



## GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

### OVERVIEW

*“Georgia State has been reimagined, amid a moral awakening and a raft of data-driven experimentation, as one of the South’s most innovative engines of social mobility.”*

-- The New York Times, May 15, 2018

*“It’s hard to exaggerate the magnitude—and the national implications—of what Georgia State University has accomplished....By dramatically boosting its graduation rate and wiping out its achievement gap, Georgia State has demolished the excuses that college have generated to rationalize their abysmal track records.”*

-- David Kirp, The College Dropout Scandal, 2019

*“No other institution has accomplished what Georgia State has over the past decade.”*

-- Bill Gates, October 2017

When it comes to higher education, the vision of the United States as a land of equal opportunity is far from a reality. Today, it is eight times more likely that an individual in the top quartile of Americans by annual household income will hold a college degree than an individual in the lowest quartile.<sup>1</sup> Nationally, white students graduate from college at rates more than 10 points higher than Hispanic students and are more than twice as likely to graduate with a 4-year college degree when compared to black students.<sup>2</sup> According to the United States Department of Education, Pell-eligible students nationally have a six-year graduation-rate of 39%,<sup>3</sup> a rate that is 20 points lower than the national average.<sup>4</sup>

In 2003, Georgia State University was the embodiment of these national failings. The institutional graduation rate stood at 32% and underserved populations were foundering. Graduation rates were 22% for Latinos, 29% for African Americans, and 18% for African American males. Pell students were graduating at a rates 10 percentage points lower than non-Pell students.

<sup>1</sup> The Pell Institute (2015) Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States: 45 Year Trend Report (2015 Revised Edition). Retrieved from [http://www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Indicators\\_of\\_Higher\\_Education\\_Equity\\_in\\_the\\_US\\_45\\_Year\\_Trend\\_Report.pdf](http://www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Indicators_of_Higher_Education_Equity_in_the_US_45_Year_Trend_Report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2014) Table 326.10: Graduation rate from first institution attended for first-time, full-time bachelor's degree- seeking students at 4-year postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity, time to completion, sex, control of institution, and acceptance rate: Selected cohort entry years, 1996 through 2007. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14\\_326.10.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_326.10.asp).

<sup>3</sup> Horwich, Lloyd (25 November 2015) Report on the Federal Pell Grant Program. Retrieved from <http://www.nasfaa.org/uploads/documents/Pell0212.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2014) Table 326.10.

Today, thanks to a campus-wide commitment to student success and more than a dozen strategic initiatives implemented over the past several years, Georgia State's equity gaps are gone. The institutional graduation rate for bachelor-degree seeking students has improved 23 points—among the largest increases in the nation over this period (See Appendix, Chart 1).<sup>5</sup> Rates are up 37 points for Latinos (to 59%), and 30 points for African Americans (to 59%). Pell-eligible students currently represent 58% of Georgia State University's undergraduate student population, and this year they graduated at the same rate as non-Pell students (Chart 2). In fact, over the past five years, African-American, Hispanic, and Pell-eligible students have, on average, all graduated from Georgia State at or above the rates of the student body overall—making Georgia State the only national public university to attain and sustain this goal. In short, race, ethnicity and income level are no longer predictors of success at Georgia State.

During the 2018-2019 academic year, Georgia State also continued to set new records for degrees conferred. For the first time, the university awarded more than 10,000 degrees in a single year, including a record of 7,303 undergraduate degrees (representing a 4% one-year increase). The university established new records for total bachelor's degrees awarded (5,260, up 5% since last year), as well as bachelor's degrees awarded to Pell-eligible (3,711, up 7%), African American (2,241, up 10%), Hispanic (567, up 2%), and first-generation (1,444, up 5%) students (Chart 3). Georgia State now awards more bachelor's degrees annually to Hispanic, first generation, and Pell students than any other university in Georgia. According to *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, for the sixth consecutive year Georgia State conferred more bachelor's degrees to African Americans than any other non-profit college or university in the United States.<sup>6</sup> Georgia State is also ranked first nationally in the number of bachelor's degrees conferred to African Americans in a number of specific disciplines: biology, finance, foreign languages, history, marketing, psychology, and the social sciences. Two years ago, Georgia State University became the first institution in U.S. history to award more than 2,000 bachelor's degrees to African American students in a single year, a feat that was repeated in both 2017-2018 and now 2018-2019 (with 2,241 degrees awarded this past year).

Since the launch of the university's current Strategic Plan in 2011, bachelor's degree conferrals are up 61% for African Americans, 54% for Pell students, and 93% for Hispanics (Chart 4). Just as importantly, students are succeeding in some of the most challenging majors at Georgia State. Over this period, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded in STEM fields has increased by 117% overall, 167% for African American students, 221% for African American males, and 388% for Hispanic students (**Chart 5**).

In just the third year since consolidation, we are also making exceptional progress at **Perimeter College**, Georgia State's associate-degree-granting college that enrolls more than 18,000 students. While there is still a long way to go, the Perimeter retention rate has increased from 58% in 2014 to 70% in 2019 (Chart 6), while the 3-year institutional graduation rate has almost tripled, rising from 6.5% to 19% (Chart 7). Equally encouragingly, equity gaps at Perimeter College are quickly being closed. This past year, the graduation rate for Hispanic students (23%) was above that of the student body overall, Pell-eligible students graduated at the same rate (19%) as non-Pell students, and African American students graduated at rates (17%) only 2 percentage points behind the overall rate and more than four times higher than the pre-consolidation rate (4%) (Chart 7). The elimination of equity gaps based on race, ethnicity and income level has been a distinctive and much-discussed accomplishment of Georgia State's Atlanta campus, and the rapid progress in this area at Perimeter lends credence to the view that Georgia State's unique data-based, proactive and systematic approach to student success—an approach now being implemented at Perimeter—helps level the playing field for students from diverse backgrounds. Despite steep declines in Perimeter College overall enrollments in the years leading up to consolidation, associate degree conferrals also increased, with 2,043 degrees awarded in 2018-2019—an 8% jump since consolidation (Charts 8-9). Perimeter College now ranks 15<sup>th</sup> in the nation for the number of associate degrees awarded to African Americans annually (999).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> All charts can be found in the Appendix.

