



Middle Georgia State College

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Institutional mission

The mission of Middle Georgia State College is to serve the educational needs of a diverse population through high quality programs connected to community needs in a global context and to serve as a leader for the intellectual, economic, and cultural life of the region.

Student Body Demographics

Middle Georgia State College serves a diverse student body comprised of many first generation and economically challenged students, many of whom require remediation upon admission. With five campuses, the college serves urban, suburban, and rural student populations. Key demographic data impacting Complete College Georgia strategies includes a population which includes 32.1% adult learners, 62.5% Pell-eligible students, and 9.1% of students who require remediation. A complete profile of MGA's Student Body Characteristics is provided in the table below.

SELECT STUDENT BODY CHARACTERISTICS
FALL 2013

Characteristic	Number	% of Total Enrollment
Full-Time	4,961	62.1%
Part-Time	3,028	37.9%
Student Level		
Freshman	3,026	37.9%
Sophomore	1,581	19.8%
Junior	1,243	15.5%
Senior	1,727	21.6%
Other*	412	5.2%
Gender		
Male	3,251	40.7%
Female	4,738	59.3%
Age		
< 25 years	5418	69.9%
> 25 years	2571	32.1%
Average Age	25.2	

Ethnicity/Race	#	%
Hispanic	270	3.4%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	22	0.3%
Asian	211	2.6%
Black Non-Hispanic	2,699	33.8%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	10	0.1%
White Non-Hispanic	4,497	56.3%
2 or More Races	234	2.9%
Unknown	46	0.6%
Residency		
Georgia	7,717	96.6%
Out of State	210	2.6%
Out of Country	62	0.8%
Other Demographic Data		
	#	%

Pell Eligible	4992	62.5%
Students Requiring Remediation	733	9.1%

The college's service area is expanding but remains focused on 18 counties in Middle Georgia. Fall 2013, the majority (96.6%) of the student body was Georgia residents. Sixty-two percent (62.1%) were enrolled in 12 or more semester hours. Almost fifty eight percent (57.9%) were classified as freshmen or sophomores (37.9% and 19.8% respectively). Ethnic diversity is predominantly White Non-Hispanic (56.3%) and Black Non-Hispanic (33.8%). Hispanic students comprise 3.4% of the student body, Asian students 2.6% of the student body and two or more ethnic groups 2.95% of the student body.

FIGURE 1: FIVE-YEAR HISTORY OF NUMBER OF DEGREES CONFERRED

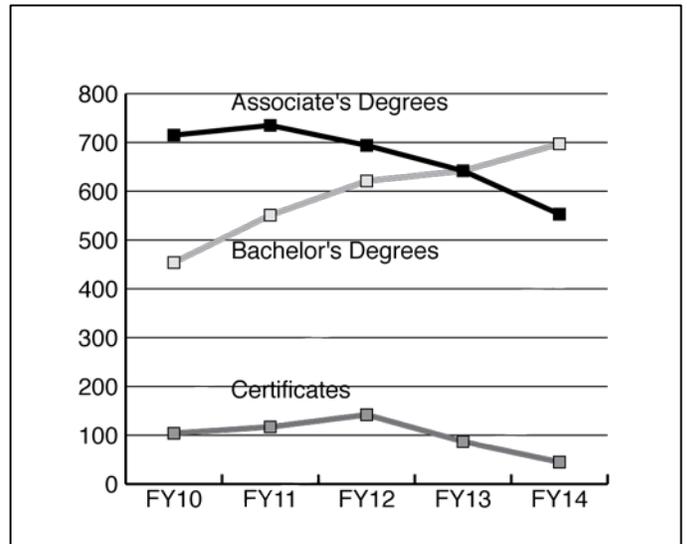
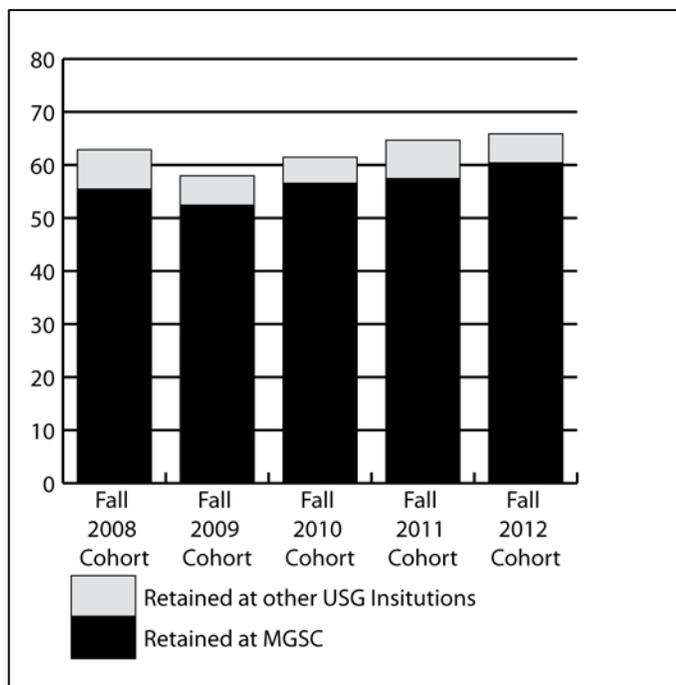


