates, students can graduate more quickly.

INSTITUTIONAL GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Our overarching CCG-A goals are to 1.) Increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by Armstrong, on-time and with fewer excess credits 2.) Implement and expand improvements in advising services for first time full time freshmen (FTTF) and at-risk students, 3.) Restructure instructional delivery to support educational excellence and student success. 4.) Improve college readiness of students who are non-traditional, military, first-generation, and/or from historically underrepresented groups.

How does meeting these goals increase student completion?

Identifying, examining and removing barriers to student success, for example, evaluating prior learning and giving students appropriate transfer credit, reduces the amount of time to complete a degree by not asking students to take courses that are not needed. Additionally, through improved and highly intentional advisement, we can have students

What are the barriers?

The barriers at Armstrong are also seen at most other institutions. Students still have trouble paying for classes, maintaining their HOPE scholarship and balancing school, family and work obligations. Faculty need to be encouraged and rewarded for developing innovative pedagogy that promotes student success, which can be difficult in tight budgets. Finally, college advisors have high workloads and yet must also be constantly involved in continuing education to stay abreast of transfer rules, changes in financial aid and academic policy as well as student development theories and trends. This can be a challenge to accomplish, especially when new staff are hired into these positions. We are continuing to work through these challenges and look for opportunities to be creative in our approaches so as to minimize each of these barriers.

SUMMARY OF GOALS, HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Goal 1	Increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by Armstrong, on-time and with fewer excess credits.
High Impact Strategy	Implementation of Adult Learning Consortium Principles for awarding credit based on verifiable experience or prior learning.
New or Continuing Strategy and Timetable for Implementation	This is a continuing strategy. All ALC principles were adopted in the 2013-2014 school year. Their full implementation begins with the 2014-2015 school year.
Summary of Activities	We have implemented the recommended principles of the adult learning consortium which include the addition of PLA portfolio options, adjusting our minimum CLEP scores to the recommended 50, expanding our AP and IB credit acceptance policies, offering challenge exams in courses where no CLEP exam exists and working to improve our ACE/JST transcript acceptance policies and procedures. We currently have a grant from the Adult learning consortium to standardize, and directly transcribe our military transcript prior learning experiences. This process should be complete in Spring 2015 and we expect to offer credit in 10-15 disciplines, mostly in core classes.
Outside Partnerships and Required	We have partnered with the ALC and will be working with other USG schools to roll out the PLA courses.

Resources

Personnel Involved This strategy involves faculty who are on the adult learner committee, our testing center, our transfer evaluation and Registrar staff, our Liberty Center director and staff and all of our advising professional staff.

Interim Measure of Progress Each of these items is fully in place for the 2014-2015 academic year.

Measure of Success We expect to see a measurable increase in the use of these credit options within our student population coupled with a measured decrease in the number of excess credits at graduation. Success in this area will be reflected by a steady increase in the graduation rate of adult and other students using these credit options. Achieving an increase in retention and graduation rates for adult students equal to that of the rest of the population (in the low 30% range) is the primary objective and outcome. Appendix 2 and 3 contain the retention information for non-traditional freshmen and transfer students. These numbers have fluctuated yearly with little trend in any direction. It is envisioned that these new policies will stabilize this fluctuation and allow us to reach our 80% retention goal/low to mid 30% graduation goal for adult students.

Goal 2 Implement and expand improvements in advising services for FTTF and at risk students

High Impact Strategy Implementation of DegreeWorks and Grades First to improve advising and provide for academic coaching of students.

New or Continuing Strategy and Timetable for Implementation This is a new strategy, scheduled for full implementation (DegreeWorks, September 2014) and expanded pilot implementation (GradesFirst for first-year, athletes, learning support and academic probation students in Fall 2014).

Summary of Activities We pilot tested both DegreeWorks and GradesFirst in the 2013-2014 school year, making them available to select groups of advisors. DegreeWorks goes live to students in January 2015. Faculty and staff have been trained regarding the use of DegreeWorks GradesFirst is being piloted for all incoming freshmen, athletes, learning support and academic probation students beginning Fall 2014. To date (as of November 5, 2014) Grades first has sent 3,800 emails and 792 text messages to students to schedule and remind of advising appointments, reducing no-shows. 766 students were marked as at-risk during the Grades First early alert process. Each of those students was contacted by an academic advisor or success coordinator/mentor to offer student and tutoring resources.

Outside Partnerships and Required Resources No additional outside partnerships are required. Funding will be needed to expand GradesFirst next year to include all sophomore students.

Personnel Involved All academic advising staff, tutor center staff and the Registrar's office are involved in both DegreeWorks and GradesFirst.