<sup>6</sup> *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, August 2018.  
<http://diverseeducation.com/top100/pages/BachelorsDegreeProducers2017.php?dtsearch=&dtrace=&dtmajor=&dtstate=Georgia State University&dtstate=&dtpage=0>

<sup>7</sup> *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, August 2018.  
[diverseeducation.com/top100/pages/AssociatesDegreeProducers2017.php?dtsearch=&dtrace=&dtmajor=&dtstate=Georgia State University-Perimeter College&dtstate=&dtpage=0](http://diverseeducation.com/top100/pages/AssociatesDegreeProducers2017.php?dtsearch=&dtrace=&dtmajor=&dtstate=Georgia State University-Perimeter College&dtstate=&dtpage=0)

Over the past five years, Georgia State’s student-success accomplishments have been the subject of growing levels of national attention:

- In December 2014, President Barack Obama highlighted the exemplary work being done at Georgia State University to assist students through its Panther Retention Grant program in his address at White House Opportunity Day.<sup>8</sup>
- In 2014, Georgia State received the inaugural national Award for Student Success from the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU), and in 2015 it received the second-ever Institutional Transformation Award from the American Council on Education (ACE). Both awards cited Georgia State’s exceptional progress in student success and its elimination of all equity gaps.
- In August 2015, Georgia State was invited to provide expert testimony on strategies for helping low-income students succeed before the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pension of the United States Senate.
- In September 2015, Georgia State was awarded a \$8.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to lead a four-year study to track the impact of analytics-based proactive advisement on 10,000 low-income and first-generation college students nationally.
- In 2016 and again in 2018, the standing U.S. Secretaries of Education visited Georgia State specifically to learn about its student-success programs and approaches. Each publicly credited the University as being a national exemplar, and Georgia State currently serves as the lead partner for the U.S. Department of Education’s program to improve student outcomes at federally designated Minority Serving Institutions.
- In March 2017, Georgia State’s student-success programs secured the second largest gift in university history, a \$14.6 million grant (since increased to more than \$16 million) from the State Farm Foundation to fund innovative, data-based programs in support of college completion at Georgia State University’s Perimeter College campus in Decatur.
- In July 2017, Bill Gates made a half-day visit to campus specifically to learn more about Georgia State’s innovative use of data and technology to transform outcomes for low-income students.
- In 2017-2018, Georgia State’s President Mark Becker was awarded the Carnegie Prize for Presidential Leadership and Sr. Vice President for Student Success Timothy Renick was awarded the McGraw Prize in Higher Education. The awarding bodies for these highly prestigious national prizes both cited Georgia State’s ground-breaking work deploying data-driven student support initiatives to eliminate disparities in graduation rates based on race, ethnicity, income level and first-generation status.
- In December 2018, the Brookings Institution released a longitudinal data study that ranked Georgia State first in Georgia and 25<sup>th</sup> in the nation for “social mobility,” i.e., taking students from the bottom quintile of Americans by annual household income at matriculation and helping them move to the upper half of Americans by annual household income fifteen years later.
- In spring 2018, The New York Times, in a feature article, highlighted Georgia State’s status as conferring the most degrees to African Americans in the country and labeled the university “an engine of social mobility,” while the Harvard Business Review and NPR’s “The Hidden Brain” both chronicled the impact of Georgia State’s groundbreaking work using an A.I.-enhanced chatbot to reduce summer melt.
- In fall 2019, U.S. News and World Report ranked Georgia State 1<sup>st</sup> in the nation for its Commitment to Undergraduate Teaching among all public universities (and 3<sup>rd</sup> overall, with Princeton leading the list) and as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Most Innovative University in the nation (behind only Arizona State). Georgia State ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the nation for Social Mobility and 11<sup>th</sup> for Diversity. Georgia State’s First-Year Experience was ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation.

Motivated by a desire to make an impact, not only in the lives of its own students but also in the lives of students nation-wide, Georgia State University has made a conscious and significant commitment of time and resources to sharing with others the lessons that we have learned. Over the past three years, Georgia State has hosted teams of administrators and faculty members from more than 400 colleges and universities seeking to learn more about our student-success programs. Visiting campuses have included almost every

<sup>8</sup> President Barack Obama (4 December 2014) Remarks by the President at College Opportunity Summit. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/04/remarks-president-college-opportunity-summit>.

university in the University System of Georgia (USG), institutions from forty-seven U.S. states, as well as universities and national governing boards from the Netherlands, Great Britain, Bavaria, Georgia, Australia, Colombia, Hong Kong, South Korea, China, New Zealand, and South Africa. Major national organizations—including Achieving the Dream, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AACSC), the Associate of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU), the American Council on Education (ACE), Complete College America, and the U.S. Department of Education—have also turned to Georgia State for its expertise in the area.

## Student Body Profile and Institutional Mission

Georgia State University now enrolls more African American, Hispanic, Asian American, first-generation, and Pell students than any college or university in Georgia. In fact, the University set new records for the number of bachelor-degree-seeking students enrolled in *every one* of these categories in 2018-19. With Georgia State's 2016 consolidation with Georgia Perimeter College, the study body has become even more remarkable. Georgia State University enrolled more than 65,000 unique students this past year. This included a record 53,500 students during the Fall 2019 semester alone. This means that approximately one out of every six students in the University System of Georgia (USG) this past year was enrolled at Georgia State. This number includes a record 28,900 Pell-eligible students. (As a comparison, the entire Ivy League last year enrolled 9,800 Pell students.) According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (August 2017), Georgia State now ranks first among all national universities for the percent of Pell students that it enrolls. Georgia State's diversity is truly exceptional. The university enrolls more than 21,000 African Americans per semester (25% of the USG total enrollment of African American students) and 5,200 Hispanic students (21% of the USG total). According to *U.S. News and World Report*, Georgia State University is one of only two universities to rank in the Top 15 in the nation for both its racial/ethnic diversity<sup>9</sup> and the percent of low-income students enrolled.<sup>10</sup>

A core part of the university mission is to serve all students in Georgia. As such, the most foundational principle guiding our student-success efforts has been a pledge to improve student outcomes through *inclusion* rather *exclusion*. In the 2011 Georgia State University Strategic Plan, we pledged to increase the number of underrepresented, first-generation and Pell students enrolled *and* to serve them better. We committed to achieving improved outcomes for our students not merely while they are at Georgia State but in their lives and careers after graduation. The consolidation with Perimeter College, with its tens of thousands of students who fall into federal at-risk categories, is the latest example of this deep commitment.

## Completion Goals and High-Impact Strategies to Attain Them

### Completion Goals

The central goal that we have set for our undergraduate success efforts is highly ambitious, but the words were chosen carefully: Georgia State would *“become a national model for undergraduate education by demonstrating that students from all backgrounds can achieve academic and career success at high rates.”*<sup>11</sup>

In 2011, Georgia State University committed to reach a graduation rate for bachelor-degree-seeking students of 52% by 2016 and 60% by 2021.<sup>12</sup> We also committed to conferring 2,500 more degrees annually than we did in 2010 and to eliminating all significant equity

<sup>9</sup> U.S. News & World Report (n.d.) Campus Ethnic Diversity: National Universities. Retrieved from <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/campus-ethnic-diversity>.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. News & World Report (n.d.) Economic Diversity: National Universities. Retrieved <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/economic-diversity>.

<sup>11</sup> Georgia State University (2012). Strategic Plan 2011-2016/21. Retrieved from [http://strategic.gsu.edu/files/2012/09/GSU\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_2016-2.pdf](http://strategic.gsu.edu/files/2012/09/GSU_Strategic_Plan_2016-2.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Georgia State University (2012) College Completion Plan 2012: A University-wide Plan for Student Success (The Implementation of Goal 1 of the GSU Strategic Plan). Retrieved from [http://enrollment.gsu.edu/wp-content/blogs.dir/57/files/2013/09/GSU\\_College\\_Completion\\_Plan\\_09-06-12.pdf](http://enrollment.gsu.edu/wp-content/blogs.dir/57/files/2013/09/GSU_College_Completion_Plan_09-06-12.pdf)

gaps between student populations. We now have committed to doubling the graduation rate of our new associate-degree seeking students from the 2014 baseline over the next five years.

