



# MIDDLE GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

**Middle Georgia**  
State University

## SECTION 1. INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Middle Georgia State University (MGA) is a five-campus institution providing selective undergraduate and graduate education throughout the middle Georgia region. MGA serves a diverse student body through traditional, online, and hybrid delivery of curriculum. It is the mission of MGA to educate and graduate inspired lifelong learners whose scholarship and careers enhance the region through professional leadership, innovative partnerships, and community engagement. The institution's vision is to transform individuals and their communities through extraordinary high learning. Four core values underscore this vision: stewardship, engagement, adaptability, and learning.

Middle Georgia State University offered twenty-three programs at the baccalaureate level and five at the master's level in the 2020-21 academic year. The University awarded 1,390 degrees in the 2020-21 academic year. The number of baccalaureate degrees awarded increased from 910 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 to 930 in FY 2021, an increase of 2.2%.

Census data define the Fall 2020 student body to be Georgia residents (93.2%), White Non-Hispanic (51.2%) and Black/African American Non-Hispanic (34.6%), and under 25 years of age (70.8%). 59.3% of the student body were enrolled full-time. Females comprised 57% of the student body and males 43% of the student body.

In Fall 2020, 93.2% of enrolled students were Georgia residents representing 141 counties with most of the in-state students coming from Houston, Bibb, Laurens, Peach, Dodge, Fulton, Bleckley, Henry, DeKalb, Gwinnett, Monroe, and Jones. 165 out-of-state counties were also represented in the fall 2020 enrolled student body. There were 427 students that came from out-of-state primarily from Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Alabama. International students represented 1.76% of the total fall 2020 enrollment.

The number of Pell recipients in fall 2020 was 3,446 (43% of Undergraduates) of total enrollment as compared to 3,448 (44.3% of Undergraduates) in fall 2019. The fall 2020 enrollment was also comprised of 1,275 (15.2%) first-generation college students and 2,457 (29.2%) adult learners. In fall 2020, there were 292 military students that comprised 3.5% of the total enrollment as compared to 331 students (4.1%) of the total enrollment in fall 2019. The ethnic minority student population in fall 2020 was 3,804 (45.3%) as compared to 3,535 (43.8%) in fall 2019.

MGA has a blended mission in that it serves both the academically gifted students in dual enrollment, bachelor's, and master's degree programs, while also serving as a point of access to higher education for underrepresented populations. Owning student success is the 2018-2023 strategic imperative for MGA which is dependent on data-driven decision making, better service to students, more efficient use of faculty and staff resources, and utilization of tools to measure and communicate performance. Keeping students on track to program completion is the CCG goal most closely aligned with MGA's strategic priorities. Outcomes for this goal include improved persistence and retention rates and an increase in the number of students completing their degree on time. To fulfill its vision of "transformation of individuals and their communities through extraordinary higher learning," MGA has identified several high impact strategies to enhance retention and graduation.

Benchmark: Columbus State University  
Competitor institution: Valdosta State University  
Aspirational: Kennesaw State University

## SECTION 2: IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES – UNDERSTANDING CHANGE MANAGEMENT

MGA has set up an Enrollment Task Force that meets on a weekly basis to discuss strategies to build enrollment and retention, discuss student success initiatives, and brainstorm solutions to perceived barriers that impede student success. This task force has representation from offices across several Divisions institution wide. These include representatives from Academic Affairs such as the Academic Deans, the Provost and Associate Provosts, and Institutional Research staff; representatives from Enrollment Management like the VP for Enrollment Management, Director of Admissions, the Registrar, and Director of Financial Aid; representatives from Student Affairs that include the VP for Student Affairs and Director of Housing; and representatives from Office of Finance like the Bursar and the Executive Director of Finance. Data Dashboards have been developed by the Office of Institutional Research that are available to all offices. These include separate dashboards for grades, retention, 15 to finish, campus enrollment, etc. A separate webpage on student achievement has been developed that highlights First-year undergraduate retention rate, degrees conferred, graduation rates, course success rates, and pass rates in professional examinations for Nursing, Education, Respiratory Therapy, and Occupational Therapy Assistant.

## SECTION 3: YOUR BIG IDEA

MGA’s Big Idea was to develop strategies and practices that help to build the academic mindset as an institutional culture. Using the lens of the academic mindset, strategies were planned to address the momentum goals. A team of nine individuals, representing advising, student success centers, registrar’s office, academic Deans, Provost’s office, residential life, career and leadership development, and online academic programming, was put together to serve as Momentum Champions. These individuals were split into committees to brainstorm and develop action items that incorporate the academic mindset while addressing the momentum goals as shown in the table below.

