University of Georgia

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

The University of Georgia's motto, "to teach, to serve and to inquire into the nature of things," reflects the University's integral and unique role in the conservation and enhancement of the state's and the nation's intellectual, cultural and environmental heritage. The University's mission expresses "…a commitment to excellence in a teaching/learning environment dedicated to serve a diverse and well-prepared student body, to promote high levels of student achievement, and to provide appropriate academic support services."

UGA has an undergraduate population of approximately 26,000. In fall 2013, 94% of undergraduates were enrolled full time, 43% were male and 26% were of racial/ethnic minority status. In 2013, UGA conferred 6,817 bachelor's degrees. See Table 1 for enrollments and degrees conferred by student subpopulations.

In fall 2013, the University enrolled the most academically qualified first-year class in history, with a mean SAT of 1896 (comprised of a 1282 critical reading and math and a 614 writing score) and high school GPA of 3.86. Also during 2013, UGA enrolled one in 20 Georgia high school graduates. The class is 13% non-Georgian, and 28% of the students self-identified as non-Caucasian. The class is comprised of 7.6% African-American, 11.8% Asian and 5.5% Hispanic. Almost 7% come from families where English is not the first language. Approximately 6% of the incoming freshmen are the first in their immediate families to attend college (*OVPI Annual Report*, 2013).

UGA's first-year retention rates have been steady at 94% for the past several years; completion rates have been climbing, and the four-year rate has increased 10 percentage points in the past five years (see Tables 2 and 3). UGA's retention and completion rates outpace peer institutions and many aspirational institutions (see Tables 4 and 5). UGA completion efforts continue to focus on improving retention and graduation rates, with particular attention on increasing the four-year graduation rate. To this end, top priority completion strategies include: 1) carrying out the First-Year Odyssey Seminar program to support student engagement and first-year retention; 2) guiding students on probation back into good academic standing via the Collaborative Academic and Retention Effort program; 3) implementing the flat-rate tuition model; 4) expanding online course offerings to allow students more flexibility in planning their programs of study; and 5) increasing scholarship funds for need-based and merit-based scholarships. Additional retention and completion strategies can be found in Appendix B.

UGA's completion strategy combines programs targeted to specific populations as well as those that impact the entire undergraduate population. The strategies and programs described below were implemented with UGA's high performing, academically strong student body in mind—to challenge, engage and support students on their way to timely completion. Additional data supporting UGA's completion efforts are available in the appendices.

Institutional Completion Goals and Strategies

First-Year Odyssey. The First-Year Odyssey Seminar (FYOS) program, implemented in 2011, provides all first-year students an opportunity to engage, experience and explore the breadth and depth of the academic culture at UGA. The seminars are graded, one-credit-hour courses that are required for all first-year students. Each seminar enrolls between 15-18 students and is taught by a tenured/tenure-track professor. Over 300 different seminars are offered, allowing each student to select one that aligns closely with his or her interests. The FYOS program seeks to introduce undergraduates to academic life on campus and to encourage positive, sustained student-faculty interactions. Furthermore, seminars introduce students to the instruction, research, public service and international missions of the University. The involvement of tenured and tenure-track faculty is a unique attribute among similar first-year programs at other research universities. This high-impact practice aligns with CCG's overarching goal to increase the number of degrees awarded in Georgia. By engaging first-year students with the University culture, FYOS is designed to support UGA's efforts to maintain an outstanding first-year retention rate and ultimately increase four- and six-year completion rates.

Collaborative Academic and Retention Effort (CARE). The Collaborative Academic and Retention Effort (CARE) is an early intervention program designed to address the individual needs of students placed on academic probation. CARE participants experience significant increases in GPA and often return to good academic standing within one semester of participation. By identifying struggling students early and helping them return to good academic standing, retention and completion become more realistic outcomes for these students. This program is an essential element of UGA's CCG plan and is intended to address CCG Goal 2: Increase the number of degrees earned on time.