On the surface, attaining these goals seems implausible. Georgia State's demographic trends—characterized in recent years by huge increases in the enrollments of students from underserved populations—typically would project a steep *decline* in student outcomes. Georgia State University, though, has been able to make dramatic gains towards its success targets even as the student body has become far more diverse and less financially secure.

The Strategic Plan also outlined key strategies to achieve these goals. We made a commitment to overhaul our advising system, to track every student daily with the use of predictive analytics and to intervene with students who are at risk in a proactive fashion, to expand existing high-impact programs such as freshman learning communities and Keep Hope Alive, to raise more scholarship dollars, and to pilot and scale innovative new types of financial interventions.

The strategies have worked. Since the launch of Georgia State University's 2011 Strategic Plan, our institutional six-year graduation rate for bachelor-degree-seeking students has increased by 7 percentage points from 48% to 55%. The four-year graduation rate has improved even more dramatically, with a 13-percentage-point increase, from 21% to 34% (Charts 1 and 2). It is important to note that, due to frequent changes in jobs and economic circumstances, low-income and first-generation students and their families move more frequently than do middle- and upper-income college students. This phenomenon significantly impacts Georgia State's institutional graduation rate. Using National Student Clearinghouse data to track Georgia State's most recent 6-year bachelor-seeking cohort across all universities nationally, the success rate is even more encouraging. For the current year, a record 78% of the students who started at Georgia State six years ago had either graduated from Georgia State or some other institution or were still actively enrolled in college (Chart 11).

The news is equally positive for Perimeter College. In the short time since consolidation was announced, the graduation rate for associate-degree-seeking students at Perimeter College has nearly tripled, moving from 6.5% to 19%. While just a few years ago, Hispanic and Pell-eligible students were graduating from Perimeter at rates 40% to 50% lower than their counterparts, equity gaps for both Pell-eligible and Hispanic students have now been eliminated at Perimeter, and the gap for African American students has been cut to 2 percentage points (Chart 8).

Aided by the consolidation with Perimeter College, a record 7,303 undergraduate degrees were conferred by Georgia State University during the 2018-2019 academic year, representing a 3,081-degree increase (73%) over the baseline year of 2011 (Chart 3). The total now far exceeds the Strategic Plan's target to increase undergraduate degrees awarded by 2,500 annually by 2021.

Despite the fact that no major Georgia State initiative is targeted by race or ethnicity, the gains have been greatest for students from underserved backgrounds. In the 2018-2019 academic year, Georgia State University conferred record numbers of bachelor's degrees to Pell-eligible, first generation, African American, and Hispanic students (Chart 4). Since the 2010-2011 academic year, the number of bachelor's degrees conferred to Pell students has grown by 54%, conferrals to African American students has increased by 61%, and degrees awarded to Hispanic students has grown by 93%<sup>13</sup>. Time to degree is down markedly—by more than half a semester per student since 2011—saving the graduating class of 2019 approximately \$18 million in tuition and fees compared to their colleagues just five years earlier (Chart 10).

Georgia State's combination of large enrollment increases of students from underserved backgrounds and significantly rising graduation rates confounds the conventional wisdom. How has Georgia State accomplished these exceptional gains?

### High Impact Strategies

Georgia State's student-success strategy has been consistent and unconventional. We have not created programs targeted at students by their race, ethnicity, first-generation status, or income level. Rather, we have used data to identify problems impacting large numbers of Georgia State students, and we have changed the institution for *all* students. Examples include:

<sup>13</sup> Actual percent increases were much higher in these two categories, but we have controlled for the effects of the University implementing more rigorous processes encouraging students to self-report their race and ethnicity.

## 1. GPS Advising

### High-impact strategy

Use predictive analytics and a system of more than 800 data-based alerts to track all undergraduates daily. Create a structure of trained academic advisors to monitor the alerts and respond with timely, proactive advice to students at scale.

### Summary of Activities and Lessons Learned

The GPS System went fully live for bachelor's students in August 2012. This past academic year, the system generated more than 60,000 individual meetings between advisors and students to discuss specific alerts—all aimed at getting the student back on path to graduation. Since Georgia State went live with GPS Advising seven years ago, Georgia State four-year graduation rate for bachelor's students has increased by 13 percentage points and the average time to degree has decreased by more than half a semester.

In 2016, Georgia State University consolidated with Georgia Perimeter College. EDUCAUSE, with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust (the Helmsley Trust) and in partnership with Achieving the Dream (ATD), has awarded Georgia State University a grant to facilitate our efforts to deploy our technology solution and adapt our advising strategy in order to increase graduation rates for the 18,000 students seeking associate degrees at Perimeter. The GPS platform launched at Perimeter in 2016-17 and the university hired an additional 30 Perimeter academic advisors in support. During the 2018-2019 academic year, Perimeter advisors. Since consolidation, the three-year graduation rate for Associate-degree seeking students had increased by 12.5 percentage points with the biggest gains being enjoyed by underserved students. (The graduation rate for Hispanic students, for instance, has increased by 17 percentage points

In each context, 90% of the upfront costs have been directed to personnel, not technology. A 2019 study by the Boston Consulting Group concludes that GPS Advising has produced a positive ROI, with programmatic costs of roughly \$150 per students even larger increases in revenues from student progression.

### Baseline Status

- *Graduation Rates at Launch:* 48% bachelor level 6-year rate and 21% bachelor level 4-year rate (2011). 7% associate level rate (2014)
- Degrees Conferred: in the 2013-2014 Academic Year: 4,155 bachelor's degrees and 1,882 associate degrees (2014)

### Interim Measures of Progress

- The numbers we are achieving via the programs are exceptionally strong.

#### *Bachelor's:*

- Credit hours accumulated at the time of graduation have declined by an average of 8 credit hours per graduating bachelor's student since 2011 (Chart 10)
- Face-to face advising visits (bachelor + associate) grew to a record 100,000+ during the 2017-2018 AY.
- Bachelor's students switching majors after the first year of studies is down by 32%. Percent of students in majors that fit their academic abilities (up by 13 points)
- Correlation between advisor visits and success markers (such as credit hours attempted and retention rates) (Chart 12)

#### *Associate:*

- Face-to-face advising meetings with associate-degree students at Perimeter College increased to 42,000+ during the 2018-2019 academic year (Chart 13). While there are no reliable baseline numbers from before consolidation, with only four to five advisors, it is estimated that annual visits were below 7,000.
- Bachelor's degree six-year graduation rates are up 7 percentage points, bachelor's four-year graduation rates are up by 13 percentage points since 2011 and associate degree three-year rates are up 12.5 percentage points since their respective launches since 2014.
- Bachelor's degree conferrals up 25% and associate degree conferrals up 8% since launches
- Wasted credit hours have declined by 8 credit hours per graduating student while average time to degree is down by half a semester, saving students roughly \$18 million a year in tuition and fee costs.
- All equity gaps for bachelor's students based on race, ethnicity and income have been eliminated
- Boston Consulting Group has determined a positive ROI for the initiative

**Primary Contacts**

Dr. Timothy Renick Sr. (Vice President for Student Success),  
 Dr. Allison Calhoun-Brown (Vice President for Student Engagement and Programs)  
 Carol Cohen (Associate Vice President of the University Advising)

**2. Summer Success Academy***High-impact strategy*

Use predictive analytics to identify admitted students for the fall freshman class who are academically at-risk and require that these students attend a seven-week summer session before fall classes, pursuing 7 credit hours of college credit while being immersed in learning communities, near-peer mentoring, and a suite of mindset-building activities.