Momentum Goals and Building the Academic Mindset as an Institutional Culture

| Momentum Goals                                | Action Plan   |
|---|---|
| Build awareness of Momentum goals             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construct a webpage</li> <li>• Offer workshops</li> <li>• Create a primer video</li> <li>• Introduce Momentum goals and objectives at new faculty orientation and reinforce in faculty development sessions</li> <li>• Introduce Mindset elements in Freshman Convocation</li> <li>• Develop and/or purchase banners, books, and flyers to create awareness of academic mindset</li> </ul>   |
| Promote purposeful choice and deepen learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build training on proactive advising for faculty and staff advisors (include 15-to-finish)</li> <li>• Integrate academic and career advising</li> <li>• Build Academic Commitment plans for high-risk students</li> <li>• Strengthen and expand High Impact Practices (HIPs)</li> <li>• Plan and execute Student Success and Majors festival</li> <li>• Offer Financial Literacy workshops</li> <li>• Offer Living and Learning Communities</li> </ul> |
| Build a productive academic mindset           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure our communications build a growth mindset.</li> <li>• Develop Mindset training for students, staff, and faculty</li> <li>• Execute mindset surveys for freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors</li> <li>• Include Mindset elements in course structure</li> <li>• </li> <li>• Review and strengthen mindset plans developed by all the Academic Schools</li> </ul>   |
| Establish a sense of belonging                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build the ‘Knight Start Ready’ module in D2L to include academic support and non-academic support resources (advising, career, student success, Be Well Mental Health initiative, etc.)</li> <li>• Apply mindset principles to orientation</li> <li>• Expand the mentoring program</li> </ul>  |
| Revamp program maps                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include milestones and co-curricular activities in program maps</li> <li>• Review for accuracy, math pathways, and flexibility to establish clear off-ramps</li> </ul>   |

## Progress

### Awareness

An introduction to Momentum objectives was provided at the Fall Convocation for Academic Affairs faculty and staff, at the Student Affairs staff meeting, Enrollment Management staff meeting, and at New Faculty orientation. Additionally, a Start of Fall 2021 video focusing on the academic mindset was produced and shown to Academic Affairs Faculty and Staff, to students at the Freshman Convocation, and uploaded into Brightspace to make it easily accessible to all students, staff, and faculty. A webpage highlighting the objectives of Momentum has been launched in October 2021.

### Purposeful Choice

Focus 2 Career Assessment was implemented to provide students with a more comprehensive career assessment platform. Since July 1, 2020, 228 students have completed at least one assessment in the Focus 2 Career Assessment platform. To increase student access to a career advisor and to connect them with employers, appointment scheduling was provided via Handshake. Individual student career advising appointments in AY2021 increased by 18% in comparison to AY2020. Program maps have been developed to include three courses in the major of study in the freshman year, 15 credit hours per semester, and core English and math courses. A Momentum sub-committee is working to develop training for professional and faculty advisors on proactive advising to address the needs of high-risk students and prepare academic commitment plans to help them succeed. Conversations are ongoing between career and academic advisors to further integrate the two resources to support purposeful choice. Financial Literacy workshops have been provided to educate students, so they make intentional efforts to select a major of their choice early on in their college career to complete their degree requirements within the amount covered by Financial Aid. Student Success festivals were offered in fall '21 to create awareness of both academic and non-academic support resources as well as the majors offered on each campus. One Living and Learning Community (LLC) is being offered in fall '21 and the plan is to expand and strengthen the LLCs going forward. MGA has been actively including high impact practices in its course offerings and the courses have been designated as HIPs courses on the course schedule to enable students to make an appropriate choice. HIPS progress is tracked in Banner as attributes.

### Productive Mindset

A Start of Fall 2021 video that introduced the concept of mindset has been developed and shared with students, faculty and staff. Mindset training is being developed individually for students, faculty, and staff that will be executed during the 2021-22 academic year. In addition to the USG (University System of Georgia) Mindset survey that is shared with all freshmen, MGA will be surveying sophomores, juniors, as well as seniors, on mindset elements during the spring semester. Each academic school developed a mindset plan for their students across the four years of undergraduate experience. These plans will be reviewed and revised if needed during 2021-22. As faculty get training on mindset, inclusion of mindset elements in the course structure will be discussed. Banners with motivational quotes have been produced and set up in the Cochran Library to provide encouragement to students.

