



Darton State College

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Darton State College (Darton) is a four-year access institution located in the southwest region of the state of Georgia. Our institution remains actively committed to meeting the needs of the southwest region and maintaining excellence in instructional delivery. This report documents our specific efforts towards increasing the completion rates of our students as prescribed in the Complete College Georgia mandate.

Darton State College’s Mission is as follows:

Darton, a state college within the University System of Georgia, is focused on providing a diverse constituency access to certificate, associate, and select baccalaureate programs of study. Dedicated to serving as an access institution, our College will empower students by engaging them in a student-centered, caring, and technically advanced environment through innovative delivery systems. Darton is committed to providing exemplary teaching to students in our community, region, and state. As a multi-campus, residential institution, the College pursues traditional and unique mechanisms to deliver education to its richly diverse student body. In service to the community, Darton State College will offer cultural enrichment experiences, continuing education, and economic development programs.

The following information documents the characteristics of our student body.

Total Student Enrollment		6,195	
DESCRIPTION	% OF POP.	DESCRIPTION	% OF POP.
Gender		Full-time vs. Part-time	
Male	31%	Full-time	48%
Female	69%	Part-time	52%
Race/Ethnicity		Age	
White	49%	First time, full time	15%
Black or African American	44%	Under 25 (majority are 18-21)	51%
Hispanic/Latino	2.60%	Financial Aid	
Asian	0.70%	Pell grant awardees	56%
Amer. Indian/Alaskan Native	0.30%	Student loan awardees	54%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.10%	Grants/scholarships	65%
Two or more races	0.50%	Online Courses	
		Enrolled in some or all	58%

The majority of our students attend part time.

Darton’s total enrollment in Fall 2013 was 6,195. Of that, 2,953 (48%) were full time and 3,242 (52%) were part time. While this difference seems minimal, it is up from the previous year’s number (51% part-time), which suggests our part-time student population is growing at an incremental, yet steady rate.

The majority of our students are under the age of 25.

Darton has historically maintained a majority enrollment of non-traditional aged students. In recent years, however, the percentage of students under the age of 25 makes up the majority of our fall enrollment. In Fall 2014, 42.34% of our students were over the age of 25, and 57.66% were under the age of 25.

The majority of our students take courses online.

To increase access to a college education, Darton offers 39 fully online degrees, 10 partially online degrees, 13 fully online certificate programs, and over 96 individual distance-learning courses over the Internet. In Fall 2013, over half of our students participated in some form of distance education. Of this percentage, the majority took courses fully online.

These numbers suggest an ever-increasing need for additional online programs and degree offerings to serve this growing population of distance education students.

Darton State College’s key priorities for completion include the following:

- Increasing access to degree programs for diverse populations through several interconnected initiatives,
- Shortening time to degree through the College’s participation in reverse transfer and dual/joint enrollment programs,
- Establishing innovative delivery systems through further development of online courses and programs, and
- Promoting a student-centered environment through the transformation of advising and remediation programs.

These priorities align directly with our mission in addition to reflecting on the larger Complete College Georgia (CCG) goals. Our mission to offer education to a “wide diversity of constituents” and to provide “innovative delivery systems and promote exemplary teaching” fostered the continued development of our dual/joint enrollment and online programs. These programs are slated to reach the widest pool

of potential college participants by offering several options for course completion. It is our institutional goal to improve student completion through our distance education programs and programs such as dual enrollment for high school students. Further, Darton State College has instituted the restructuring of its advising and remediation programs to promote a more student-centered environment based on our student body profile.

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The Complete College Georgia goals we identified for Darton State College include the following:

- **Goal 1:** Increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded.
- **Goal 2:** Increase in the number of degrees that are earned “on time” (associate degrees in two years, bachelor’s degrees in four years).
- **Goal 5:** Award degrees to students who have already met the requirements for associate degrees via courses taken at one or more institutions.
- **Goal 6:** Shorten time to degree completion through programs that allow students to earn college credit while still in high school and by awarding credit for prior learning that is verified by appropriate assessment.
- **Goal 7:** Increase the likelihood of degree completion by transforming the way that remediation is accomplished.
- **Goal 8:** Restructure instructional delivery to support educational excellence and student success.

Darton State College has identified and has begun to implement five high-impact strategies that are associated with one or more CCG goals. Our first strategy is to transform advising with the purpose of increasing the overall number of degrees awarded and increasing the number of *on-time* degrees. Specific to the strategy, Darton State College has implemented a New Student Orientation to provide specialized advising experiences for new students through the inclusion of one-on-one time with advisors and clarification of institution, as well as program of study, requirements. We have also changed the advisor role, so that the advisor does just that - advises students. In the past, our process was focused on registration rather than advisement. Lastly, Darton State College has removed the late registration day, only allowing students to drop/add courses, and has changed the name and structure of “pre-registration” to “spring advising/early registration.”

