SAVANNAH STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Savannah State University (SSU), as a member of the state university sector, offers a portfolio of academic programs that reflects the unique needs of the region and the state. The approved mission statement can be found at SSU Mission & Vision Statement.

SSU has also responded to the educational needs of the region by extending admission requirements to increase access opportunities while offering greater support services and leveraging scholarship and the talent of faculty and staff to maintain academic rigor and expectations. In addition to the System Office's 2017 approval of raising SSU's Limited Admission percentage from 20% at state universities to 25%, in late 2018, the institution was also approved to implement a new Admissions Pilot Program to be able to accept additional students who fell just short of regular admission standards. The Pilot program allowed SSU to admit 8 students for spring 2019, and was fully implemented for fall 2019, admitting 119 students in this category. When all categories of admission for underprepared students are combined (University College, limited admits, and pilot admission students), SSU's fall 2019 new freshman class included 341 underprepared students (44% of the fall 2019 freshman class). Building out and sustaining support services to help this population of underprepared students must be a priority going forward.

The total headcount for fall 2018 was 4077, a decline of 7.9% from fall 2017. Full-time Enrollment (FTE) also declined 8.2%, from 4192 in fall of 2017 to 3850 in fall 2018. Despite these declines in enrollment, SSU staff and faculty continue to introduce innovative solutions and efficiently deploy resources to maximize student success.

MOMENTUM YEAR UPDATE

The 2018-2019 academic year was significant at SSU because faculty, staff, and students came together to move the needle on increasing buy-in and building out support services to launch several new strategies aligned with Momentum Year principles in preparation for the first-year students entering in Fall 2019. Although we will not have data to report on the success of these strategies until 2019-2020, the past year allowed us to lay the foundation for strengthening SSU's focus on student success.

One of the most significant changes SSU implemented was the establishment of the new Center for Student Success (CSS) in July 2019. The Center combined the former Access to Success (A2S) unit and the Center for Academic Success (CAS) and now houses many student support services in one centralized unit. The Center is also implementing a new professional advisement program this fall. The professional advisement program was originally designed to ultimately shift all student advising to professional staff who will be available to students year-round and stay with the student from matriculation to graduation, regardless of changes in major program or classification. The model requires different levels of intrusive advising, depending on the student's academic profile and performance. Faculty will serve as mentors and focus on career exploration and advanced study opportunities. The Center also oversees retention, tutoring, and testing services. Given the fiscal challenges at the University, we may need to modify the operations of the Center and adjust the advising model strategically. Data is now being collected on the effectiveness of the Center's programs and will be used to determine what components of the Center's work are most effective for our students.

Specific activities in 2018-2019 include:

- Changes promoting purposeful academic choice:
    - Early outreach by advisors in the Center of Student Success to inform incoming first-year students of academic options and help them discern the appropriate academic fit prior to registering for courses.

- o Redesign of the first-year experience (FYE) course to emphasize exploration of focus areas and discerning the differences among the majors within them. College-level FYE courses were offered in the College of Education, the College of Sciences and Technology, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the College of Business in Spring 2019. Assessment from the spring 2019 offerings showed that the redesigned FYE course did not improve overall student grade outcomes or decrease DF rates. Results indicated a need for stronger course standardization across the colleges. However, the Academic Mindset Survey has been distributed through the FYE course and the response rate among SSU students is among the highest in the University System. Among the 761 first year students, 582 responded to the survey.
  - o Significant changes to the new student orientation program called New Tiger Enrollment Sessions, including greater infusion of academic conversations with parents and new students.
- Changes that clarify pathways to graduation:
  - o Program maps for each academic program have been introduced and are used by professional advisors to guide students through coursework. In addition, these are currently being uploaded into Degree Works, the software used to complete degree audits so students, staff and faculty can easily view their progress to degree completion.
  - o Five focus areas have been identified to help students with academic decision making.
  - o Introduction of block scheduling to ensure first-year students register for English, Math and First-Year Experience courses together so that students with similar interests take these three courses together and form small learning communities. In addition to fulfilling the requirements of completing English and Math courses in the first year, SSU students have the added benefit of building communities specific to focus areas early in their academic career.
  - o Greater utilization of the early alert system using EAB Navigate, allowing for more timely intervention and coordination of faculty and professional advising staff to identify and help students who are at risk of struggling in coursework.
- Changes that promote the development of academic mindset:
  - o SSU first-year students continue to have a strong response rate for the USG Academic Mindset Survey, providing valuable information about the mindset of entering students that will inform the creation of innovative interventions.
  - o Among the themes of faculty development work pursued by Chancellor's Learning Scholars at SSU, elements of Momentum Year are areas of focus that faculty will explore over the next year.

OTHER INSTITUTIONAL HIGH IMPACT STRATEGIES, ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

In addition to Momentum Year, several important strategies were instituted this year, including:

- Participation in the National Association of System Heads High Impact Practices "Taking Student Success to Scale" project through USG to develop a common taxonomy for the most widely used high impact practices. This includes the redesign of the first-year experience course.
- Gateway to Completion (G2C) Course redesign in Engl 1101/1102 (Composition I & II), Math 1111 (College Algebra), and HUMN 1201 (Critical Thinking):
  - o ENGL 1101/1102:
    - In fall 2018, the initial redesign of both courses included a locally composed custom textbook, *Taking Stands*, curriculum revision to follow a "strands" model in which faculty selected among predetermined strands of instructional units, and student assignments that culminated in a capstone portfolio assignment to serve as the common assessment across all sections. However, faculty participation was inconsistent and an analysis in spring and summer of 2019 indicated the redesigned curriculum was too complex.
    - For fall 2019 ENGL 1101 courses, a completely free OER textbook was adopted and a single curriculum of instructional units and assignments was developed. Part of the revised curriculum was a requirement for faculty to report attendance through EAB Navigate and make use of the early alert system in that platform.
    - The second revision of ENGL 1102 is scheduled for implementation in spring 2020.
  - o MATH 1111:
    - Faculty taught two redesigned sections in fall 2018, along with two non-redesigned sections for control to determine if there were any differences in student achievement in the two course formats. Students who took the redesigned MATH 1111 sections in fall 2018 were also

encouraged to take MATH 1113 with the same instructors who taught redesigned MATH 1111 sections to monitor their progress in MATH 1113 to see if the redesign of MATH 1111 improved performance in MATH 1113. Results indicated that, but not significant improvements, were achieved.