FIGURE 2: ONE-YEAR RETENTION RATES FTFTF



MGA’s mission and demographics (see above) lead to our overarching CCG Goals which have not changed since their adoption: (1) clear and consistent degree and curriculum pathways for completion in time and within credit hours, (2) appropriate academic and student support in order to attain degree completion (3) success in core curriculum and (4) data analytics infrastructure.

Many of the institution’s fiscal and personnel resources were directed to the fundamental work of bringing to fruition the official establishment of a new institution with full approval from SACSCOC in December 2013, the reconciliation of two information technology structures such as two completely different Banner systems and the hiring of Dr. Christopher Blake as the first permanent president of MGA in January 2014. Our single largest accomplishment this year was the integration of the two Banner systems (re: consolidation of institutions) and now the institution can move forward with purposeful modification of the original strategies in the campus plan.

The 2013-2014 strategic work for CCG focused on the advancement of a Freshman/Sophomore College model that includes academic advising, FYE, Living/Learning Communities and academic support centers for mathematics and writing. The Office of Information Technology and the Office of Academic Affairs continued to build the technology infrastructure to support the data analytics technology solutions the institution invested in such as Blackboard Analytics, Degree Works and Student Success (EAB).

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 1: *Clarity and consistency in communicating with students about their curriculum path and providing supports to keep them on the path to completion requires a strategic and dynamic communication plan, via catalog, handbooks, flyers, announcements, advising sessions and websites that do not corrupt the message migrating across five campuses and units of the institution.*

Academic Affairs, Enrollment Services, and Students Affairs have begun to work in tandem via Project Management Plans, to create and sustain a unified communication system. MGA is committed to increasing access and completion for students traditionally underserved in post-secondary education. Two new strategies for 2014-2015 to further impact this goal are Student Academic Progress (SAP) Warning Letters issued by the Office of Financial Aid, and the creation of **Purple Zones**.

Approximately 70% of MGA students are financial aid recipients. Students often do not understand the basis on which their aid is determined or the circumstances that affect the continuance of that aid. A SAP Warning letter will be sent from Office of Financial Aid to students in jeopardy of losing their financial aid and their academic advisor with a directive to see their academic advisor for course selection. The letter will include a statement of the exact number of credits and grades needed to avoid loss of aid. Although academic advising holds are already placed on students on academic probation or who are enrolled in a learning support course, consideration is being given to putting the same hold on students on SAP probation or dismissal. To ensure success of this strategy, in addition to the letters, a list of all students placed on SAP probation or facing SAP dismissal will be sent to the respective academic advisor.

