



Georgia Perimeter College

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE:

Georgia Perimeter College (GPC) is a multi-campus institution offering on-site and distance learning opportunities to the highly diverse populations that live in DeKalb, Newton, and neighboring metro-Atlanta counties. The college is committed not only to its role as the major provider of associate's degrees and transfer opportunities in the state but also to its partnership with the DeKalb County School System through the Early College Programs that offer access to higher education for well qualified high school students.

In fiscal year 2014 (fall 2013), the College had a total enrollment of approximately 21,000 students of which 1,144 (5.4%) were dual enrolled; an additional 7,218 (34.4%) were adult learners, thus demonstrating the range of generational diversity at the college and the different methods of communication required to meet their needs. Another 9,146 (43.5%) students were first generation, and 4,909 (23.4%) were international with 3,994 (19%) identified as immigrants and 915 (4.4%) as non-immigrants.

Many students require financial aid to attend GPC; for example, 9,482 (45.1%) were Pell Grant recipients, and 1,663 (7.9%) were Hope Scholarship recipients. In total, 15,155 (70%) of all students at GPC were on some form of financial aid.

Many of the 12,930 (61.6%) part-time students had significant responsibilities and family commitments limiting the number of courses they could take in a semester. In addition to attending part-time, many students address time limitations resulting from personal and work commitments by taking classes online. While 7,869 (37.5%) students took at least one class online, nearly half of them, 3,811 (18.1%), only took classes online.

With the statewide transformation of remediation, Georgia Perimeter College saw a decrease in its Learning Support population. However, the college still had a significant pool of diverse learners with 2,457 (11.7%) students taking one or more developmental classes; the vast majority of these students, about 2,246 (10.7%), were enrolled in math. Additionally, GPC has a strong international population with 775 (3.7%) students enrolled in English as a Second Language classes.

Most of the students attending Georgia Perimeter College have at least one, if not multiple, risk factors that may prevent them from completing their degree program. These factors include, but are not limited to, first-generation college student, economic status, part-time attendance, full-time employment, and single parenthood. To better serve this at-risk population, the college established Program Maps to delineate the recommended course sequence for a student to complete a degree program in two years. Furthermore, the college encouraged full-time students to complete 15 hours each semester in order to graduate in four semesters. As part of the college's commitment to reducing time to degree completion, part-time students, approximately 60% of the total student population who take fewer than 12 credit hours in a semester, were also encouraged to increase the number of courses they took each semester. Time to completion is one of the greatest risk factors attributed to a student not graduating. Therefore, many of the college's projects focused on getting students to take more classes each semester and on providing them with the necessary support to help them be successful with an increased academic course load.

The college recognizes that getting students accustomed to the academic rigor of college early increases their ability to succeed, especially if the student is the first in his or her family to attend college. The Early College Programs that enable high school students to earn high school and college

credit simultaneously, thereby reducing the time needed to complete a college degree, are a priority for the college. Exposing students to collegiate-level work, along with providing a strong academic support infrastructure while they are still in high school, prepares them for success when they start college full time.

Recognizing that many students at the college need assistance in science, engineering and mathematics, GPC has made support for STEM education a priority through numerous initiatives and grants, including the creation of a full-time STEM coordinator position.

GPC created key initiatives that provided timely communication and intervention for students who were in academic peril. The college implemented a proactive and timely academic alert system to improve student success. This advising system did not wait for students to access the support resources they needed. Instead it provided the structure and mechanism by which college faculty and staff initiated contact with students in an effort to provide academic assistance to enhance their chances of success in their coursework.

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. Early College Initiatives (Goal of Shortening Time to Degree Completion):

- a) GPC has the largest Dual Enrollment (DE) program in the University System, which makes the college well positioned to use this as a means for meeting the Complete College Georgia goal of shortening the time to degree completion. DE students have a high success rate, and are able to begin their careers as full-time college students having successfully accrued a number of college credits. During the 2013-2014 academic year, GPC had 1,144 dual enrolled students

who took 10,600 hours of credit, giving these students an early start on completing their degrees. By completing core curriculum courses while still in high school, DE students are able to move into more advanced courses earlier in their college careers. Moving forward, GPC is anxious to expand the number of students participating in this program by offering it to more high schools.