Measure of Success DegreeWorks usage will reduce advising errors and will help students map their path to degree. We expect to see a measurable decrease in the excess credits students accumulate. A 69% response rate for GradesFirst, was seen by the participating faculty. This is higher than all other early alert process we have attempted in the past. We hope to get this rate to 85% within 3 years of implementation to allow for more contact and follow up from advisors to assist students with resources needed to be successful and progress to the next course. We expect to see measurable increases in both 4 and 6 year overall graduation rates as a measure of success. We also expect to see increases in FTTF retention rates. Appendix 4 gives the current and historical retention rates for this population. Again, our data has been inconsistent in the past and we hope that our efforts will begin to stabilize these fluctuations.

Goal 3 Implement and expand improvements in advising services for FTTF and at risk students to include

High Impact Strategy Improve the First Year Experience to focus on key impediments to freshman success and retention and improve first year student's overall college readiness.

New or Continuing Strategy and Timetable for Implementation This is a continuing program that has been fully implemented. Additional implementations for the 2014-2015 academic year include 15 to Finish initiatives, GradesFirst and appreciative advising course training for 2 of our advisors (appreciative advising training is sponsored by the University of South Carolina, a pioneer in FYE programs). We are expanding our use of peer-mentors and supplemental instructors in FYE in 2014-2015. One graduate assistant was also used as the academic coach for our Summer Bridge (Summer challenge) program.

Summary of Activities We have hired advisors in the Colleges of Liberal Arts, Health Professions and Science and Technology to focus on freshmen student advising and success. We have a full-time FYE director who works to

implement our QEP, First Class, which provides first-year students with education on campus resources and information literacy competency. Our First-Year Experience program is a comprehensive retention and graduation strategy that is also a part of our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). See:

http://www.armstrong.edu/Departments/first_year_experience/fye_welcome

Our First-Year director is responsible for assisting at orientation, developing and implementing our Summer Bridge program, implementing our mandatory first year seminar, implementing and assessing our early alert programs, developing the common read program and working with advisors and others on campus to provide services and strategies to improve the entire first-year experience at Armstrong. We recently completed the 3rd year of our summer challenge bridge program for provisionally admitted students. Within FYE, we now employ peer-mentors and a Hispanic Outreach and Retention Coordinator who recruits and coaches Hispanic and Latino students. Our "Tickets for Success" program, run by our advisors and success coordinators, provides information on study skills, financial aid, impacts of SAP and course withdrawals and other necessary success information. Our 15-to finish web-site has been created and a number of degree-pathways have been added.

See: http://www.armstrong.edu/Departments/first_year_experience/fye_armstrong_15_to_finish

Outside Partnerships and Required Resources

If the appreciative advising training and certification proves beneficial for our students and advisors, we will need to find resources to have additional advisors trained in the appreciative advising program. Resources will also be needed to continue to expand our peer-mentoring, academic coaching and supplemental instructor program for first-year students.

Personnel Involved

Our professional advising staff, our FYE Director, 5 peer-mentors, an FYE GA and a Student Success GA, the Hispanic Outreach and Retention Coordinator.

Interim Measure of Progress

Progress is measured by an increase in freshmen retention rate, which hovers on average 69% year to year. A reduction of students on SAP and an increase in retention of summer challenge students to the sophomore year (which currently runs at 59%) will signal progress. Our FTFTF retention and summer challenge retention numbers are in Appendices 4 and 5 respectively.

Measure of Success

We are targeting an 80% retention by 2020, for all populations. The summer challenge retention will increase and approach that of the regular student population.

Goal 4

Improve college readiness of students who are non-traditional, military, first- generation, and/or from historically underrepresented groups.

High Impact Strategy New or Continuing Strategy and Timetable for Implementation Summary of Activities

Renewed-focus on Military students
Continuing, all items are implemented.

Armstrong has been designated as a military- friendly campus. We have eliminated all non- course fees for active duty military. We have been improving our process and increasing ACE transcript evaluation and course acceptance. We have expanded course offerings at the Liberty Center and increased our offering of evening, flex-term and hybrid classes for adult/military students. We hold adult information sessions and adult 1-day registration sessions, with special programs at the Liberty Center targeting military students. We provide one-on-one tutoring and Math and English workshops for military students to review prior to finals. Our Liberty Center hosts Health Profession information and advising sessions to help retain students in health related degree programs. We have instituted web-based career service counseling for Liberty Center students who cannot travel to main campus during the work day. We are active in attending college outreach events on Ft Stewart. Armstrong was accepted into the Air Force GEM program in the Spring of 2014, with the first students enrolling for Fall 2014. Finally, the Armstrong Green Zone is a campus-wide initiative to increase faculty and staff knowledge of the issues veterans face as they transition to university life. Through a three-phase training program faculty and staff are given the background necessary to identify and address the needs of Veterans and assist them in being successfully in their academic pursuits.

Outside Partnerships and Required Resources

We have significant outside partnerships with Ft. Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield, in addition, we are partnered with the Community College of the Air force with the GEM program. Ongoing resources for the Green Zone and the focus on ACE/JST transcript evaluation need to be secured.

Personnel Involved

Our Liberty center and Green Zone staff, professional advisors, career services and 40 faculty and staff each year who attend Green Zone training.