Integral to the academic success of our students is changing a culture where advising has been perceived as synonymous with helping students register for courses to an operational understanding of advising as a process that begins with admissions and concludes with all program requirements met. The next phase in the evolution of the academic advising program is the creation of **Purple Zones**. Modeled after the green-zone strategy for army veterans, the **Purple Zone** is so named because purple is the color used to reference the collective of all branches of the Armed Forces. It is also one of the three colors that brand MGA – purple, silver and black. Marked by the Knight’s Shield of the MGA mascot, the participants trained for the **Purple Zone** will provide concierge-like services for adult learners to include veterans and service members. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these populations of students are routed to many offices before getting their questions answered or their matriculation needs met. Someone trained for the **Purple Zone** would be able to triage the student’s needs and get them to the appropriate office or individuals in a timely manner. This initiative includes personnel and offices representing Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, and Student Affairs.

Although self-report data is all that is captured with the

411 application, given the institution’s presence on the Warner Robins Air Force base, close proximity to the Veterans Center in Dublin and the new Veteran’s transition center in Warner Robins, of which MGA is a lead institution, MGA is positioned to take an active role in helping the veteran with degree completion. It is envisioned that the **Purple Zone** strategy will be integral to retention of the military veteran.

On August 8, 2014, President Blake addressed the entire MGA community (faculty, staff, directors, Chairs, Deans, Campus directors and Vice-Presidents) to deliver the state of the institution and lay out the three important goals for this upcoming year. One of the three goals is Complete College Georgia. He charged everyone with responsibility both individually and collectively for meeting MGA commitment to CCGA and its commitment to our regional community. We believe with this direction, the strategies we outlined above will succeed because everyone will be aligned and working for the same outcomes. We do not see any significant challenges that would impede our progress; we look at challenges as obstacles to overcome. Those obstacles may slow our work temporarily but we will continue to trend in a positive direction as our data is showing us.

Goal 2: *Continue to shape the institutional culture to align fiscal affairs, enrollment management, student affairs, information technology, and academic affairs in order to increase degree completion, number of degrees completed on time, decrease in excess credits accrued, and shorten time to completion.*

Strategies specific to this goal are implementation of data mining tools that will inform adoption of transformative practices, the creation of school based Complete College Georgia Project Teams, adoption of meta majors, the use of transfer specialists and the redesign of high failure freshman core classes.

To support the faculty in this work, MGA has invested in three data mining tools: BlackBoard Analytics (BBA), Degree Works [*MyDegree*], and EAB [MGA Student Alert Advising System (SAAS)]. BBA provides data that guides curriculum decisions. MyDegree will be used for conducting graduation audits, preparing course registration schedules and for designing the curriculum map for each student. EAB SAAS is an intrusive advising tool that serves multiple masters. At the individual student level it provides data that describes a student’s risk of degree completion which facilitates academic advising. At the unit level, the data informs curriculum decisions. The timing for professional development and implementation for each of these tools was contingent on completion of the Banner data validation process resulting from consolidation of two institutions. This has been a lengthy and tedious process spanning 2 and ½ years. Dashboards built through BBA for deans and chairs to look at curriculum, enrollment, and retention trends were released Spring 2014.

Deans and chairs have already begun analyzing CORE courses with high D,W,F rates.

For the upcoming academic year, each school/department will create a CCG Project Data Team with a representative to sit on an institution-wide CCG Project Team. The Office of Academic Affairs will provide professional development to the school/departmental committees in order to ensure faculty are analyzing, reflecting, and posing hypotheses for improving student progression and graduation. The representative will bring before the institution team data-driven recommendations that improve the probability of academic success for our students through changes in policy or practices.

MyDegree, MGA’s branding of Degree Works, was piloted by Professional Advisors June-July 2014 for program planning and graduation audits. It will be released to faculty Fall 2014 and to all incoming students Spring 2015. SAAS (EAB), an analytical advising tool, will be piloted by three academic programs Fall 2014.