### Sense of Belonging

A Momentum sub-committee is exchanging ideas to build a 'Knight Start Ready' module in D2L that will provide access to academic and nonacademic resources to support student success. To enable first-year students to make a smooth transition to college and connect with their peers as well as the academic departments, orientation events have been reviewed using the lens of the academic mindset. Changes in structure and format are being discussed both for the online and the face-to-face orientation events for summer 2022.

### Program Maps

MGA has developed program maps that list courses a student must take every semester to stay on track to graduation in four years. The maps follow the Momentum Year guidelines whereby core English and math, three courses in the major, and 30 credits are included in the first year. The maps also list learning outcomes for the program as well as the employers that have hired current graduates.

### Barriers

- The program maps are based on 15 credit hour schedules per semester, however, some students like those in learning support (LS) prefer to limit their schedule to 12-14 hours and complete their LS requirements before taking on additional courses especially those placed in LS English. Adult learners who are working also request a reduced load.
- Though the Center for Career and Leadership Development offers several resources and career assessments, the utilization of these resources is minimal. Increased staffing with additional career advisors, cross-training of academic advisors, and integration of academic and career advising will be necessary to ensure that all students make a purposeful choice of an academic pathway.
- To deepen purposeful choice, students in the Interdisciplinary Studies program need more direction to get on a focused pathway.
- Program maps are specific for each campus on which the degree is housed; however, this information is not provided on the admissions application. This may not allow students to make a purposeful choice as they select a campus.

- The School of Arts and Letters offered a Living and Learning Community (LLC) in fall'21 but it did not garner much interest and had limited enrollment. More needs to be done to build student motivation to participate in LLCs.
- MGA does not offer a First Year Experience (FYE) course that could be used as a platform for several initiatives related to mindset, purposeful choice, and sense of belonging. Execution of the mindset surveys is a challenge at the end of the fall semester as participation is limited even though multiple forms of communication are employed to encourage students to complete the survey. Another challenge is having students to undergo Mindset training outside of a common platform like the FYE course.
- All freshmen are registered for core English and math courses in their first year but do not complete them successfully.
- MGA has five physical campuses and a growing online presence. Providing equal access to resources on all physical campuses and online is a challenge given the limited personnel available.

## Lessons learned

MGA needs to strengthen mindset activities for students, so they understand the value of their education and are more engaged with the academic and non-academic resources that can help them be successful. While there are abundant resources available to students like tutoring provided by the Student Success Centers (SSCs), the Mathematics Academic Resource Center, the Writing Center, and several departmental tutoring centers; workshops provided by the SSCs; academic advising provided by the professional advisors and faculty advisors; and career advising provided by the career advisors, there is a need to build awareness of these resources and to help the students recognize their role in owning their success.

## Assessment

Assessment of the Big Idea will be done using the following metrics:

- A Mindset training video was developed and presented fall' 21.
  - D2L video will be tracked by view rate with of goal of 100% of enrolled students viewing the mindset training by spring 2023. Campus-wide presentations were provided on three occasions - Goal to increase by 33%.
- The Momentum webpage highlighting goals and objectives was developed fall' 21.
  - Click through numbers will be collected and tracked – baseline in fall' 21.
- Student Success and Majors Festivals were held in Cochran & Macon fall'21.
  - Number of students attending – establish baseline in fall' 21.
- One LLC offered fall'21.
  - Number of students served in LLCs- establish baseline in fall'21.
- Financial Literacy workshop(s) will be offered fall'21.
  - Number of students attending workshops-establish baseline fall'21.
- Orientation for fall'22 revamped to include mindset principles of growth, purposeful choice, and sense of belonging.
  - Orientation inclusion of three metrics:
    - Growth Mindset activities-percent of students engaged
    - Purposeful Choice activities-percent of students engaged
    - Sense of Belonging activities-percent of students engaged
- Mindset Quiz Participation
  - Number of students completing quiz-establish baseline in fall'21
- Mindset training in D2L
  - Number of faculty trained-establish baseline in 2021-22
  - Number of staff trained-establish baseline in 2021-22
  - Number of students trained-establish baseline in 2021-22

## SECTION 4.1: MOMENTUM WORK RESILIENCE UPDATE

### Resilience strategies

Progress and successes:

- Availability of online tutoring steadily increased from 12% in fall'19 to 59.5% in fall'20.
- Embedded tutors are available inside D2L course modules which are accessible by both face-to-face and online students. The number of courses with an embedded tutor increased from 21 in fall'20 to 45 in spring'21.
- A Momentum sub-committee has engaged in extensive conversations and produced a set of recommendations for including mindset principles into orientation planning for summer'22.
- One Living and Learning Community titled 'Diverse and Included' has been offered in fall'21 for incoming freshmen.
- Teams is being used as a platform for meetings to reduce campus segregation.