Online Learning. The Office of Online Learning was launched in August 2012 to advance online opportunities at UGA. Online course expansion at UGA supports efforts to increase graduation rates and adopt new instructional strategies. In 2013, 1,085 students enrolled in 36 summer online classes; in 2014 enrollment jumped to 1,849 and course offerings increased to 56. These newly developed courses satisfy several degree requirements and are in high demand for UGA students (see Table 6). This important college completion effort allows students to stay on track to graduate with greater flexibility. Additionally, in 2006, UGA's first completely online bachelor's degree program was introduced in Special Education; this program contributes to overall degree completion at UGA (see Table 7). Expanding online

opportunities for UGA students addresses CCG Goal 2: Increase the number of degrees earned on time, as well as Goal 8: Restructure instructional delivery.

Increasing Scholarship Funds via the Gateway to Georgia Scholarship Program. UGA launched the Gateway to Georgia Scholarship program in 2012 in response to the increased need for student financial support. Staff members are actively soliciting funds, and almost $1.9 M has been received to date. The three scholarships under the Gateway to Georgia program are Georgia Access, a need-based scholarship program; Georgia Opportunity, a merit-based program; and Georgia Gateway General, a general scholarship with more flexible award criteria. Continued gifts and partnerships are necessary to sustain the Gateway program. As of 2013, the Division of Development and Alumni Relations has partnered with the Georgia Department of Revenue to allocate a portion of UGA license plate sales to the Georgia Access Scholarship fund. As frequently cited in higher education literature, financial need is one of the greatest barriers to college completion. By reducing the amount of unmet financial need, the Gateway program improves the likelihood of completion for students, thereby contributing to CCG Goal 1: Increase the number of degrees awarded and Goal 2: Increase the number of degrees awarded on time.

Flat-Rate Tuition Model. Since 2009, UGA has offered a flat tuition rate. Currently, tuition for in-state students enrolled in six credit hours or less is $2,552 and $4,295 for in-state residents enrolled in more than six credit hours. This flat tuition rate is an incentive for students to take a full course load each semester. Students who take 12 credit hours pay more per credit hour than those who take 15 or more. Students who take full course loads realize significant financial savings and are more likely to graduate on time. According to recent institutional studies, students who take fewer than 15 credit hours at any point in their course of study are 7% less likely to graduate on time. Time-to-degree has steadily decreased over the past decade; however, since the implementation of this tuition policy, time-to-degree at UGA has decreased even more sharply. Time-to-degree for 2013 and 2014 graduates is notably lower than other graduate cohorts (see Table 8). Furthermore, the 2009 entering cohort has the highest four-year completion rate in the past several years (see Table 2).

SUMMARY OF GOALS, HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Goal	Increase first-year retention rate
High-Impact Strategy 1	*Increase student interaction with tenured faculty and engage students in the various missions of the institution*
Summary of Activities	Implemented in 2011, the First-Year Odyssey Seminar (FYOS) program seeks to introduce first-year students to academic life on campus. The seminars are graded, one-credit-hour courses that are required for all first-year students. Each seminar enrolls between 15-18 students and is taught by a tenured/tenure-track professor. Higher education research shows that students who are more engaged in their campus community are more likely to be retained and ultimately graduate. FYOS is an ideal program to accomplish this goal of increased retention.
	The FYOS program is administered by the Office of the Vice President for Instruction (OVPI), through partnerships with the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and tenured/tenure-track faculty members from a variety of disciplines.
	The FYOS program includes funding incentives for faculty participation ($3,000 per seminar) and provides up to $300 per seminar for academic activities outside of class (concerts, museums, etc.).
	Recently the FYOS program received the Regents' Award for Excellence in Teaching in the outstanding program category. The Board of Regents stated:
	"The committee chose this program for its scope and potential influence on all freshmen students and UGA faculty. The committee determined that the program included elements of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, student engagement, advisement, application of pedagogy and data-driven assessment. The professional development opportunities and web-based resources provided to faculty, and data supporting the program's success with students and faculty were a deciding factor in the program's selection."
	See www.usg.edu/news/release/six_university_system_faculty_honored_for_teaching_excellence
Interim Measures of Progress	100 percent of first-year students participate in the program.
Measures of Success	The University's first-year retention rate continues to be sustained at exemplary levels (see Table 2). Retention rates for underrepresented groups have decreased slightly (see Table 3). This metric will continue to be closely monitored for these groups.