MGA requires students to commit to a major on their application. It was envisioned that declaring a major this early in matriculation would lend itself to community building. Lesson learned is that traditional freshmen have interests, but are not prepared to commit to a narrowly defined major. The creation of meta majors is one of the five 2014-2015 CCG strategies. Meta majors, a collection of like disciplines under one major code, will provide a more robust and meaningful structure for collaboration among Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, and Student Affairs in the design and delivery of recruitment, orientation, and academic advising programs. Students will declare a meta-major at admissions, such as Health Professions, and then declare a more narrowly defined field of study no later than end of sophomore year, e.g. Nursing. A project team with representatives from Academic Affairs, Information Technology, Enrollment Management, and Student Affairs will begin the process of delineation and adoption of meta majors Fall 2014.

SUMMARY OF GOALS, HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Based on the review of institutional data prepared for SACSCOC Substantive Change Accreditation, the results of the Campus Plan Strategy Survey, 2014 institutional vision and core values, MGA College Completion goals and strategies for 2014-2015 are rooted in the original campus plan, but represent an evolution of those strategies for migration to university status. All strategies are designed as a project plan which includes both workflow and a communication plan. Personnel and resources will focus on two goals and five strategies.

USG CCG GOAL 1 Increase the number of undergraduate degrees awarded

High Impact Strategies

- (1) Issuing SAP Warning Letters to students at risk of losing financial aid
- (2) Creation of **Purple Zones** that offer concierge-like services to non-traditional students, veterans and service personnel

Summary of Activities

- (1) SAP Warning Letters -NEW
Initiated by Office of Financial Aid- A letter is sent to the student and copied to their advisor

stating the number of credits and required GPA to return to Satisfactory Academic Progress for Financial Aid purposes. Advisors will use the letters, along with MyDegree and EAB-SAAS, to guide the academic advising conversation and recommend success strategies.

Implement beginning July 2014

(2) Purple Zones -NEW

A Project Team led by Academic Affairs developed the concept. Target date for full implementation January 2015

Interim Measures of Progress

Offices and individuals trained in intrusive advising around issues specific to returning adults and veterans, will have their offices signified by a purple brand that incorporates the institutional logo.

1a Increase the number of intrusive advising sessions with students at risk of losing financial aid

1b. Increase the number of students receiving academic tutoring/student support during the semester of concern

1c. Decrease number of students who stop-out due to the loss of financial aid

2a. Increase the number of adult students receiving personalized services in order to enhance degree pathways for completion

2b. Decrease the number of credits to degree completion

Measure of Success

1.1: 5-year history of number of entering students, by underserved population to include:

- Part-time students
- Adult learners (undergraduate students 25 or older)
- Military and former military students
- First generation
- Underserved minority
- Gender
- Low income (Pell recipients)
- Students with disabilities

Outside Partnerships

None at this time. Responsibilities of academic support personnel are being re-evaluated for possible realignment. A new position, Director of Academic Advising, is under consideration.

Required Resources

Establishment of Purple Zones will require professional development led by experts in the fields of returning adults, service members and veterans. Funds are being requested in the next budget cycle to support both initial and on-going development of faculty and staff.

Operational funds are being requested for purchase of Purple Zone markers and consumables.

If warranted, a new position, Director of Academic Advising, will be requested.

Budget hearing: December 4, 2014

Identification of those involved

Financial Aid Counselors, Academic Advisors, Admission Office, Registrar’s Office, Admin Assistants for Campus Directors

USG CCG Goal

Increase the number of degrees that are earned “on-time” (associates in 2 years and bachelor’s degrees in 4 years)

High Impact Strategies

(1) Easy access to accurate data that can guide individual advising sessions as well as, core course redesign **ONGOING** - 80% complete

(2) Analysis of data trends around student learning outcomes by school based CCG Project Teams - **NEW**

(3) Adoption of meta majors that will unify the work of Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management and Student Affairs - **NEW**

Summary of Activities

(1) Data Access

Pyramid (BlackBoard Analytics) – Dashboards that report real-time institutional and unit trend data supportive of Enrollment Services and Academic Affairs are accessible to the President, Vice Presidents, Assistant/ Associate Vice Presidents, Deans and Department Chairs.