Interim Measure of Progress

Our military population grew 7% over last year and we expect continued growth in this population. Our Military student retention numbers (active, spouse and dependent) are attached in Appendix 6.

Measure of Success Measurable and consistent increases in military student enrollment, retention and graduation rates. Our data indicates constant fluctuation in these numbers. However, with more intentional and well-planned activities, we expect this fluctuation to stabilize and allow for steady increase.

Goal 5	Improve college readiness of students who are non-traditional, military, first- generation, and/or from historically underrepresented groups.
High Impact Strategy	Workshops and community outreach regarding college readiness and financial options for college, targeted to adult, military, first-year and historically underrepresented students.
New or Continuing Strategy and Timetable for Implementation	This is a continuing strategy.
Summary of Activities	Hispanic Outreach and Retention held 23 sessions in the community to address many first-year Hispanic student questions and concerns about college in 2013-2014 and a similar number of sessions are planned for this upcoming year. Financial Aid conducts 5 financial workshops (including one at the Liberty county campus) each year in the neighboring counties. Our academic advising office hosted 20 community visits in the local 6 county region to recruit for dual enrollment programs, with an average of 21 students attending each event. Our Hispanic enrollment, and retention rates are shown in Appendices 1 and 7. Our Office of Multicultural affairs provides a mentoring program for African American males (MOVE) which has achieved a 75% retention rate for first year students in the Fall 2012 cohort, and a smaller, newer program for African American females.
Outside Partnerships and Required Resources	Funding has been obtained from the USG for the MOVE program for African American males. Outside funding is also in place for the Hispanic student outreach and recruitment position (CAMINO). Resources are required to maintain these programs past the time of the grant funding. The financial aid, dual enrollment and academic advising workshops are funded with university resources.
Personnel Involved	Our Hispanic Outreach and retention Coordinator, our Director of Multicultural affairs, the Director of HOLA, the Director of Financial Aid and her staff and the Director of Academic Orientation and Advisement and the entire professional advising staff (total of 35 staff).
Interim Measure of Progress	Progress in this area is evidenced by the increased attendance at the events and the number of college applications received from areas where we have visited. In addition, a continued enrollment of Hispanic/Latino students would signal success in that area of recruitment.
Measure of Success	Measurable increases in applications from Hispanic and dual enrollment students will be the primary marker of success for these initiatives.

Additional High Impact Strategies for CCG-A

Other strategies we are pursuing include significant changes to our remediation model for English and mathematics for implementation in the Fall of 2015. We will be implementing co-remediated English and Mathematics for all students below the math and English placement indices and eliminating some of the barriers to registration and progression that learning support students encounter (suspensions, holds on registration, denial of admission for placing into too many learning support classes). We are piloting mathematics laboratory sections to increase student success and completion in mathematics courses, where DFW rates have remained stubbornly high. We believe that the changes in remediation and the mathematics laboratories will begin to decrease the DFW rate in our mathematics courses (which are typically around 40%). Finally, we will be re-branding, changing our marketing and recruitment message and adjusting our admissions standards for our Summer Challenge bridge program, now called “Pirate Passage” for summer 2015. We anticipate that this will

increase our summer bridge program enrollments (which have been flat in the 45-55 student range for 3 years). In addition, we are planning to begin using predictive analytics to assist with identifying at-risk students. This will begin prior to summer orientation and our campus freshmen advisors will pre-register all freshmen for courses appropriate to their preparation, major based on the predictive analytical model.

OBSERVATIONS

In reviewing our original CCG-A plan, we have noted that many of the original proposed goals are incorporated within these modified and more focused goals. Our original goals were to improve for traditionally underserved groups, improve student success and rates of credential completion and increase alumni and donor engagement to support student access and success. We have made strides and are making strides in each of these areas. Each of the previous tactics have been implemented, from implementing MOUs with Savannah Tech, Georgia Southern and the Community

College of the Air Force to reaching out to educate the local community to an increased commitment and fundraising for student gap funding to prevent stop-outs and are part of institutional culture and process. From these initiatives we have begun to see significant increases in degree production (Table 2). Based on 2014 numbers, our bachelor's degrees have increased 16% since 2012 and our overall degree production is up 9%. While these increases may not be directly attributable to CCG activities, the results of our collective efforts are positive. We believe they are making impacts and we are confident that the numbers of graduates and enrollees will continue to increase. Our modified goals, as stated above, show our continued commitment to the

original goals and the expansion to new goals and strategies. For example, we have noted that adult (non-military affiliated), learning support and part-time students have the lowest 6 year graduation rates, thus we are reemphasizing our strategies to address their needs, while continuing the higher levels of service we now provide to military and FTFTF students. Finally, in all student populations, our retention numbers have fluctuated historically. As we have become more direct, intentional and focused on implementing CCG strategies to improve retention and graduation, we expect these fluctuation to stabilize and begin trending upward.