Goal	**CCG Goal 2: Increase the number of degrees earned on time**
High-Impact Strategy 2	*Reduce the number of students on academic probation*
Summary of Activities	The Division of Academic Enhancement (DAE) recently expanded the CARE program to meet increasing student needs as well as needs of the growing number of schools and colleges that have joined the CARE program (see Table 9). Participating schools refer students to CARE who are not performing well academically.
	CARE participants benefit from one-on-one consultations with academic specialists. Prior to the initial CARE appointment, students fill out a survey describing their study habits and identifying roadblocks to academic success. Using the information from the survey, CARE specialists create a personalized improvement plan and provide valuable resources for each student.
	Students who are served through the CARE program include those who fall on scholastic probation for the first time within participating schools and colleges (see Table 9); are on continued probation and are re-admitted (post-dismissal); and students who self-select into the program, seeking to heighten or improve academic performance.
	Faculty can also refer students who need academic assistance through the Early Alert Program. Students referred through Early Alert receive the same services as CARE students.
Interim Measures of Progress	CARE students in spring 2013 had an average increase of 0.89 in their term GPAs. Those who delayed participation or did not participate at all displayed on average a very small increase of 0.03 in their term GPAs.
	Significance tests revealed that students who were required to participate in CARE had a statistically significant increase in GPA ($p < 0.05$) compared to students who were eligible but did not participate.
	Note: The control group for this interim measure of progress consists of eligible students who did not participate. An additional control group determined by the non-participating schools and colleges is not feasible, as there are only three schools/colleges that do not actively participate in the CARE program. Additionally, these schools/colleges have very small student populations. This comparison would not yield beneficial measurements.
Measures of Success	Forty-six percent of students who participated in CARE in spring 2013 cleared probation by spring's end as expected. Only 6% of students who delayed participation or did not participate at all cleared probation by spring's end. Helping students on academic probation return to good academic standing will undoubtedly lead to improved retention and completion rates.

Goal	**CCG Goal 2: Increase the number of degrees earned on time**
High-Impact Strategy 3	*Encourage students to take 15 credit hours per semester through the flat-rate tuition policy*
Summary of Activities	The "finish-in-four" tuition model was implemented in 2009 by the Board of Regents. This policy encourages students to take full course loads (15 hours per semester) and graduate on time. Students who take fewer than 15 credit hours per semester pay more per credit hour.
	See http://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section7/policy/C453/
Interim Measures of Progress	Since the implementation of the flat tuition policy, average time-to-degree has decreased for first-time freshmen (see Table 8).
	Average time-to-degree for first-time freshmen in the 2009 graduating cohort was 4.18 years, 4.07 years for the 2013 graduating cohort and 4.05 years for the 2014 graduating cohort.
	Average time-to-degree also has decreased for transfer students from 2.97 years in 2004 to 2.65 years in 2014.
Measures of Success	The four-year completion rate for the 2009 entering cohort is 62.5%, nearly a 10-point increase since the 2004 entering cohort (see Table 2). Additionally, the four-year completion rate has substantially increased for Black/African-American and Hispanic students as well as all non-white students (see Table 3).

Goal	**CCG Goal 2: Increase the number of degrees earned on time**
	CCG Goal 8: Restructure instructional delivery
High-Impact Strategy 4	*Expand summer online course offerings*
Summary of Activities	The Office of Online Learning (OOL) has facilitated the development of new online courses to be offered in the summer. OOL launched the Online Learning Fellows Program in 2013 to provide faculty with the training and support to design, develop and teach high-quality online courses; the program has resulted in 56 new summer courses since 2013.

