



Gordon State College

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Gordon State College's mission is to be a catalyst for exceptional and accessible education through innovative teaching, engaged learning, and transformative experiences for the benefit of our students, the communities we serve, and the world we live in. Our institutional vision statement is as follows: Gordon State College will be a leader and primary educational partner in elevating our region's economic prosperity and educational attainment through collaboration, integrated educational experiences, and a vibrant campus culture.

Our core values reflect our mission as an access institution in the USG: student-focused; life-long learning and scholarship; and a culture of excellence, respect, and collaboration. We provide engaged faculty-student interaction through intimate classroom experiences; innovative and effective teaching strategies; excellent advising and mentorship programs; and effective student support services. GSC offers baccalaureate and associate degree programs. The institution has focused more in recent years on meeting the needs of underrepresented populations whose retention numbers have lagged behind the overall cohort's.

Final Fall 2018 enrollment was 3,663. As of October 11, 2019, Fall 2019 enrollment is 3,492. One noticeable difference in the Fall 2018 cohort is the sharp increase in the number of students with Learning Support requirements (and the nature of those requirements), and an increase in the percentage of African-American students:

- 59.9% had learning support requirements, up significantly from 53% in Fall 2017.
 - 20.4% of entering freshmen had only a Math requirement (N=194), down significantly from 34% in Fall 2017.
 - 33% had both Math and English requirements (N=249), up dramatically from 11% in Fall 2017.
 - 1.1% had only English requirements (N=9), down from 2% in Fall 2017.
- 46% were African-American, up from 38% in Fall 2017
- 24.6% self-identified as first-generation college students, up from 20% in Fall 2017

MOMENTUM YEAR UPDATE

1. Improve Retention and Student Success by Improving Academic Advising for Incoming Students

For students entering GSC in Fall 2017, the institution decided to do away with all new student orientation activities, with predictable results: extremely low student success rates, and record-low retention for the Fall 2017 cohort. In response, the CCG/Momentum Year team worked very hard in the fall of 2017 and the spring of 2018 to rebuild New Student Orientations (NSOs), with a focus on improving the academic advising students receive in their first year. In rebuilding our NSOs, we focused on the Momentum Year goals:

- Help students make a purposeful choice about their academic pathway
- Encourage students to pass 30 hours in their first year, including Area A English and Math courses, and 9 hours in a focus area
- Help students develop an academic mindset

A faculty-led committee developed a 75-minute advising session that served as the centerpiece of the new orientations. Each of the seven focus areas represented on campus held its own advising session. Six faculty—identified by their commitment to excellence in academic advising—were hired to make schedules on the day after NSOs, based on information gathered in the advising sessions. We saw some dramatic improvement towards those Momentum Year goals:

- The percentage of new freshmen registered for 15+ hours in Fall 2018 effectively **doubled** compared to Fall 2017, increasing from 30.6% to 61.06%. GSC led the state college sector in this category, roughly 35 percentage points above the sector average. We were third system-wide, trailing only Georgia Tech and the University of Georgia.
- The newly redesigned NSOs seemed to help the Fall 2018 cohort make purposeful choices about their academic pathway. The percentage of students choosing "General Studies," which had become our de facto "undecided" major, dropped from 16% for the Fall 2017 cohort to only 10% for the Fall 2018 cohort.

- Because of the NSO advising sessions and revised scheduling efforts, we did a much better job of getting students in the Area A math class that aligns with their intended major/pathway. While in Fall 2017, 62.5% of new freshmen were enrolled in MATH 1111 (College Algebra), a class that only students entering STEM fields should take, in Fall 2018, that number dropped to 31.8%; instead, over two-thirds (68.14%) of our new freshmen were enrolled in MATH 1001 (Quantitative Skills and Reasoning), the non-STEM math class. While we still have some work to do in this area, that number more accurately reflects our students' collective choice of majors/pathways.