- Mental Health initiative ‘Be Well’ launched in January 2021, is being promoted on all campuses and online throughout orientations and convocations to increase awareness and usage.
- A Momentum sub-committee on High Impact Practices (HIPs) has engaged with the USG sponsored faculty HIPs team to discuss progress and plan next steps. MGA QEP (Quality Enhancement Plan) that was completed in 2020, was focused on Experiential Learning which enabled the inclusion of HIPs across the curriculum. A total of 431 courses included HIPs in their course design in 2020-21.
- Presence software was utilized to inform the students about all events on campus.
- Shared reading of text to promote diversity and civility was organized by the School of Arts and Letters.

Challenges, lessons, and next steps:

- Mentoring opportunities for students are not consistent across all academic schools. A review of current practices followed by recommendations for moving forward is required.
- MGA does not offer the First Year Experience course for its students. The course has to be developed in 2021-22 and offered in fall’22.
- MGA employed a decentralized model of advising in 2020-21. Advising assessment results will highlight the changes required moving forward. MGA plans to hire a Director of Advising with a centralized role in overseeing the decentralized model spread over six academic schools across five physical campuses and online.
- Student interest in LLCs has been limited; more needs to be done to plan and provide LLCs that will be exciting and inviting to students.
- Currently, MGA does not have a Center of Excellence for Teaching and Learning. Plans to create one to offer faculty development opportunities are underway.
- While the Center for Career and Leadership Development offers several resources for the students, the utilization is not satisfactory. Planning is underway to build presence for this Center so students can take advantage of these opportunities to define their passion and career and build leadership skills.
- The number of courses with an embedded tutor increased to 45 from 21 during spring’21, however, the challenge to increase student utilization of this resource remains. In addition to encouraging students to avail themselves of this opportunity, greater instructor support of this strategy will be necessary.

## SECTION 4.3: GLOBAL MOMENTUM SUPPORT

### Communication

MGA identified nine Momentum Champions representing different offices across the institution. This team included a Professional Advisor, Student Success Coordinator, Director for the Center for Career and Leadership, an Associate Provost, a Dean, Online Academic Program Coordinator, Academic and Administrative projects Coordinator, Director of Residence Life, and the Registrar. This group met to discuss the Momentum plan and work out the action items for building awareness, revamping orientation, building mindset assessment and mindset training, promoting sense of belonging and purposeful choice, and developing proactive advising and mentoring.

Several strategies were planned to have an institution-wide awareness of Momentum work. An introduction to Momentum goals was provided at the Fall Convocation for faculty and staff in Academic Affairs, at the Student Affairs staff meeting, and at New Faculty orientation. Additionally, a Start of Fall 2021 video focusing on the academic mindset was produced and shown to Academic Affairs Faculty and Staff, to students at the Freshman Convocation, and uploaded into Brightspace to make it easily accessible to all students, staff, and faculty. A Momentum webpage is under construction that will highlight the goals and objectives of Momentum. Conversations are ongoing with the Student Newspaper, The Statement, to publish articles on Momentum work. To facilitate buy-in from the faculty and staff on mindset-related strategies, MGA is developing mindset training that will be specific for each group. The goal of this training is to enable faculty and staff to appreciate the value of a growth mindset and how it is integrally connected with student success.

### Data plan

The Office of Institutional Research and Data Strategy has developed data dashboards that include a grades dashboard and a retention dashboard. These are available on the MGA website for all stakeholders to view. In addition, the office responds to data requests from Deans and Chairs and others across the institution for specific initiatives like Early Alert, co-requisite support, course redesign, HIPs, among others.

As noted above in the assessment plan, specific data will be established as baseline in fall’ 21 and tracked continuously for Momentum progress and planning. These will include:

- Tracking view rate of Mindset video in D2L with a goal of 100% of enrolled students viewing the training by spring 2023. Campus-wide presentations were provided on three occasions - Goal to increase by 33%.
- Tracking click through numbers for the mindset webpage – baseline fall’ 21.
- Recording number of students attending Student Success Festivals – baseline fall’ 21.
- Recording number of students served in Living and Learning Communities.
- Tracking number of students attending workshops on Mindset.
- Monitoring three metrics in revamped Orientation:
  - Growth Mindset activities- percentage of students engaged.
  - Purposeful Choice activities- percentage of students engaged.
  - Sense of Belonging activities- percentage of students engaged.
- Recording number of students completing Mindset quiz.
- Tracking Early Alert participation and success outcomes.
- Tracking number of courses with embedded tutoring and success outcomes.