Our second high-impact strategy was the development and promotion of our dual/joint enrollment programs. This strategy aligns with our CCG goal of shortening the time to degree completion. Darton State College plans to accomplish this by forming public and private partnerships with the purpose of class location expansion. We have already absorbed institutional fees and have begun to offer ACT testing onsite to increase college entrance and decrease waiting periods for test results.

Next, Darton State College has been selected to participate in the pilot program for reverse transfer. This program is designed to enhance the reverse transfer process at USG schools while removing barriers at the University System of Georgia (USG) and institutional levels. To date, Darton State

College has participated in kick-off workshops for the program, has begun internal and external dialogue on implementation, and has provided the names of transfer students to our immediate partners: Albany State University, Georgia Southwestern State University, and Valdosta State University. The overarching CCG goal for this strategy is to award degrees to students who may have already met requirements for associate degrees via courses taken at one or more USG institutions.

Darton State College has also committed to transforming remediation. In Spring Semester 2014, Darton State College faculty and administrators attended several meetings and symposia regarding transforming remediation. In these meetings, Darton State personnel were presented with recommendations from USG Taskforces. Of these recommendations, Darton State has implemented or will implement the following within the next year.

1. The alignment of gateway mathematics course sequences (College Algebra and Quantitative Reasoning) with academic programs of study,
2. Creation of co-requisite courses, which allow a majority of students to be placed in gateway courses with just-in-time remediation to shorten time in learning support,
3. Creation of a combined reading/writing course,
4. The termination of the COMPASS as an exit examination,
5. Expansion of hours for the Writing Center, and
6. Support for advisors in transitioning to the new models.

With this outlined course of action, Darton State College will achieve the CCG goal of increasing the likelihood of degree completion by transforming the way remediation is accomplished.

Lastly, Darton State College has continued to develop its online program in several ways. First, Darton State College restructured its online learning division to serve its students more effectively by placing an online support specialist (OSS) in each division. The OSSs assist distance learners with admissions, advising, registration, course navigation, and proctored testing. Additionally, OSSs facilitate student connections with on-campus departments, clubs, instructors, and other individuals. Darton also contracts with select full-time faculty who, as content experts, create Master Shells (Darton State College creates “master” content for online classes in certain disciplines. This content is then shared to adjuncts teaching in that area. We call the courses that have the master content Master Shells) for specific disciplines, mentor new and adjunct faculty, and review courses periodically throughout the semester. This online lead designer/faculty program ensures that Master Shells cover all required learning objectives, meet Darton State College’s standards for academic rigor, and assist student success by providing a well-organized course structure. Lastly, Darton State College has worked to identify and track online-only students for retention, progression, and graduation to identify strategies to increase student success. These activities will aid Darton State College in achieving the goal of restructuring instructional delivery to support educational excellence and student success.

While Darton State College has not experienced challenges for all of our high impact strategies, we have identified several

that may impede progress towards ultimate CCG goals. Thus, the challenges we have experienced include the lack of participation among underrepresented populations in the dual/joint enrollment programs, the development of more rigorous measures for transforming advising for continuing students, and the overall timeliness of changes that need to

occur coupled with the shifting of institutional culture to support those changes. Although we have these challenges and expect others as we move toward our stated goals, Darton State College stands firm in the viability of each program and will continue to address those challenges through the elimination or inclusion of additional strategy activities.

Summary of Goals, High-Impact Strategies, and Activities

The following section highlights the five high-impact strategies Darton State College has chosen to meet our completion goals.

Goal 1

Increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG institutions.

High Impact Strategy Summary of Activities

Transformed Advising

Implemented New Student Orientation:

- As a part of the new student orientation experience, incoming students hear numerous presentations from faculty, staff, and administrators about making the transition to college. Incoming students spend one-on-one time with advisors in their designated major who assist with course selection, clarification of institutional requirements, and answer specific questions pertaining to programs of study.
- Removed “Late Registration” day:
- The last day for students to register for the upcoming semester is now two days prior to the start of class.
- Changed “Pre-registration” to “Early Advising”:
- Previously, advisors would have one week per semester to meet with their advisees and advise and register them. The advisors now only advise, while the students register themselves after being advised.
- Redefined Advisor role:
- Changed advisor role from one that advised and registered a student for class to one of advising only. This allows the advisor to spend more time advising and makes advising more intentional and in depth.
- We began our first “transformed advising” session in January 2014. It was a one-day intensive advising session conducted with students two days prior to the start of classes. In April 2014, we extended the new advising session to three weeks of advising for the following Summer and Fall semesters. July 2014 was our third advising session under our new system and lasted two weeks for the following Fall semester.
- Our next scheduled advising will be in November 2014, lasting three weeks, and will prepare students for the upcoming spring.