The new NSO, with its emphasis on better first-year advising, paid off in improved retention and student success rates for the Fall 2018 cohort:

- Overall, we saw a 10-point jump in our first-time, full-time (FT/FT) freshman retention rate from Fall 2017 to Fall 2018: from 48% to 58.22% (please note that all retention data in this report excludes freshmen in our FVSU-GAP program).
- That 58.22% retention rate was in fact our highest rate since Fall 2014, when it was 58.9%.
- First-time, full-time freshmen who took 15+ hours in Fall 2018 were retained at roughly 1.5 percentage points higher than first-time, full-time freshmen who took 12-14 hours in Fall 2018.
- Improved retention seemed to be consistent across our access mission: FT/FT freshmen with no Learning Support requirements were retained at the highest rate since we began tracking (64.2%); FT/FT freshmen with 1 Learning Support requirement were retained at the highest rate since the Fall 2015 cohort; and FT/FT freshmen with 2 LS requirements were retained at the highest rate since the Fall 2013 cohort, despite the fact that, as alluded to above, we had the highest number ever of new freshmen with 2 LS requirements.
- The improved alignment of students' pathways with the appropriate Area A Math courses seemed to have paid off handsomely: the ABC rate for new freshmen in MATH 1111 (College Algebra) improved a staggering 24 percentage points from Fall 2017 to Fall 2018 (from 43% to 67%), while the ABC rate for MATH 1001 (Quantitative Skills and Reasoning) rose a healthy 11 points from Fall 2017 to Fall 2018.

2. Increase student success and retention in the first year by helping students develop an academic mindset

In Spring 2018, GSC successfully re-submitted a proposal to get our new freshman seminar course, FIRE 1000, approved for Area B. Previous first-year experience classes at GSC were the weakest of models in that they did not count towards graduation or a student's GPA, and not all students were required to take them. As we designed FIRE 1000, we put an emphasis on helping new freshmen do the following: think critically; develop a growth mindset; and develop a sense of belonging, both academically and socially. We had 764 new freshmen enroll for the FIRE 1000 class in Fall 2018, and ended the semester with just below a 71% ABC rate. Some early and interesting data suggest that in its first year, FIRE 1000 had a positive impact on student success and retention:

- Success in FIRE 1000 seems to be a strong predictor of/contribution to retention. New freshmen who passed FIRE in Fall 2018 with an A, B, or C were retained at 70.4%, or **roughly 12 points above** the overall Fall 2018 cohort's retention rate.
- New freshmen who earned an A in FIRE 1000 were retained at 77%, or 19 points above the cohort average.
- While success in FIRE seems to be strong predictor of retention in general, it is even more so for Fall 2018 new freshmen enrolled in 15+ hour schedules: those earning an A, B, or C in FIRE 1000 were retained at 71.2%; Fall 2018 new freshmen in the 12-14 hour category who earned an A, B, or C were retained at 68%.

While planning and designing the FIRE 1000 class, we were particularly interested in and excited about research that suggested mindset interventions such as FIRE 1000 had a disproportionate impact on the academic success of minority and historically underrepresented students. Early data from the Fall 2018 cohort suggests that might be the case here at Gordon State:

- For the overall Fall 2018 cohort, African-American male retention rose to 55.1% from 42.2% for the previous Fall 2017 cohort—a gain of roughly 13 percentage points.
- That 55.1% retention rate for African-American males is a full 17 points higher than the Fall 2016 African-American male retention rate.
- Fall 2018 is in fact the first time since we began tracking such data at GSC that African-American male retention has cracked the 50% level.
- The retention rate for African-American male students who earned an A, B, or C in FIRE 1000 was 77%, or **about 6 points higher than the retention rate for white male students who earned an A, B, or C in FIRE 1000**, suggesting that FIRE 1000 had its intended impact.