The courses developed are high-demand courses that fulfill several areas of degree requirements (see Table 6). By offering high-demand, required courses in the summer and in an online format, students are afforded flexibility in course scheduling. Increasing course offerings in high-demand areas allows more UGA students to meet degree requirements in a timely manner, ultimately contributing to increased degree completion and reduced time-to-degree.

In 2015, UGA's Terry College of Business will launch a two-year degree-completion Bachelor of Business Administration program. The new B.B.A. program and the well-established online Special Education program target working professionals who have earned previous college credits and seek to advance in their careers. |
| **Interim Measures of Progress** | • In 2013, 1,496 students were enrolled in summer online courses and earned a total of 5,839 credit hours.
• In 2014, 2,230 students were enrolled in summer online courses and earned a total of 8,904 credit hours.
• Of all 6,609 bachelor's degrees awarded in fiscal year 2014, 683 were awarded to students who completed at least one online course.

There have been 91 online B.S.Ed. in Special Education degrees conferred to date (see Table 7). This online degree program began in fall 2006. |
Measures of Success	It is clear that online courses contribute to overall student credit hour production and progress toward degree completion. Reduced time-to-degree for participants in online courses is the ultimate measure for success and will be reported as data become available.
Goal	**CCG Goal 1: Increase the number of undergraduate degrees earned**
	CCG Goal 2: Increase the number of degrees earned on time
	Other: Increase scholarship funding
High-Impact Strategy 5	*Increase scholarship funds for need-based and merit-based scholarships.*

Gateway to Georgia Scholarship Fund |
| **Summary of Activities** | Since 2009 the Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA) has developed several need-based scholarships that are primarily funded by the UGA Foundation. UGA also receives funding from the UGA Athletic Foundation and the Georgia Department of Revenue from UGA vanity license plates. Due to increases in funding, OSFA has been able to increase the award limits for the Georgia Access Scholarship. The award increased from a $1,000 award in 2010-11 to $2,500 in 2012-13. The award increased again in 2013-14 from $2,500 to $3,000 for Georgia undergraduate students who qualify for a Federal Pell Grant, have a family income less than $40,000, file a 1040A/EZ Federal Income Tax Return (if required to file), and complete their FAFSA during the academic year.

Eligible for four years of renewal, these scholarships include the Georgia Access Scholarship, the University Gateway to Opportunity Program, the Gateway Scholarship, and the UGA Foundation Advantage Scholarship. Once data on the first cohort of students receiving the Georgia Access Award are available, OSFA will create metrics to measure the success of this program. In fall 2013, OSFA developed financial aid recipient profiles for each of UGA's colleges/schools. These profiles have been finalized for the 2012-13 academic year and will help individual academic units gauge the financial needs of their students. OSFA plans to make the profiles available on an annual basis.

University of Georgia license plates have raised $1,875,580 for student scholarships as of September 2014. For each UGA tag sold or renewed, $10 is designated for Georgia Access Scholarships. Students from communities throughout the state now hold Georgia Access Scholarships and are currently attending UGA with the help of those awards. Since 2012, more than 500 Access Scholarship awards have been provided to UGA students who may not have otherwise been able to |

afford the cost of attendance.

Interim Measures of Progress Contributions to the Gateway Scholarship program as of September 2014 included gifts of $1,028,228 and pledges of $786,195 for a total of $1,814,423 in gifts and pledges to this program. As of fall 2013, 350 students were receiving one of UGA's newly created need-based scholarships.

Retention and completion statistics will be tracked for each cohort in the future.

Measures of Success The ultimate goal for these scholarships is to improve students' likelihood of earning a degree. Degree completion for scholarship recipients will be reported as these data become available.