- b) GPC, in partnership with the DeKalb County School District (DCSD), operates the DeKalb Early College Academy (DECA), which has been successful in creating access for students who are members of an underrepresented population in higher education. Last year, 160 high school students were taking GPC classes through DECA with 1,873 hours of collegiate credit earned. Sixteen students completed an AA degree along with receiving their high school diploma, which supports the Complete College Georgia goal of shortening time to degree completion. The Academy was the only school in DCSD on the "Highest Performing" awards school list.

2. Intrusive Advising (Goal of Decreasing excess credits earned on the path to getting a degree.):

- a) Many students withdraw or fail courses due to a poor start in a class, which causes them to be overwhelmed. These students often are unaware of the many resources available at the college to assist them in their studies. GPC has an alert system in place that notifies faculty advisors early in the semester when students are struggling and allows proactive interventions to occur to support the student in the course. Advisors contact students concerning their performance in the class, evaluate the students' difficulties, and direct them to the most appropriate resources to support their success. Often the student requires additional assistance in the Learning and Tutoring Center and the Library, but other barriers can exist for which other college resources can be of service to the student. Several thousand students receive an early alert each semester. Students accessing the academic resources the college provides should be able to catch up, succeed in these classes, and progress in their degree program.
- b) GPC implemented DegreeWorks, a web-based academic advising and degree audit system, to improve the monitoring of students' progress toward degree completion. GPC plans to make use of DegreeWorks as part of an overall redesign of the advising process to reduce the number of excess credits earned and shorten the time to graduation for students.
- c) A revised advisement requirement has been implemented for all students, which necessitates that they meet with an academic advisor to ensure that they are on the correct path towards earning their degree.

3. 15 to Finish (Goal of Increasing the Number of Degrees Earned on Time):

- a) GPC employees, Ms. Elizabeth Thornton and Dr. Matthew Robison, led the development of the "15 to Finish" initiative, and the college is committed to its full implementation. GPC created Program Maps for all degree paths, and students use them to plot the correct courses to take each semester in order to complete their AA in four semesters. Part-time students are guided by the Program Maps to minimize the number of semesters required to complete a degree and are encouraged to take as close to 15 hours each semester as is possible considering their personal commitments. Ultimately, "15 to Finish" will increase the number of students completing a degree on time by reducing the time to graduation for them.
- b) The Program Maps have been added to DegreeWorks, which will allow for more effective use of technology in advising and in student decision-making by matching program selection with his or her interests and abilities.

4. Restructuring Supplemental Instruction (Goal of Restructuring Instructional Delivery):

- a) With support from the Betty and Davis Fitzgerald Foundation grant and the National Science Foundation through the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Talent Expansion Program (STEP), GPC implemented the use of supplemental instruction in a limited number of chemistry and mathematics gateway courses with high rates of withdrawal and grades of D or F to determine the feasibility of expanding this academic support as part of a systematic plan.
- b) GPC has made a focused effort to support increasing participation in STEM fields by creating a number of programs that provide supplemental instruction and support for students in these courses. These programs serve 130 students who are underrepresented minorities or who are female. Last year, GPC awarded 162 degrees in the STEM fields, demonstrating a 37% increase in STEM degrees awarded from the 2010-2011 academic year.

5. Transforming Remediation (Goal of Increasing the likelihood of Degree Completion):

- a) GPC has participated in a redesign of Learning Support math courses, which reduced the number of courses from three levels to two. The percentage of students successfully moved into college math in one semester increased from 20% in Academic Year 2012 to 33% in Academic Year 2013.
- b) A similar redesign has occurred for students in English and reading as the number of Learning Support courses has been reduced from two levels to one. However, the number of students in Learning Support English at GPC is only 405, a number too small to make any definitive statement about improvement in success rates.