**Summary of Activities and Lessons Learned**

Program was initiated for bachelor's students in 2012 as an alternate to deferring weaker freshman admits to the Spring semester. Students enroll in 7 credits of college-level (non-remedial) courses and have the support of all of GSU's tutoring, advising, financial literacy, and academic skills programs at their disposal. All students are in freshmen learning committees, participate in community and campus projects, and worked with near-peer tutors—all designed to increase "mindset," the students sense of belonging and confidence. This year's cohort at the Atlanta campus was the second largest ever, with 332 students enrolled. The most recent cohort was retained at a rate of 88%. This compares to an 83% retention rate for remainder of the freshmen class who were, on paper, better academically prepared for college. It is important to note that these same students, when Georgia State was deferring their enrollment until the spring semester (as is the common practice nationally), were being retained at only a 50% clip. This equates to more than 100 additional freshmen being retained via the Summer Success Academy annually than was the case under the old model. We launched the first application of the program to Perimeter College, the Perimeter Academy, in the Summer of 2017. Amid the first cohort of 60 students, 92% persisted to the spring semester (compared with 70% for students overall). This year, the Perimeter Academy expanded to three Perimeter campuses: Decatur, Clarkston, and Dunwoody.

**Baseline Status**

- Bachelor's: Prior to the launch of the program, students with their similar academic profile had a one-year retention rate of 50% (2010). Associate: The baseline retention rate for Perimeter Decatur-campus students overall is 64.5% with 11 credit hours attempted and a first-year GPA of 2.1.

**Interim Measures**

- Retention rates, GPA, hours attempted and completed

**Measures of Success**

- Bachelor's: Retention rates for the students enrolled in the Success Academy (90+%) exceed those of the rest of the freshman class (82%) and the baseline of 51% in 2011.
- In summer 2018, the program enrolled almost 350 students, up 207 from summer of 2012.
- 62% of the students from the first cohort of the Success Academy in 2012 have now graduated, making their 6-year graduation rate higher than both the rate of the rest of the freshman class and the one-year retention rate was for the like cohort the year before the program launch (Chart 14).
- Associate: The first cohort of Perimeter Academy students enjoyed markedly higher credit-hours attempted, GPAs, and retention rates than the rest of the Decatur campus students (Chart 15).

**Primary Contacts**

Dr. Allison Calhoun-Brown (Vice President for Student Engagement and Programs)  
 Dr. Eric Cuevas (Sr. Director of Student Success Programs)

**3. Panther Retention Grants***High-impact strategy*

Provide micro-grants to students at the fee drop each semester to help cover modest financial shortfalls impacting the students' ability to pay tuition and fees, thus preventing students from stopping/dropping out. This past fall, more than 18,000 of Georgia State's 25,000+ bachelor-seeking students (72%) had some level of unmet need, meaning that even after grants, loans, scholarships, family contributions and the income generated from the student working 20 hours a week, the students lack enough funds to attend college.

Each semester, hundreds of fully qualified students are dropped from their classes for lack of payment. For as little as \$300, Panther Retention Grants provide the emergency funding to allow students who want to get their degrees the opportunity to stay enrolled. Last year, more than 3,000 Georgia State students were brought back to the classroom—and kept on the path to attaining a college degree—through the program. As of spring summer 2019, 15,600 grants have been awarded to Atlanta campus and Perimeter College students since the program’s inception in 2011. Of these, more than 80% have gone on to graduate. The program has prevented literally thousands of students from dropping out of Georgia State.

### Summary of Activities and Lesson Learned

Staff examine the drop lists for students with unmet need, who are on track for graduation using our academic analytics, and who have modest balances for tuition and fees. Students are offered micro-grants on the condition that they agree to certain activities, including participating in financial literacy modules and meeting with a financial counselor to map out plans to finance the rest of their education. Last academic year, more than 3,000 grants were awarded. This included grants awarded to Perimeter College students. The timeliness of the intervention and access to good data are the keys to success.

### Baseline Status

- A California State University study found that, among students who stop out for a semester, only 30% ever return and graduate from the institution. The PRG program is designed to prevent stop out and the negative impact on completion rates that follow.

### Interim Measures of Progress

- Of freshmen who were offered Panther Retention Grants in fall 2017, 93% enrolled the following spring, a rate higher than that of the student body as a whole. 83% of freshman PRG recipients were enrolled for fall 2018.
- *Of the Perimeter College students receiving Panther Retention Grants during the Fall 2016 semester, 73% returned for the Spring 2017 term.*

### Measures of Success

- The ultimate measure of success is college completion. More than 15,000 Panther Retention Grants have now been awarded since the program’s inception in 2011. More than 80% of students who have received the grant have graduated, most within two semesters. The program also generates a positive ROI for the institution according to a Gates-Foundation-financed 2018 analysis of the program conducted by the Boston Consulting Group,

### Primary Contacts

Dr. Timothy Renick (Vice President for Enrollment Management & Student Success)

Mr. James Blackburn (Associate Vice President for Student Financial Services)

## 4. Keep Hope Alive (KHA)

### *High-impact strategy*

With 58% of Georgia State students coming from Pell-eligible households (where the annual household income last year was less than \$30,000), the Hope scholarship can be a mixed blessing. The \$6,000+ scholarship provides access to college for thousands of Georgia State students, but for the students who do not maintain a 3.0 college GPA, the loss of Hope often means they drop out for financial reasons. In 2008, the graduation rates for students who lose the Hope scholarship were only 20%, 40-points lower than the rates for those who hold on to it. Before Keep Hope Alive, gaining the Hope Scholarship back after losing it is a statistical longshot: only about 9% of Georgia State students pull this off. Keep Hope Alive provides a \$500 stipend for two semesters to students who have lost Hope as an incentive for them to follow a rigorous academic restoration plan that includes meeting with advisors, attending workshops, and participating in financial literacy training—all designed to help students improve their GPAs and to regain the scholarship. Since 2008, the program has helped to almost double the graduation rates of Georgia State students who lose the Hope scholarship.

### Summary of Activities and Lessons Learned

By signing a contract to receive \$500 for each of the first two semesters after losing Hope, students agree to participate in a series of programs and interventions designed to get them back on track academically and to make wise financial choices in the aftermath of losing the scholarship.