Interim Measures of Progress

Our faculty has had very positive reactions to the new advising role; the consensus is that they feel they have a more active voice in the advising process.

Our retention rate for students has risen approximately 1% since the implementation of our new advising system.

Overall Measures of Success

Our retention rates have been steadily rising in the last five years. We expect to see even greater increase in the next two years as a result of this new, student-focused advising system. We will also measure and expect to see a decrease in course withdrawals in the year following full implementation (Fall 2014/Spring 2015) compared to the years prior to implementation.

***Retention Rates:**

- 2014: 47%
- 2013: 46%
- 2012: 44%

(*One year retention rates based on fall enrollment of all students)

Goal #6

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

High Impact Strategy Summary of Activities

Dual/Joint Enrollment

- Forming public and private partnerships and expanding location offerings for classes.
- Absorbing institutional fees to provide increased access.
- Providing courses through face-to-face, online, and blended formats to accommodate high school schedules.
- Offering institutional ACT to increase to entrance testing and decrease waiting period for test

results.

- Designating and advisor dedicated to advising solely dual enrollment students.

Interim Measures of Progress

Number of Dual Enrollment Students

Term	2011-05	2011-08	2012-02	2012-05	2012-08	2013-02	2013-05	2013-08	2014-02
N	3	159	167	7	41	113	2	75	254

Overall Measures of Success

Course success rates (number of total institutional GPA credits attempted compared to number of total institutional GPA credits passed and earned).

Year	N	DE GPA credits (enrolled)	DE GPA credits (passed)	DE GPA credits (earned)
Fall 2012	41	870	870	945
Fall 2013	75	2882	2844	2964
Fall 2014	183	6127	*	*

Goal #7

Increase the likelihood of degree completion by transforming the way that remediation is accomplished.

High Impact Strategy Summary of Activities

Transformed Remediation

1. The alignment of gateway mathematics course sequences (College Algebra and Quantitative Reasoning) with academic programs of study,
2. Creation of co-requisite courses, which allow a majority of students to be placed in gateway courses with just-in-time remediation to shorten time in learning support.
3. Creation of a combined reading/writing course.
4. The termination of the COMPASS as an exit examination.
5. Expansion of hours for the Writing Center.
6. Support of advisors in transitioning to the new models.

In Spring 2014, Darton participated in several meetings and symposia to gather methods and ideas on how to transform remediation. Based on recommendations, Darton implemented several strategies, summarized above.

We implemented the co-requisite courses for ENGL1101/ENGL 0999 (Fall 2014) and MATH 1001/MATH 0997 (Spring 2015).

ENGL 0989 was created (Summer 2014) to combine reading and English and cut down on the number of courses that may be required, and MATH 0987 (Fall 14) and MATH 0989 (Fall 15) were created to provide a year-long pathway (two semesters) instead of the three attempt/three semester model we currently use for math remediation.

We also plan on lowering the threshold for placement out of foundations courses. Our hope is that this will increase the number of students placed directly into the co-requisite course with the gateway course, allowing students to take credit-bearing courses in their first semester.

We have held several presentations on the changes to learning support with good attendance (over 100 faculty and staff members). We have also created video tutorials, handouts, and PowerPoints and have distributed them to all campus constituencies.

Interim Measures of Progress

So far, we have seen a significant increase in the number of students enrolling in MATH 1001 (For example, fall enrollment increased 50% from 2013 to 2014).

We believe this is due in part to our realignment of Math courses with academic programs of study.

Number of students enrolled for MATH 1001

- Fall 2013: 31
- Spring 2014: 138
- Summer 2014: 106
- Fall 2014: 276

Overall Measures of Success

- Semester to semester comparison of enrollment in alternative math courses.
- Semester to semester comparison of overall pass rates in math courses.
- Pass rate of students after elimination of COMPASS exit examination (Data available following Fall 2014).
- Semester to semester comparison of learning support attempts required before exit.
- Semester to semester comparison of success in gateway courses for students who placed into learning support.
- Number of students placed into foundations courses as opposed to co-requisite courses.

Goal #8

Restructure instructional delivery to support educational excellence and student success

High Impact Strategy

Online Learning

Summary of Activities

Darton State restructured its online learning division to serve its students more effectively by placing an online support specialist (OSS) in each division. The OSSs assist distance learners with admissions, advising, registration, course navigation, and proctored testing. Additionally, OSSs facilitate student connections with on-campus departments, clubs, instructors, and other individuals.

Darton contracts with select full-time faculty who, as content experts, create Master Shells for specific disciplines, mentor new and adjunct faculty, and review courses periodically throughout the semester. This online lead designer/faculty program ensures that Master Shells cover all required learning objectives, meet Darton’s standards for academic rigor, and assist student success by providing a well-organized course structure.