OBSERVATIONS

Effectiveness of our completion approach and adjustments

In addition to the individual program assessments described earlier in this update report, the Office of the Vice President for Instruction, along with the Retention, Progression and Graduation (RPG) Partnership, has reviewed UGA's overall completion approach. Following UGA's submission of the 2013 CCG status report, a graduate assistant was hired to coordinate the completion efforts ongoing across campus. The RPG Partnership, a group with representatives from financial aid, institutional research, academic enhancement, instruction, student affairs, and various schools and colleges, met frequently to discuss the progress of various completion initiatives. The RPG Partnership recommended focused studies to better understand factors that contribute to completion obstacles as well as successes.

As completion efforts have been focused on increasing the four-year graduation rate, a time-to-degree study was conducted. According to the study, UGA students who earned 30+ credits in their first year (including earned AP credit) were 21% more likely to graduate within four years than students who earned fewer than 30 credits in the first year. Additionally, students who took fewer than 15 credit hours during the fall or spring semesters were 7% less likely to graduate on time than those who pursued a full course load.

A team of institutional research analysts investigated student course load patterns and how different patterns relate to on-time completion. These analyses indicated that many of the UGA students who took 12 credit hours in the fall and spring semesters still graduated within four years. Additionally, students who took five or six years to earn their degrees did not necessarily earn "excessive" credits; on average, five- and six-year completers earned 125 to 129 resident credits (credit hours earned at UGA). While the data demonstrate that this "excess" credit is negligible, five- and six-year completers may have received additional credit elsewhere (through AP credit, transfer credits, etc.). In future analyses we will attempt to determine total credit hours earned by four-, five-, and six-year graduates and determine where students earn non-resident credit hours. This analysis will help us identify potential barriers to timely completion.

Continued investigation into UGA student course-taking patterns is planned for the upcoming academic year. It may be the case that students who extend their time-to-degree are participating in additional educational programs, such as study abroad, an internship, or are earning a double major. The planned analysis will provide greater insight into this issue and suggest future actions.

In summary, UGA students are being retained and are completing bachelor's degrees at exceptional rates. UGA's first-year retention rate and four- and six-year completion rates have outpaced most peer institutions and many aspirational institutions (see Tables 4 and 5). Because of these successes, a focused, two-pronged effort has supported our continued upward trajectory for retention and graduation. UGA continues to strive to create and support an engaging environment designed for the success of all students and to focus on specific programs for students who are highly at-risk. By ensuring all students are engaged with the University mission and culture, which is one of the primary objectives of the First-Year Odyssey Seminar Program, and by applying tailored interventions for students who need academic support, we seek to provide each UGA student with the resources required to succeed.

Lessons Learned

This report presents examples of initiatives that create and support an environment designed for the success of all students, with an emphasis on programs targeted to students who are highly at-risk. This concluding section on lessons learned highlights two examples. The FYOS program is an excellent example of strengthening UGA's culture of student engagement, and the CARE program is an example of a program that targets at-risk students. The success of these programs reveals important lessons to share:

- **Engaging Students in the Academic Culture of the University to Promote Student Retention**. Evaluative data from the three-year implementation of the FYOS program indicate that students are being introduced to and assimilated within the academic culture of the University. One-hundred percent of all incoming freshmen over the past three academic years have enrolled in FYO seminar courses in which they engage in small group discussions throughout the semester with tenured/tenure track faculty. Over 16,000 students have participated in the FYOS program. A majority indicate that their experiences in the FYO seminar course helped them understand the importance of taking responsibility for their learning experience. Further, the first-year students indicated that their experiences in the FYO seminar course helped them understand their personal goals for learning and helped them make plans for their future learning. This emphasis on intentional learning has long-term implications for student retention and completion.

- **Early Intervention Leads to Student Success**. Results

from the Collaborative Academic and Retention Effort (CARE) reinforce the importance of early intervention when students are placed on academic probation. This effort also reinforces the importance of campus partnerships that link central academic support to schools and colleges. Students who participate in CARE see significant increases in their GPAs and are often back in good academic standing within one semester of participation. By identifying struggling students early, and helping them get back into good academic standing, retention and completion become more realistic outcomes for these students.