Scholarship Criteria:

- Program is open to freshman and sophomore students with a 2.75 – 2.99 HOPE grade point average.
- Students must pursue a minimum of 30 credit hours within the next academic year.
- Students must attend Student Success workshops facilitated by the Office of Undergraduate Studies.
- Students must meet with their academic coaches on a regular basis.
- Students are required to attend mandatory advisement sessions facilitated by the University Advisement Center.

During the coming academic year, we are exploring models for the use of KHA for our associate-degree seeking students. It is critical to identify students at risk of losing Hope as early as possible, when the interventions are far more likely to change outcomes. Good tracking data are essential.

#### **Baseline Status**

- Retention rates for students receiving the HOPE scholarship were 50% in 2008.
- Six-year graduation rates for students who lost their HOPE scholarship at some point in their academic career were 21% in 2008

#### **Interim Measures of Progress**

- For students in KHA in the period from 2011 to 2019, better than 55% gained the scholarship back at the next marker, in the process leveraging our \$1,000 scholarship investment by gaining between \$6,000 and \$12,000 of Hope dollars back again. Students losing HOPE who did not participate in the program regained the HOPE scholarship at a 9% rate.

#### **Measures of Success**

- Since 2008, institutional HOPE retention rates have increased by 50%, from 49% to 75% in 2018.

Compared to 2008, the six-year graduation rate for students who lost their HOPE scholarship at some point in their academic career has almost doubled, from 21% in 2008 to 39% in 2018.

#### **Primary Contacts**

Dr. Eric Cuevas (Sr. Director of Student Success Programs)

Dr. Allison Calhoun-Brown (Vice President for Student Engagement and Programs)

## **5. Meta-Majors/Career Pathways**

### *High-impact strategy*

At a large public university such as Georgia State, freshmen can feel overwhelmed by the size and scope of the campus and choices that they face. This fall, Georgia State is offering 96 majors and more than 4,000 courses. Freshmen Learning Communities are now required of all non-Honors freshmen at Georgia State. They organize the freshmen class into cohorts of 25 students arranged by common academic interests, otherwise known as “meta majors” or “career pathways” (STEM, business, arts and humanities, policy, health, education and social sciences). Students in each cohort travel through their classes together, building friendships, study partners and support along the way. Block schedules—FLCs in which all courses might be between, for example, 8:30 AM and 1:30 PM three days a week—accommodate students’ work schedules and help to improve class attendance. FLC students have one-year retention rates that are 5 percentage points higher than freshmen not enrolled in FLCs. 86% of this fall’s bachelor-degree-seeking freshmen class are in FLCs. In the second year of rolling out “career pathways” at Perimeter College, 79% of incoming freshmen were enrolled in the thematically-based block schedules. Requiring all students to choose a meta-major/career pathway puts students on a path to degree that allows for flexibility in future specialization in a particular program of study, while also ensuring the applicability of early course credits to their final majors. Implemented in conjunction with major maps and a suite of faculty-led programming that exposes students to the differences between specific academic majors during their first semester, meta-majors provide clarity and direction in what previously had been a confusing and unstructured registration process.

#### **Summary of Activities and Lessons Learned**

Upon registration, all students are required to enroll in one of seven meta-majors/career pathways: STEM, Arts, Humanities, Health, Education, Policy & Social Science, and Exploratory. Once students have selected their meta-major, they are given a choice of several block schedules, which are pre-populated course timetables including courses relevant to their first year of study. On the basis of their timetable, students are assigned to Freshman Learning Communities consisting of 25 students who are in the same meta-major and take classes according to the same block schedules of 5 – 6 courses in addition to a one-credit-hour orientation course grounded in the meta major and providing students with essential information and survival skills to help them navigate the logistical, academic,

and social demands of the university. Academic departments deliver programming to students—alumni panels, departmental open houses—that help students to understand the practical differences between majors within each meta major. A new career-related portal allows students in meta majors and beyond to explore live job data including number of jobs available in the Atlanta region, starting salaries, and their connection to majors and degree programs. The portal also suggests cognate careers that students may be unaware of and shared live job data about them. It is critical to make career preparation part of the curriculum, from first semester on. Doing so also promotes voluntary students visits to Career Services, which have increased by 70% since the introduction of meta majors. These visits are also occurring earlier in the student’s academic careers.

### Baseline Status

- 48% FLC participation with opt-in model at the Atlanta campus (2010); 0% FLC participation at Perimeter College (2014)
- Retention rates of 81% for non-FLC students (2011).
- Average bachelor-degree graduates going through 2.6 majors before graduating (2009). In the 2017-2018 academic year, enrollment in a Freshman Learning Community according to meta-major resulted in an average increase in GPA of 8%.
- In the 2016-2017 academic year, enrollment in a Freshman Learning Community by meta-major was found to increase a student’s likelihood of being retained through to the following year by 5%.
- Perimeter College retention rates were 64.5% in 2014.

### Interim Measures

- Adopting an opt-out model has meant that more than 86% of bachelor’s-degree freshmen and 79% of associate-s-degree freshmen now participate in FLCs.

### Measures of Success

- One-year retention rates reached 84% for FLC freshmen (2018) in bachelor’s programs. Perimeter Academy students, the first associate-degree-seeking students to start their studies in meta-major-based FLC, had a semester-to-semester retention rates 15 points higher than other Perimeter students.
- Changes in majors after the freshman year are down by 32% at GSU since 2011.

### Primary Contacts

Dr. Allison Calhoun-Brown (Vice President for Student Engagement and Programs)

Dr. Eric Cuevas (Sr. Director of Student Success Programs)

## 6. A.I.-Enhanced Chatbot to Reduce Summer Melt

### *High-impact strategy*

In the Fall 2015, 19% of Georgia State’s incoming freshman class were victims of “summer melt.” Having been accepted to GSU and having confirmed their plans to attend, these students never showed up for fall classes. We tracked these students using National Student Clearinghouse data and found that, one year later, 274 of these students (74% of whom were low-income) never attended a single day of college classes at any institution. We knew we needed to be far more proactive and personal with interacting with students between high-school graduation and the first day of college classes. Towards this end, we launched a new portal to track students through the fourteen steps they needed to complete during the summer (e.g., completing their FAFSA, supplying proof of immunizations, taking placement exams) to be ready for the first day of college classes. We also become one of the first universities nationally to deploy a chat-bot in support of student success. Current grants from the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation and ECMC will allow for the expansion of the chatbot to all continuing Georgia State students.

### Summary of Activities and Lessons Learned

In the summer of 2016, we piloted a new student portal with partner EAB to track where incoming freshmen are in the steps they need to complete during the summer before fall classes. With the help of Admit Hub, we deployed an artificial-intelligence-enhanced texting system—a chatbot—that allowed students to text 24/7 from their smart devices any questions that they had about financial aid, registration, housing, admissions, and academic advising. We built a knowledge-base of 2,000 answers to commonly asked questions that served as the responses. We secured the services of Dr. Lindsay Page of the University of Pittsburgh as an independent evaluator of the project. From these efforts, we lowered “summer melt” by 37% over the past three years. This translates into 360 more students, mostly low-income and first-generation, enrolling for freshman fall who, one year earlier, were sitting out the college experience. Critical to success is building an adequate knowledge base of answers so students can rely on the system. Many students reported that they preferred the impersonal nature of the chat-bot. During the 2018-19 year, with the support of the Dell and ECMC

Foundations, we rolled out the chatbot to a pilot group of continuing students at the Atlanta Campus and to incoming freshmen at Perimeter College.