- The retention rate for African-American females similarly rose 12 percentage points between Fall 2017 and Fall 2018, increasing from 41.8% to 53.9%.
- African-American females who earned an A, B, or C in FIRE 1000 were retained at 64.7%, well above the cohort average of 58.22%.
- The retention rate for Fall 2018 new freshmen who identified as first-generation students—another minority/underrepresented group we wanted to target—was 56.6%, the highest rate since the Fall 2015 cohort.
- Overall, first-generation student retention trailed non-first generation student retention in the Fall 2018 cohort by about 2.5 percentage points (58.9% to 56.5%).
- However, when we look at first-generation students who passed FIRE 1000 with an A, B, or C, and compare their retention rates to other student groups who passed FIRE 1000 with an A, B, or C, we can see the course’s disproportionate impact on “first-gens”:
 - First-generation students who earned an A, B, or C in FIRE 1000 were retained at 73%, **higher than the 70.4% retention rate for all Fall 2018 students who earned an A, B, or C in FIRE 1000.**
 - Similarly, that 73% retention rate for self-identified first-generation students who passed FIRE 1000 is **higher than the 69.5% retention rate for students who identified as NOT being first-generation students and passed FIRE 1000**—again suggesting that FIRE 1000 is having the intended impact on students who engage in the class.
- The retention increases we saw with targeted student groups such as African-American males and first-generation students had another significant impact on our retention: for the first time since Fall 2015, residential students in the Fall 2018 cohort were retained at higher rates than commuting students.

OTHER MOMENTUM YEAR WORK:

- We completed stress tests of all program degree maps.
- All maps are now posted in the academic catalog and on the Student Success Center’s website.
- We completed our FORGE (Focused Online Retention Gateway Experience) pre-orientation modules in time for Fall 2019 orientations. FORGE’s purpose is to prepare incoming students to get the most out of their on-campus orientation experience. Modules include information on focus areas/majors; accessing GSC email, Banner Web, and the wireless network; financial aid; career services resources; and payment deadline information, among other items.

OTHER INSTITUTIONAL HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES, ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

1. Co-requisite remediation

GSC continues to be a leader in co-requisite remediation. We were early adopters of a full-scale co-requisite remediation approach, ahead of all other state college, and we continue to see positive results.

- Almost 60% of our Fall 2018 FT/FT freshman cohort had at least one LS requirement
- For FT/FT freshmen in the Fall 2018 cohort, the ABC rate for MATH 0997 (co-req for MATH 1001) rose 12 percentage points compared to Fall 2017.
- Similarly, for FT/FT freshmen in the Fall 2018 cohort, the ABC rate for MATH 0999 (co-req for MATH 1111) rose 23 points compared to Fall 2017.
- However, for FT/FT freshmen in the Fall 2018 cohort, the ABC rate for ENGL 0999 (co-req for ENGL 1101) **fell** 7 points for the Fall 2018 cohort, even though ABC rates ENGL 1101 went up. We will continue to work on keeping the co-req labs and college-level sections synchronized for maximum student success.

2. G2C Course redesign

We are entering our third year of G2C course redesign for ENGL 1101 and MATH 1111, and our second year of G2C redesign for HIST 2111. Our fourth G2C course, FIRE 1000 (formerly GFYE 0097), has already been discussed above. Although it is difficult to tease out how specific variable contribute to student success and retention, we are definitely seeing improvement in the ABC rates in our targeted G2C courses:

- The sharp increase in the ABC rate for MATH 1111 has already been cited above.
- Similarly, for FT/FT freshmen in the Fall 2018 cohort, we saw a 6% increase in the ABC rate for ENGL 1101 over the previous year (to 78% from 72%).
- That 78% ABC rate for the Fall 2018 cohort is in fact the highest ENGL 1101 ABC rate for any previous cohort.

- Although it is still early in the G2C process for HIST 2111, we did see a jump of 9 points in the ABC rate for FT/FT freshmen in the 2018 cohort, compared to the previous year (from 55% to 64%).
- That 64% ABC rate is also 7 points higher than the Fall 2016 freshman cohort.
- For **ALL** students taking HIST 2111 in Fall 2018 (not just the Fall 2018 freshman cohort), we saw a 12 percentage point increase in the ABC rate, compared to Fall 2017, and a 10 point increase over Fall 2016.