SUMMARY OF GOALS, HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Goal	Goal 6: Shorten time to degree completion through programs that allow students to earn college credit while still in high school.
High-impact Strategy Summary of Activities	<p>Early College Initiatives</p> <p>GPC has nearly 1,200 dual enrollment high school students completing more than 11,600 credits worth of college-level courses, which can be applied to degrees at matriculation into an institution of higher education. The most popular courses are English and math, but a wide range of courses that satisfy core requirements for most degree programs are offered.</p> <p>In addition to dual enrollment, the DeKalb Early College Academy (DECA) is jointly operated with the DeKalb County School District (DCSD). The focus of the program is on those students of high ability as demonstrated by past performance on standardized tests and classroom effort. Students from any middle school in DCSD may apply to join DECA in the 8th grade. In addition to the college preparatory curriculum, students can receive up to 60 hours of college credit leading to a two-year Associate of Arts degree. Students spend the 9th and 10th grades at the Academy location and the 11th and 12th grades taking classes at GPC. The program is designed to accommodate 400 students in grades 9 through 12 .Of those students, 160 are on a GPC campus.</p>
Interim Measures of Progress	<p>The college continues to expand the Dual Enrollment program and seeks opportunities to serve additional high schools.</p> <p>The students in DECA graduate on time at a rate that is greater than 90%, which is far above the state average of 71% and the DCSD rate of 62%. Additionally, students acquire significant college credit with 16 students receiving their associate’s degree last year at the end of their high school career. However, due to resource considerations, it is not possible to significantly increase the number of students in this program, and for the next few years, it is likely to continue at its current size.</p>
Measures of Success	<p>Students in Dual Enrollment pass their classes with a C or better at a rate greater than 97%, earning more than 11,600 hours of college credit. The total monetary value of this credit depends upon the college to which each student matriculates, but estimating a tuition rate of \$100 per credit hour, which is approximately the lowest rate for state colleges in Georgia, this represents \$1,160,000 saved by the families of these students. Additionally, two students completed their associate’s degrees by the time they completed high school. GPC believes this program can grow by 5% per year for the next few years, as new high schools are added to the partnership, while maintaining the same standards for student success.</p> <p>DECA has won numerous awards for excellence. It was the only school in DCSD on the Highest Performing awards school list. It was a Platinum and Gold Award Winner for Student Achievement. More than 90% of all students graduating through this program enter college after completing high school with transferable college credit, and most complete a bachelor’s degree within four years of entering college.</p>

Goal	Goal 3: Decrease excess credits earned on the path to getting a degree.
High-impact Strategy Summary of Activities	<p>Shorten Time to Degree Completion</p> <p>An alert system is in place that allows intervention to occur early in each term. Students are directed to the appropriate resources that will best meet their needs for academic success. Advisors meet with students who are identified as struggling, assess the barriers to success, and create a plan of action to give the student the best chance of success.</p> <p>GPC has fully implemented DegreeWorks and requires mandatory advisement once a student earns 18 and 36 credit hours respectively, thus ensuring that students are on track for completing degree programs in the fewest number of semesters.</p>
Interim Measures of Progress	<p>During spring semester 2014, the college issued 6,271 alerts to 1,489 different students whose early performance indicated that they were in danger of not completing enrolled courses with a grade of C or better.</p>
Measures of Success	<p>For 57% (4252) of the early alerts issued, students were able to recover and earn a grade of C or better in the class. The grade distribution showed 16.25% (1035) earning an A, 21.11% (1345) earning a B and 19.89% (1267) earning a C.</p> <p>By making these early interventions, 4254 students who had a clear indication of earning a D or an F in a course were able to improve their course grade, thus avoiding the need to repeat the course. This early intervention and redirection resulted in the potential savings of, at an average tuition rate of \$261 per course, \$1.11 million dollars because students did not need to repeat these courses.</p>

Ultimately the number of classes that are repeated by students has decreased, and this reduction will lead to students completing degrees in fewer semesters. However, this program has not been in place long enough for meaningful data to be collected concerning this hypothesis. The College has a goal of reducing the percentage of students receiving grades of D or F or W in its gateway courses by 10 percentage points over the next two years.