### Baseline Status

- Summer Melt rate of 19% for the incoming freshman class of 2015.

### Interim Measures

- In the three months leading up to the start of Fall 2016 classes, the chatbot replied to 201,000 student questions, with an average response time of 7 seconds. Similar usage has been tracked each of the past two summers, with summer melt declining by an additional 4 percentage points.

### Measures of Success

Summer Melt has been reduced by 37% when compared to the 2015 baseline, translating into almost 1,000 more students, mostly low-income, who matriculated at Georgia State rather than sitting out college entirely. Dr. Lindsey Page has published a research article confirming these results. See <https://www.ecampusnews.com/top-news/gsu-summer-melt-enrollment/> <https://hbr.org/2018/01/how-georgia-state-university-used-an-algorithm-to-help-students-navigate-the-road-to-college>. Dr. Page is also overseeing the pilot expansion of the chatbot to Georgia State continuing students using a random control trial. Since the launch in fall 2018, students with access to the chatbot have completed key tasks such as removing holds from their accounts, addressing account balances, and meeting with advisors when prompted to do so, at rates 30%-40% higher than their counterparts not using the chatbot.

### Primary Contacts

Dr. Timothy Renick (Sr. Vice President for Student Success)

Mr. Scott Burke (Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Admissions and Housing)

## 7. SunTrust Student Financial Management Center

### *High-impact strategy*

Supported by a gift from the SunTrust Foundation, Georgia State opened the SunTrust Student Financial Management Center (SFMC) in late fall 2016. Predicated on the premise that more students will persist if their financial problems are identified early and proactively addressed, the center deploys predictive analytics parallel to those critical to Georgia State's ground-breaking GPS academic advising system. In the case of SFMC, ten years of financial data were analyzed to identify early warning signs of student financial problems. We discovered that some financial decisions made before the students first set foot on campus may determine whether a student ever graduates, such as a student choosing a single dorm rather than living at home or with roommate in the summer before the freshman year. Through the SFMC, certified financial counselors now track students daily and reach out to offer support and advice when problems are identified. In the first 18 months of operation, 56,833 Georgia State students visited the SFMC.

### Summary of Activities and Lessons Learned

A central objective of the SFMC is to deliver to our students the help they need before financial problems become severe enough to cause them to drop out. Building on a similar system that Georgia State has already deployed for academic advising, the initiative extends our predictive analytics to financial advisement. In the first six months of 2017, the SunTrust SFMC conducted 72,121 in-person, online and phone interactions. 62% of the interactions focused on loans, FAFSA verification, status of aid, and HOPE Scholarship questions. We found that missing or incomplete documents, FAFSA problems, and parent loans were among the leading issues faced by students. An additional 6% of interactions focused on Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) appeals. Combining information currently in Banner, our student information and records system, with experiences observed during the past year, the SunTrust SFMC has identified 16 risk triggers that are aligned with the data. A new financial alert system, created in part through our engagement with the Educational Advisory Board (EAB), is accessible by campus advisors, college academic assistance staff, and student retention staff.

### Baseline Status

This project represents new territory, not only for Georgia State but nationally. We have more than 1,000 students being dropped for non-payment each semester, and historically 50% of our students miss the deadline for completing the FAFSA.

### Interim Measures

*In the first year of SunTrust SFMC operation, 56,833 unique students visited the center. Of the 13,428 student who visited the center over its initial semester, 12,326 completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and 1,104 did not complete the FAFSA. In addition, more than 2,500 first-year students received financial literacy training through their GSU 1010 new student orientation course, primarily offered through the Freshman Learning Community program. This hour-long session provides*

information on maintaining financial-aid eligibility, FAFSA completion, Satisfactory Academic Progress, HOPE Scholarship eligibility, and student loan responsibilities. Students were also given information on managing credit and budgeting. These efforts had a significant positive impact on our students, as we found a more than 94% FAFSA completion rate for students re-enrolled in the spring semester compared to a general Georgia State student population FAFSA completion rate of 74%.

### Measures of Success

With 93% of Georgia State undergraduates receiving federal aid, a major challenge for the university is getting students to take the steps to address outstanding financial-aid obligations and to resolve their balances. For the Fall 2017 semester, students who visited the SFMC were 6 percentage points more likely to complete all financial-aid requirements and bring their balances down to zero than the rest of the student body. With a campus of 52,000 students, this translates into more than 3,000 students being financially able ready to start the semester than would have been true without the assistance of the SFMC. We believe these kinds of positive impacts will only increase in the coming year, as the programs and capabilities of the SFMC reach full capacity. By the summer of 2019, Georgia State had increased by 50% the number of students who were fully “packaged” and financially ready for the start of classes one month before the start of the fall semester.

### Primary Contacts

Dr. Timothy Renick (Sr. Vice President for Student Success)  
Mr. James Blackburn (AVP for Student Financial Services)  
Ms. Atia Lindley (Director of the SFMC)

## 8. Supplemental Instruction

### *High-impact strategy*

Supplemental Instruction (SI) builds upon Georgia State’s extensive use of near-peer tutoring and mentoring by taking undergraduates who succeed in lower-division courses one semester and deploying them as tutors in the same courses the next semester(s). Students are paid to go through training, to sit in on the same class again so they get to know the new students, and to offer three formal instructional sessions each week.

### Summary of Activities and Lessons Learned

During the past academic year, Georgia State had more than 1,000 course sections with near-peer tutors embedded in the courses. We have found that we can leverage our data to identify federal work-study and Panther Works students who have succeeded in courses with high non-pass rates and redeploy these students from their current campus jobs, thus reducing the costs of the program. We have also found that SI becomes more important with the use of early alerts to identify academic risks (as with our GPS Advising). The reason is simple: if one identifies a student struggling during week three of an Accounting course (to use one example), there needs to be support specific to that Accounting course. SI provides it. Finally, we have found that SI creates a natural and strong mentoring relationship between the faculty members teaching the course and the SI instructors (who faculty often nominate to the position), thus improving graduation rates for the tutors.

### Baseline Status

- Average GPA in courses identified prior to SI was 2.6 with non-pass (DFW) rates in excess of 20%.

### Interim Measures

More than 15,000 students attended at least one SI session during the 2018-2019 academic year. Over 1,000 course sections had a supplemental instructor embedded in the course.

### Measures of Success

- Students who attended at least five session of SI for any given course earned an GPA in these sections of 3.22 when compared to 2.59 for students who did not attend and non-pass rates were 30% lower (Chart 16).