- *MGA My Degree* (Degree Works) – Piloted Spring and Summer 2014. Released to all Chairs and Administrative Assistance May 2014 to conduct graduation audits; released to faculty and selected staff August 2014 and students September 2014 for program planning.
- *MGA Student Academic Alert System -MGA SAAS* (EAB SSS) – This tool will allow the academic advisor to see any holds that may be on the student’s record, including a financial aid hold.

Data validation and report screens in final edit. Piloted Fall 2014.

(2) School based CCG Project Management Teams will be tasked with analyzing data from BBA and EAB – SAAS and (a) using that data to inform curriculum re-design/faculty development and (b) reporting back to the institutional CCG Team.

(3) Adoption of meta majors to provide a more robust and meaningful structure for collaboration among Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, and Student Affairs in the design and delivery of recruitment, orientation, and academic advising programs.

Interim Measures of Progress

Describe the preliminary outcomes associated with this strategy

(1) Demonstrated skill among faculty and select staff in how to use data to make informed decisions in terms of retention, progression and graduation of students in discipline specific degree programs.

(2) Data profiles of academic success trends among traditionally underserved student groups

Measure of Success

What metric(s) is your institution using to assess the outcome of this strategy?

(1) 5 year history and % of students enrolling in 15 or more credits per semester

(2) 5-year history % and number of students completing degrees on-time.

Outside Partnerships

NA

Required Resources

The college has purchased Pyramid, MyDegree, SAAS (EAB).

Identification of those involved

Academic Affairs, Deans, Chairs, Faculty and Professional Advisors;

SECTION 4 – OBSERVATIONS

This past year, MGA received SACSCOC approval and the college also hired its first President! Dr. Blake began his presidency in January 2014. The full institutional commitment to CCGA was in place however there was a lack of coordinating offices around a strong, cohesive plan. The Office of Academic Affairs was primarily responsible for CCGA. Under Dr. Blake’s leadership, the institution is responsible and it is in his words “a wildly important goal”. He directed his cabinet summer 2014 to address CCGA goals within their units and to work collaboratively with each other for this upcoming year to ensure student retention, progression and graduation.

First lesson learned. The initial point of contact is a determining factor in student retention. It is this conversation between student and institutional representative that puts the student on the path to completion, minimizes probability of the student taking unnecessary courses, and clarifies degree path for career or employment aspirations. That point of contact could be someone affiliated with Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management or Student Affairs. MGA has embraced a project management team approach to resolution of issues that impeded the academic progress of students. One example of the power of this process is New Student Orientation. The event and program is coordinated through Enrollment Management. The Director of Recruiting and Orientation provides a list of attendees to the Associate Dean for the School of Arts and Sciences who is tasked with

coordinating faculty and staff to help with first semester schedule building and registration, an integral part of the day’s agenda. Students come together in a computer lab where they are taught how to access their Banner portal, SWORDS, how to build a schedule and how to register for classes. Transfer students are served by a Transfer Specialist, (specialized Professional Advisor) who evaluates the student transcripts and works closely with the specific receiving academic unit to ensure students are given the maximum amount of transfer credit toward degree completion. Transfer Specialists are given access to the student’s file pre-orientation so they can pre-build a schedule prior to orientation.

Second lesson learned. The academic life of the student is an institutional responsibility. Without a structure for all units to regularly engage in dialog, policies and procedures are often created that are at cross-purposes and resource allocations maybe misdirected away from the greater impact of that allocation.

The Office of Academic Affairs implemented the use of Project Management Teams with representation from all appropriate units. Three noteworthy examples:

- Redesign of the Enrollment Management website,
- Redesign of New Student Orientations and registration events, and
- Collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs to create a center for non-traditional learners that would also house the offices of the Transfer Specialists.