Goal	Goal 2: Increase the number of degrees that are earned “on time” (associate’s degree in 2 years, bachelor’s degree in 4 years).
High-impact Strategy Summary of Activities	<p>“15 to Finish”</p> <p>GPC created Program Maps for all programs of study; these maps provide students with the recommended course selection for each term, to complete their AA in four semesters. Program Maps are available on the college website and through the advising offices. Advisors encourage part-time students to take as close to 15 hours each semester as is possible considering their personal commitments.</p> <p>The Program Maps have been added to DegreeWorks, which students access for information when choosing classes and are directed to those classes that best match the requirements for degree completion. Students will be able to choose programs of study that best match their interests and abilities.</p>
Interim Measures of Progress	<p>The number of students who access DegreeWorks will be tracked, which will provide a measure of how effective communication has been. Additionally, the college should see an increase in the number of students taking 15 hours per semester, and the average number of hours taken per student should increase.</p>
Measures of Success	<p>GPC expects to see a higher percentage of its students completing degree programs in four semesters. Since 61% of the students at GPC are part-time, completion in four semesters is not possible. However, due to completion initiatives that are in place, there will be an increase in the number of hours taken and an increase in the number of students completing in six semesters or three years. GPC has a goal of increasing the graduation rate to 21% by 2016, which can be achieved in part by encouraging students to take one more class each semester. Additionally, GPC has a goal of increasing the number of students taking 15 hours or more per semester from approximately 8% in 2014 to 12% and reducing the number taking seven hours or fewer from approximately 40% to 35% by 2016.</p>

Goal	Goal 8: Restructure instructional delivery to support educational excellence and student success.
High-impact Strategy Summary of Activities	<p>Supplemental Instruction</p> <p>Supplemental instruction was provided in select general chemistry and college algebra courses. A student, who had passed the course previously, attends the regular lectures and then offers additional instruction to students in another arranged setting. During the supplemental instruction session, the lead student provides additional review and time for the enrolled students to grasp the concepts presented. The lead student is generally viewed more as a peer by the enrolled students and hence is more likely to be asked questions.</p> <p>Other activities supported by GPC are those designed to support student success in science, engineering, and mathematics and to encourage students of ability who belong to populations underrepresented in these fields. These programs encourage students’ interests in the STEM areas and support their success in the required courses. Activities include summer research opportunities at universities and laboratories, participation in science competitions, and opportunities for tutoring, additional instruction, and mentoring.</p>
Interim Measures of Progress	<p>There were approximately 100 students in 10 classes who took advantage of the supplemental instruction during the last academic year. The college has learned from this experience and looks to expand its offerings in the upcoming year with the hiring of a full-time coordinator for this initiative, which will move the program from the pilot stage to an operational phase.</p> <p>Last year, 130 students participated in one or more of the STEM programs, which represents approximately 10% of all students at GPC with a declared program of study in the STEM field. These students had an average GPA of 3.3 and were predominantly from populations underrepresented in the STEM fields.</p>
Measures of Success	<p>Students receiving supplemental instruction this past year did not appear to perform any better than students who did not receive it. This result can be understood, in part, to the small percentage of the total population taking classes that had a supplemental instruction component and to possible weaknesses in the design and administration of the supplemental instruction component. GPC will increase the number of students by 50% as more classes with supplemental instruction are added to</p>

the schedule.

GPC has seen a significant increase in the numbers of students receiving an associate’s degree in STEM fields. Students studying in a STEM field are more likely than others to transfer to a four year institution without completing an AA degree. However, through GPC’s support programs, Academic Year 2014 had a 37% increase in the number of associate’s degrees (162) awarded over Academic Year 2010. Of the students who earned STEM degrees, 51 were from underrepresented minority populations, and 66 were women. GPC has as a goal to increase the graduation rate to 21% by 2016.