### Primary Contacts

Dr. Allison Calhoun-Brown (VP for Student Engagement and Programs)  
Mr. Eric Cuevas (Sr. Director of Student Success Programs)

## 9. Hybrid Math Classes Using Adaptive Learning

### *High-impact strategy*

Deliver introductory courses in mathematics using a pedagogy that requires students actively to do math rather than merely to hear an instructor talk about math. Leveraging adaptive technologies, students receive dozens of bits of immediate, personalized feedback every hour that they are in class, and they spend class times with instructors and classmates in a math lab environment.

### **Summary of Activities and Lessons Learned**

Georgia State has adopted and scaled a model for introductory math instruction on the Atlanta campus in which students meet for one hour per week in a traditional classroom and three hours per week in a math lab with classmates and instructors. In the lab, dubbed the MILE (Mathematics Interactive Learning Environment) students sit at their own computer terminals and learn the subject matter at their own pace. As they answer questions, students receive personalized feedback from the adaptive program that allows slower students time to build up foundational competencies and more advanced students to be challenged—all at the same time. Results show improvement in GPA and pass rates for all demographics, but the largest gains are for students from underserved backgrounds. Students taking adaptive classes not only pass math courses at significantly higher rates, they perform at higher levels in next-level courses reliant on math skills. We are working on a pilot with Stanford University to test open-source adaptive math courseware, as well as a project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to expand adaptive pedagogies to first-year courses in the social sciences (Psychology, Economics, and Political Science). During the fall 2019, we will pilot the model at Perimeter College's Decatur campus.

### **Baseline Status**

Before the launch of the model, 43% of all Georgia State bachelor's students attempting introductory math courses were receiving non-passing grades. These numbers are often in excess of 60% at Perimeter College, where the adaptive model is set to be piloted.

### **Interim Measures**

Last year, all 8,500 seats of Introduction to Statistics, College Algebra and Pre Calculus offered at the Atlanta campus were taught using adaptive, hybrid pedagogies. Since the launch of the program, non-pass rates for these courses have been reduced by 35%. We deployed random control trials in initial semesters, having students in the lecture and hybrid sections of a given math courses come together to take the same mid-term and final, thus verifying the effectiveness of the new approach.

### **Measures of Success**

1,300 more bachelor's students annually are passing math courses in their first attempt than was the case before the launch of the initiative. STEM completion rates at Georgia State have more than doubled over the last six years, with the greatest gains being seen by underserved populations (**Chart 5**).

### **Primary Contacts**

Dr. Guantao Gu (Chair of Mathematics)

Dr. Timothy Renick (Sr. VP for Student Success)

## 10. College to Career

### *High-impact strategy*

Integrate career preparation and awareness throughout the college curriculum and co-curricular experiences, starting with the first semester. Onboard students through learning communities structured around career pathways/meta majors, with competencies documented by students in real time by providing all students with career-based e-portfolios.

### **Summary of Activities and Lessons Learned**

Georgia State's Quality Enhancement Plan, College to Career, is a campus-wide effort to get students to recognize the career competencies that they are acquiring through their curricular and co-curricular activities; to document these competencies in a robust fashion thorough archiving textual, video and audio evidence in faculty- and peer-reviewed e-portfolios; and to articulate the competencies through resumes, cover letters, and oral discourse. All students are now provided with Portfolium e-portfolios upon matriculation at Georgia State so that they can chronicle, archive and share their career competencies on a semester-by-semester basis. Faculty and departmental grants are awarded to encourage instructors to integrate assignments highlighting career competencies into both lower-level and capstone courses. New technologies have been implemented to share real-time job data for metro Atlanta with students, starting before they arrive on campus. All undergraduates are now onboarded on career-pathway-based learning communities in their first semester. In 2018, Georgia State became the first university nationally to partner with Road Trip Nation to create a searchable video archive of the careers of Georgia State alumni.

### Baseline Status

In 2015, the average Georgia State undergraduate made their first visit to University Career Services in their final semester before graduation.

### Interim Measures

Last year, Georgia State students posted more than 700,000 artifacts (evidence of their career competencies) to their e-portfolios. All students complete a first resume as part of their first-semester orientation courses. Visits by first- and second-year students to University Career Services have increased by more than 100% since 2015. We are now two years into a new program to provide small grants to faculty to create assignments in existing courses that highlight the career competencies that students are learning. We now have a cohort of College to Career Faculty Fellows at Atlanta and Perimeter tasked with creating career-readiness programming.

### Measures of Success

Students are now most likely to visit University Career Services in their first year of enrollment and overall visits are up by more than 400%. The Brookings Institution 2017 Rankings of Social Mobility ranked Georgia State first in Georgia and 25<sup>th</sup> in the nation for social mobility (defined as moving students from the bottom quintile of Americans by annual household income at matriculation to the top half of Americans by annual household income fifteen year later). In fall 2019, U.S. News and World Report ranked Georgia State University 8<sup>th</sup> in the nation for social mobility.

### Primary Contacts

Dr. Angela Christie, Faculty Director of College to Career  
 Ms. Catherine Neiner (Director of University Career Services)  
 Dr. Tim Renick (Sr. Vice President for Student Success)

## Momentum Plan

The high-impact practices (HIPS) outlined in the previous section are strong evidence of Georgia State's deep commitment to the principles of the Momentum Plan, an initiative to ensure that students meet a series of metric-based milestones that have been shown to correlate to college completion. These HIPS are already having a positive impact on key Momentum-Plan indicators.

Georgia State students find a **purpose** from the outset of college through being exposed to portals with live job-data before matriculation and in all advising sessions, enrolling in learning communities organized around meta-majors/career pathways in their first semesters, and exploring career options in both curricular and co-curricular settings through Georgia State's Quality Enhancement Plan, College to Career, as they pursue their degrees. Since our model of onboarding incoming students via career and meta pathways was implemented at the Atlanta campus, Georgia State has seen a 32% reduction in students changing majors after their first year. Students are finding the right academic fit earlier on in their studies, and, starting in their first semester, they are documenting their career interests, goals, and competencies in e-portfolios. This past year, students posted to their e-portfolios more than 700,000 artifacts evidencing the career competencies they have acquired. Over the past two years, career-based learning communities and e-portfolios have been rolled out at Georgia State's Perimeter campuses. (See High Impact Practices 5, 9 and 10 in Section II, above.)

Learning communities with block schedules for all incoming freshmen help to ensure that **students enroll in the appropriate English and math courses during the first year**. All incoming non-Honors freshmen are required to enroll in learning communities, and, as part of their blocked schedules, all learning communities include English as well as the math appropriate to the career or meta pathway (HIP 5). For bachelor's students, 97.6% of freshmen attempted English in their first year with 91.6% successfully completing the requirement. 88.1% of freshmen attempted college-level Math in the first year with 81.7% of students successfully completing the course. Our Math numbers will need to improve and are, in part, a product of the rapid growth of the freshmen class over the past two years (growing by 700 students) and difficulty staffing sections with experienced math instructors (**Chart 17**). At Perimeter College, 97.5% of new students attempted English in the first year and 93.9% attempted Math. The move to a co-requisite approach to remedial education, the adoption of learning communities, and the increase in proactive advising at Perimeter have helped to improve these numbers markedly over a short period of time. The percent of Perimeter freshmen who did not attempt college-level English in their first year has declined from 13.5% in 2016 to 2.5% in 2018 (an 81% drop). The percent of freshmen not attempting math at Perimeter has declined from 10.4% in 2016 to 6.1% in 2018 (a 40% drop). (**Chart 18**).