- In spring 2019, a second phase of redesign was implemented. The piloted sections adopted OER material (Algebra and Trigonometry, Jay Abramson; Arizona State University; ISBN-10, 1-938168-37-2, https://cnx.org/contents/E6wQevFf@3.116:9IqWREMp/Linear-Functions\ ) instead of the $75 textbook, used a flipped learning approach, completion of online assignments requirement prior to class time and tests, and reduced the number of quizzes. The end of term analysis showed a significant drop in DFWI rates. The results were shared with the department faculty and a decision was made to upscale the redesign to all sections in fall 2019.

- This fall all MATH 1111 sections are using the redesigned elements from both phases. Initial midterm evaluation results show increases in student's engagement and a decrease in course failure rates. The committee will conduct the analysis at the end of the semester to see if the improvements on the DFWI rates will translate to all sections, and propose modifications if necessary to be implemented in the following spring semester.

o HUMN 1201:
- In fall 2018, all sections of HUMN 1201 (Critical Thinking and Communication) implemented (1) a refreshed common writing assignment with a revised rubric; and (2) a revised rubric for evaluating student speeches and oral presentations. Additionally, a pilot group began to test group quizzing as a means to reduce test anxiety and reinforce the study cycle as a means for demonstrating mastery in some sections during the 2018-2019 academic year.

- During summer 2019, a complete course re-design was undertaken to include the following elements in the new curriculum:
  - Innovative pedagogical strategies to reinforce metacognition, learning, and study skills;
  - Use of AAC&U LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes: Intellectual and Practical Skills - including inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, information literacy, and teamwork and problem solving (https://www.aacu.org/leap/introduction-to-leap)
  - Incorporation of an AAC&U-identified High Impact Practice: Collaborative Assignments and Projects. Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research. (https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/HIP_tables.pdf);
  - Utilization of free, digital OER materials and videos in place of a purchased textbook

- Additionally, the faculty were trained at a Summer 2019 CTC Course Redesign Retreat to introduce the new curriculum and to ensure that all faculty would be engaging in the following student-success practices:
  - Strict use of the syllabus template and shared rubrics;
  - Establishment of common standards on assignments, exams, and grading scales/weights across sections;
  - Stronger discussion/use of articulated learning outcomes, especially to provide students with an understanding of the value of the course;
  - Provision of early and frequent feedback to students (esp. within the first three weeks) on a variety of assignment types;
  - Ample and evident opportunities for students to practice for mastery of content, reflected in the course schedule;
  - Formal integration/embedding of learning support resources: Smarthinking, peer tutoring, learning workshops, the Writing Center, etc., as a requirement in the syllabus – making sure these thing are mentioned in the Grade Components, Course Schedule, and/or Campus Support Resources sections; and
  - Continued administration of the G2C Learning Gains Survey to track progress.

- The newly designed course is now being offered across all sections, and faculty development workshops are being held (4 per semester) to assist with support for the changes in the curriculum and approach. An additional course curriculum revision is expected for spring 2020

as a result of discussions and gathering faculty preferences for what is effective in the new curriculum/content.

OBSERVATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

As part of the ongoing implementation of Momentum Year and Momentum Approach, SSU is working to develop the research and evaluation of the Center for Student Success and measure the effect of changes made to the experience of first-year students. SSU staff are currently organizing research analysis to evaluate the influence of the new advising protocol, the number of advising meetings and the time in the academic year when these meetings take place. Through greater data collection during summer activities, SSU staff hope to also measure the effect of early engagement with Academic Affairs, specifically following the students who complete the academic interest survey, speak with professional advisors before the NTE session, and those who attend NTE sessions. This analysis will help SSU better understand, illustrate, and promote the benefits related to purposeful academic choice among students.

Based on an initial review of the efforts of CSS, significant progress is being made. Of the 802 first-year students, 77 percent are enrolled in 15 credit hours in fall 2019, up from 35 percent in fall 2018. In addition, professional advisors are meeting with first-year students 2.86 times on average in the first half of the term. Similar engagement among first-year students is being seen in the Learning Commons Center where 627 tutoring sessions have been held in the first half of the term. A majority of these tutoring sessions are for English, math and chemistry courses. These changes are being felt in the classroom, with positive feedback from faculty. As part of the analysis, faculty will be surveyed for their perceptions of differences in first-year student engagement in course material.

SSU is also working to establish a sustainable infrastructure to support Momentum Year and Momentum Approach that balances the needs of students and institutional resources. Data collection will be critical so that strategic decisions can be made to sustain the most effective services for students. As the institution continues to adjust to recurring changes in enrollment and the academic preparation of incoming students, a clearer focus on leveraging institutional resources on academic supports based on data driven decision making will become increasingly important.

STUDENT SUCCESS AND COMPLETION TEAM

Reginald Leseane, Interim Provost & VPAA
Sametria McFall, Assistant VPAA
Dedra Andrews, Title III Director & Interim Assistant VP for Enrollment Management
Danita Townsend, Executive Director, Center for Student Success
Brian Dawsey, Director of Admissions
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