Goal	Goal 7: Increase the likelihood of degree completion by transforming the way that remediation is accomplished.
High-impact Strategy Summary of Activities	Transforming Remediation The college redesigned Learning Support classes to reduce the number of levels of courses from two to one. Additionally, GPC will pilot the placement of some Learning Support students in collegiate math and English classes with co-requisite support labs. Such programs implemented at other colleges have shown a dramatic increase in the rates of success for students while having the added benefit of earning collegiate credit.
Interim Measures of Progress	The number of students moving from Learning Support mathematics into collegiate- level math in one semester has increased from 20% to 33%. For English, there has not been a measurable increase, but the number of students in Learning Support English has been substantially reduced as a result of recent changes in statewide standards for admission, thus making it difficult to compare populations. Another interim measure of success will be an increase in the number of collegiate credit obtained by students who began in Learning Support classes.
Measures of Success	Ultimately, GPC will see more students who started in Learning Support completing degrees and doing so in two fewer semesters on average. This data will not be available for at least another year for full-time and two years for part-time students. GPC has a goal of increasing the fall to fall retention rate from the current rate of 47% to 50% by 2016.

OBSERVATIONS:

GPC has had success with a number of its strategies and continues to look for opportunities to expand them. The DECA program continues to be an exceptionally successful program: however, its capacity is limited to approximately 100 students at each grade level, and it is not feasible for any significant expansion in the near future. Our Dual Enrollment program is also highly successful, reaching a large number of students who are able to complete a significant number of college courses while in high school and reducing their time to degree completion. This initiative is an area of significant potential growth for the college, and next year we anticipate more than a 5% growth in the number of students and high schools participating.

GPC plans a modification of the early alert program for several reasons. First, the early alert has not been occurring early enough in the semester, and second, students can get off track at several critical points during the semester even though they may have made a good start. The new academic alert system will issue a warning throughout the term based on benchmark assessments or a student’s performance on core concepts that are specific to each course and developed by course curriculum committees. The student’s inability to master one or more of these concepts serves as a predictor of his or her ability to be successful in that course. An assessment of these core concepts is made at three appropriate points during the semester and immediate intervention occurs if a student does not demonstrate mastery. The Early Alert will transform into the Performance Alert for Student Success (PASS), and data indicates that this ongoing monitoring of students’ mastery of key concepts will increase successful course completion rates. This program will begin with fall

semester 2014.

GPC has made adjustments to its completion activities over the last three years in response to an institutional assessment of the effectiveness of various initiatives as well as lessons learned from the experiences of other USG institutions. These adjustments include the development of the “15 to Finish” initiative and the creation of clear completion maps for students. GPC has modified its student advisement to include an intrusive rather than a passive response to students.

There has been significant success in helping students complete their AA degree in the STEM fields. The numbers of graduates have steadily increased, and these graduates continue to represent a greater diversity than the national average in these areas. GPC continues to focus efforts upon students in these fields through its programs. In contrast, the results that were seen in the use of supplemental instruction were not as good as expected, but the lack of success is due in no small part to limited experience in providing this type of support to students. More coordination and student leader training are needed to make this program successful. To that end, GPC will hire a full-time supplemental instruction coordinator for FY 15, who will train the student leaders, coordinate efforts with faculty, and provide leadership to this effort. Given the positive results with supplemental instruction seen at other institutions there is reason to believe that this activity has the potential to succeed and is worth an investment of resources in the hiring of a full-time coordinator.

GPC continues to assess the effectiveness of its many activities, which support the Complete College Georgia priorities. Modifications are made in response to data to

enhance current activities and initiate new opportunities. GPC is proud of what has been accomplished over the past year, and looks forward to continuing its efforts on behalf of its students to build the educated workforce required by Georgia companies in the 21st century.