3. Actively challenged and encouraged faculty professional development, especially classroom strategies and pedagogical approaches:

- For the Fall 2018-19 academic year, our dynamic Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) put on 12 separate events and presentations designed to encourage faculty to think about their teaching.
- Topics included diversity in the classroom and approaching first-generation students.
- Under our CETL's guidance, we also launched its first cohort of Chancellor's Learning Scholars. Four faculty were chosen, each responsible for organizing and hosting a faculty learning community on relevant topics.
- Our CETL also hosted the 17th Annual Teaching Matters Conference on our campus, with a theme of "First Things First: Preparing Students for Success." We had 154 participants from across the state—and the southeast—and 32 presentations, the highest number ever for both categories.
- In August 2018, we hosted our own full-day student success conference, the Third Annual Student Success Summit, with a theme of "Giving our Students the EDGE." For the first time, all campus offices shut down so that all faculty and staff could participate in the Success Summit.
- We were honored to have Dr. Tristan Denley as our keynote speaker for the Summit.
- In the afternoon, we had what was until this year (2019) a record number of faculty- and staff-led presentations (17 in all) on various success topics.
- We expanded our Faculty Fellows program. Faculty Fellows provide 100 hours of service to select units on campus in return for the opportunity to receive "superior service" ratings on their annual evaluations. Our CETL had 2 faculty fellows, while the Student Success Center had 4.

4. Undergraduate Research

- For our Spring 2019 Undergraduate Research Symposium (URS) event, we doubled the number of faculty and students who participated in the URS.

5. Always Alert/intrusive advising

- 1,222 unduplicated Always Alert student referrals for the 2018-19 academic year
- Always Alert has become a campus-wide effort instead of a Student Success Center initiative: in 2018-19, 16 faculty (non-SSC staff) performed 70.5% of all Always Alert interventions.

OBSERVATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Observations

- While it was a monumental undertaking and a huge investment of both time and money, rebuilding our New Student Orientations was a worthwhile task. We believe it contributed significantly to the increase in student success and retention rates. We are also proud that our newly redesigned NSO won the first Regents' Momentum Year Award for Excellence in Advising and Student Success.
- As noted above, FIRE 1000 has already had the predicted impact on student success, especially with minority subpopulations. However, we believe it has the potential to have an even bigger impact on student success and retention. For the 2019-20 year, we "themed" FIRE courses according to academic focus area, and we instituted a "FIRE Speaker Series" that gives students in those themed classes the opportunity to hear from successful professionals and community leaders in their chosen fields of study. We are looking forward to seeing what kind of an impact those improvements may have.
- We are excited about the potential of our pre-orientation project, FORGE (mentioned earlier in the report) and will continue to tweak and improve it in response to student, faculty, and staff feedback.

Next Steps:

While we continue to assess and refine all of our student success initiatives, our major tasks are clearly defined:

- We will continue to work to make the academic advising/focus sessions of our NSO more standard and consistent.

- While as noted above, we did a good job of getting incoming freshmen 15+ hour schedules in Fall 2018, we need to do a better job of encouraging them to register for 15+ hour schedules in Spring. We ended up with only 19% of the Fall 2018 freshman cohort completing 30 hours in their first year. While that represents an improvement over the Fall 2017 cohort (13.2%) and especially the Fall 2016 cohort (10.6%), we feel that we can do better.
- To help our incoming students make a purposeful choice, we will continue to refine FORGE and mandate that incoming students must complete it before registering for a New Student Orientation.
- We will improve our course scheduling process to remove bottlenecks and time conflicts (i.e., two classes on a first-semester program map being offered at the same time, or overlapping times). We are currently evaluating software programs to help with that task.
- Similarly, we will continue to work on scheduling themed FIRE classes. We feel that we learned a lot from this past Fall (Fall 2019) in that regard.

SECTION 5: STUDENT SUCCESS AND COMPLETION TEAM:

C. Jeffery Knighton, Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs
Peter Higgins, Assistant Vice-President for Academic Excellence
Stephen Raynie, FIRE Coordinator
David Janssen, Honors Program Coordinator
Anna Higgins-Harrell, CETL Director
Ryran Traylor, MAP Coordinator and Director of our AAMI program
John Head, Vice-President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs
James Woodruff, Access Institute Coordinator
Barry Kicklighter, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences
Victor Vilchiz, Dean of the School of Nursing, Health, and Natural Sciences
Joseph Jones, Dean of the School of Education
Matthew Robison, Dean of Students
Laura Shadrick, Academic Affairs Operations Manager