Learning communities with block schedules also promote the accumulation of **30 attempted credit hours in the students' first year of enrollment**. In the first year that the learning community/career pathway program was initiated at Perimeter College, average credit hours attempted for incoming freshmen during the fall semester increased from 9.0 to 12.4. At the Atlanta campus, where the program is fully implemented, the average incoming freshman (including part time students and new transfer students with freshman standing) this fall attempted just under 14 credit hours. For academically at-risk students, the Success and Perimeter Academies (HIP

2) allow students to earn 7 college credits before the start of the freshman fall. Student completing the first-ever Perimeter Academy, launched at the Decatur campus in the summer of 2017, earned 7 credit hours in the summer and then successfully completed an average of 19.7 credit hours during the fall and spring semester, for an average total of 26.7 credit hours earned during the first twelve months. The year before, Perimeter students averaged a total of 13.2 credit hours completed for the first year—meaning that the Perimeter Academy students accumulated 100% more credit than their counterparts from a year earlier. (HIPS 5 and 2).

Because these learning communities are based on meta majors/career pathways, they embed courses specific to the academic field as well as feature an orientation course that focuses on the nature of the discipline, thus **ensuring that students receive substantive course-tied exposure to their chosen academic fields in their first year** (HIP 5). Georgia State’s university-wide Quality Enhancement Plan, College to Career, provides all students will substantive exposure to pathway-based curricular and co-curricular activities not only during their first-year but also in gateway courses to the major, in Signature Experience (credit-bearing courses in each major that provide students with experiences outside the classroom), and in capstone courses (HIP 10).

Hybrid adaptive learning classes in introductory math not only help thousands of additional students to satisfy their math requirement in their first year, they also **provide students with a stronger foundation in math skills to promote success in subsequent courses**. At the Atlanta campus, we have increased the percent of first-year students who complete college-level math in their first attempt by 35%, and the percent of students who then go on to successfully complete STEM majors has increased by more than 100% (HIP 9). In fall 2019, we are piloting the hybrid adaptive model in introductory math sections at Perimeter College. With the support of the John Gardner Institute, we are also currently engaged in a major initiative to scale co-requisite remediation for all Perimeter College students needing learning support in English and mathematics, a program that we are confident will further increase the number students successfully completing English and math in their first years.

Through the programming and design of the Summer and Perimeter Success Academics, supplemental instruction, and programmatic components of all learning communities (including near-peer mentors who are embedded in the communities, field trips, and group and service-learning projects) **students develop a sense of belonging and a positive mindset** from the first semesters. Adaptive components of introductory math sections—as is the case with courseware we are piloting with Stanford University—are explicitly designed to address **mindset** issues by tracking students’ levels of frustration and adjusting questions posed accordingly. Our data show that the benefits of getting students off to a positive start can be tracked in later success outcomes including graduation rates (HIPS 2, 5, 8, 9).

Finally, GPS Advising has now been fully implemented at both the Atlanta and Perimeter campuses. The initiative includes the use of predictive analytics to track all undergraduates daily for hundreds of data-based risk factors and immediate interventions by trained advising staff when problems are detected. Since the launch of GPS Advising on the Atlanta campus in 2012, we have hired 50 additional advisors to support the platform and launched 400,000 proactive interventions with students. Every student has a personalized, four-year academic map, and advisors monitor all registration records and all grades to ensure students stay on path. GPS Advising monitors that students are taking the right courses in the right order—including attempting required English and math courses in the first year and enrolling in courses specific to the students’ academic field. Administrative savings from consolidation were used to hire 32 additional advisors at Perimeter College in 2017. Last year, there were 42,000 proactive interventions with Perimeter College students conducted by these advisors. We have already begun to see significant increases in credit-hour accumulation, retention rates, and graduation rates among Perimeter College students. Across Georgia State, GPS Advising has served as a potent **boost to student credit-hour momentum** in the first year and beyond. GPS Advising tracks all students daily throughout their academic careers, helping to ensure that they stay on path. Since the program’s launch, bachelor-degree seeking students are completing their degrees with an average of eight fewer wasted credit hours and in half a semester’s less times, saving the graduating class of 2019 \$18 million in tuition and fees when compared to the graduating class of 2012 (**Chart 10**). In effect, GPS Advising is the institutional tool that allows for the day-to-day monitoring and enforcement of Momentum Plan parameters throughout the entire academic careers of Georgia State students (HIP 1).

## CONCLUSION

Georgia State University is testimony to the fact that students from all backgrounds can succeed at high rates. Moreover, our efforts over the past few years show that dramatic gains are indeed possible not through changing the nature of the students served but through changing the nature of the institution that serves them. How has Georgia State University made the gains outlined above? How do we propose to reach our ambitious future targets? In one sense, the answer is simple. We employ a consistent, evidenced-based strategy. Our general approach can be summarized as follows:

- Use data systematically and daily in order to identify and to understand the most pervasive obstacles to our students’ progressions and completion.

- Be willing to address the problems by becoming an early adopter. This means piloting new strategies and experimenting with new technologies. After all, we will not solve decades-old problems by the same old means.
- Track the impacts of the new interventions via data and make adjustments as necessary to improve results.
- Scale the initiatives that prove effective to have maximal impact. In fact, almost all of the initiatives outlined benefit thousands of students annually.

Our work to promote student success at Georgia State has steadily increased graduation rates among students from all backgrounds, but it has also served to foster a culture of student success among faculty, staff, and administration. As the story of Georgia State University demonstrates, institutional transformation in the service of student success does not come about from a single program or office but grows from a series of changes throughout the university that undergo continual evaluation and refinement. It also shows how a series of initially small initiatives, when scaled over time, can significantly transform an institution's culture. Student-success planning must be flexible since the removal of each impediment to student progress reveals a new challenge that was previously invisible. When retention rates improved and thousands of additional students began progressing through their academic programs, for instance, we faced a growing problem of students running out of financial aid just short of the finish line, prompting the creation of the Panther Retention Grant program. It also led to a new analytics-based initiative to better predict and address student demand in upper-level courses. For a timeline of where we have been and where we are going next, please see Chart 12.

Georgia State still has much work to do, but our progress in recent years demonstrates that significant improvements in student success outcomes can come through embracing inclusion rather than exclusion, and that such gains can be made even amid a context of constrained resources. It shows that, even at very large public universities, we can provide students with systematic, personalized supports that have transformative impacts. Perhaps most importantly, the example of Georgia State shows that, despite the conventional wisdom, demographics are not destiny and equity gaps are not inevitable. Low-income and underrepresented students can succeed at the same levels as their peers. We owe our students no less.