Identify and track online-only students for retention, progression, and graduation to identify strategies to increase student success.

Interim Measures of Progress

Number of online-only students

Term	Total Headcount	Online Only	Online Only (%)
Fall 2014	5602	1055	18.83%
Fall 2013	6221	893	14.35%
Fall 2012	6369	788	12.37%

Additionally, in Fall 2013, approximately 17% of the total credit hours taken were garnered from students taking classes solely online.

Overall Measures of Success

Darton plans to use the retention rates of online-only students who established a connection with the OSSs compared to those who do not as an overall measure of program success.

We will analyze tracking reports for online-only students and use a comparison of student course evaluation survey questions 3 and 11, which deal specifically with course structure and academic rigor.

We will run retention, persistence, and graduation rates for online-only students and conduct year-to-year comparisons using DWF reports.

Goal #5

Award degrees to student who may have already met requirements for associate degrees via courses taken at one or more institutions

High Impact Strategy Summary of Activities

Reverse Transfers

Inclusion in the South Georgia Pilot for Reverse Transfers Program.

Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Dean from Darton's Cordele site participated in a one-day kick-off workshop for the program in Macon, GA, on July 15, 2014, and the institution has begun internal and external dialogue on best approaches for program initiation.

Identification of students who transferred from Darton to three area institutions: Georgia Southwestern State University, Albany State University, and Valdosta State University.

Interim Measures of Progress

Darton was selected for inclusion in the South Georgia Pilot for Reverse Transfers Program. Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Dean from Darton's Cordele site participated in a one-day kick-off workshop for the program in Macon, GA, on July 15, 2014, and the institution has begun internal and external dialogue on best approaches for program initiation.

Darton has identified students who have transferred to area institutions

Albany State University: 141

Valdosta State University: 81

Georgia Southwestern University: 110

Darton has contacted Albany State University, Georgia Southwestern State University, and Valdosta State University to construct a plan for contacting those students who have transferred from Darton.

So far, we have active participation from two of the three institutions, and we have received contact information from five students. We expect to award a minimum of five reverse degrees this academic year.

Overall Measures of Success

Of these students identified as potential reverse transfers (332 total), we are aiming to award reverse transfer degrees to five of the total number of students identified.

***Graduation Rates:**

2014: 20%

2013: 13%

2012: 11%

(*Graduation rates are based on first-time, full-time, degree-seeking freshmen, and Fall 2014 counts are unofficial)

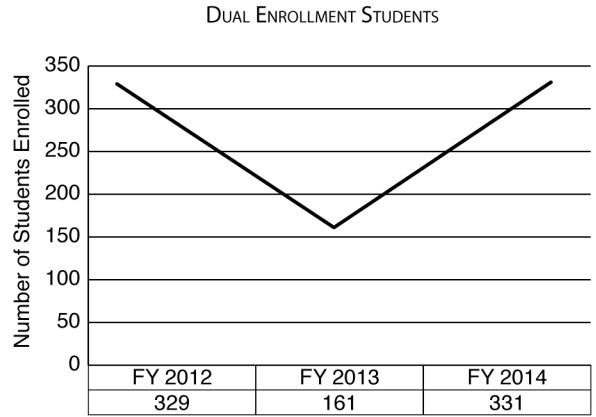
OBSERVATIONS

Faculty members have had very positive reactions to the new advising role. They have said that they feel like they are

actually advising now and that they are making a difference for the students. We have also conducted an informal survey of previous Darton students on attitudes on the new advising system. They were very pleased to hear of the changes we have made. The over all process of registration is moving more efficiently, and to date, we have seen a drop in the number of students withdrawing from courses compared to the most recent academic semesters under the old advising system.

After observing the dual enrollment system at Darton State College, we see the need for establishing memoranda of understanding. Darton believes that the development of these memoranda would establish clear relationships between institutions and agencies while also aligning institutional policies, goals, and expectations. Although we are seeing an increase in dual enrollment numbers, we believe the slight decrease experienced in 2013 was due to significant policy shifts in state merit aid (HOPE Program) requirements for course rigor (See below).

Figure 1. Number of Dual Enrolment Students



One challenge we have observed in transforming remediation is the development of a scoring system that aligns with our student profile for our Math courses. We have autonomy in choosing a co-requisite placement score that is appropriate for our learning support students. We are now in the process of calculating what will work best based on historical data.

Overall, Darton’s graduation rates have increased nine percentage points from 2012 to 2014 (see Appendix, Table 2). We also have seen steady increases in our retention rates as compared to our peer institutions (see Appendix, Table 1). We anticipate even greater increases moving forward with the high-impact strategies identified.