## Faculty and Staff support

Academic Affairs will re-establish a Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). The CETL will offer professional development opportunities for faculty and staff and promote Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. CETL will also serve as a platform to update personnel on Momentum goals and objectives, and other significant projects related to course redesign, inclusion of HIPs, and use of embedded Librarian and embedded tutoring. MGA will expand Faculty and Staff Development workshops offered across campuses every semester. Information on professional development opportunities provided by the USG, including those linked to momentum year objectives, student success, and course redesign, is also shared broadly with faculty.

## SECTION 5: OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTAL UPDATES

### Early Alert

An Early Alert system was developed and implemented in 2020-21. During fall’20, courses included in the early alert were limited to 1000 and 2000 levels only. They were expanded to 3000 and 4000 level during spring’21. Preliminary results from spring’21 show that 12.5% of the students on the early alert report took advantage of tutoring offered by the Student Success Centers, the Mathematics Academic Resource Center, and the Writing Center. Of those tutored, the highest percentage (17%) were reported for low grades only. Those on the early alert report for lack of engagement had the lowest tutoring rate (7.6%). For those reported for low grades, success outcomes (grades of A, B, or C) were greater if they were tutored as compared to the same group that did not seek tutoring. Success rates were the lowest for courses offered at the 1000 and 2000 level, with tutored students showing higher success outcomes as compared to non-tutored students.

### Embedded Tutoring

To expand tutoring opportunities for students, tutors were embedded within courses both in fall’20 and spring’21. A total of 21 course offerings that included multiple sections of 15 distinct courses had an embedded tutor (ET) in fall’20. In spring’21, 45 sections of 31 distinct courses had an embedded tutor. The overall success rates (grades of A, B, or C) for individual sections of all courses with an embedded tutor was 71.92%. Data comparing success rates for sections of the same course showed that sections with an embedded tutor had success rates of 71.92% while those without an embedded tutor had a success rate of 67.95%. Of the 31 distinct courses, 7 courses had no other section without embedded tutoring for comparison and success rates varied from 66.67-100%. 11 courses had success rates higher than the non- ET section. Overall, a total of 18/31 courses (58%) showed high success rates (64.47%-100%). Based on instructor feedback, the biggest challenge reported was that some students did not use the ET. To encourage students to take advantage of this resource, instructor support for this strategy will be necessary.

### MGA Direct

The number of online programs offered through MGA Direct grew by 18.8% from a total of 16 in 2019-20 to 19 in 2020-21.

### Be Well Mental Health Initiative

BeWell@MGA consists of three initiatives:

- In partnership with Christie Campus Health, a 24/7 hotline, a prescribing clinic, and a Wellness Hub have been established. By the end of June, MGA had 33 calls to the hotline, 18 referrals to the prescribing clinic, and 161 connections of the Wellness Hub.
- Work with the JED Foundation has produced recommendations and strategic planning initiative for MGA to expand services. Two recommendations accomplished by the end of June were an approval to hire an additional mental health counselor and

add the National Suicide Hotline number on to the back of the student ID cards. Additional JED recommendations will be implemented this upcoming year.

- MGA was awarded 5 Mental Health Mini-Grants.
  - **Fresh Check Day** – Two Fresh Check Days (Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention events) were hosted in spring semester and five are scheduled for fall 2021 semester – one on each campus. The April 21 event in Macon and April 22 event in Cochran events had:
    - 113 students participated in these events with 76 visiting all stations and completing the evaluation. 34% freshmen; 26% sophomores; 28% juniors; 12% seniors
    - 82% residential students and 18% commuter students.
    - 83.5% were satisfied or very satisfied with this event.
    - 89% were much more or somewhat more aware of the warning signs for suicide.
    - 84% were much more or somewhat more prepared to help a friend in distress.
    - 92% were much more or somewhat more aware of mental health resources available to them.
    - 91% were much more or somewhat more likely to ask for help if experiencing emotional distress.
  - **Kognito Mental Health** training software was purchased and implemented. Faculty, staff, and student training will be launched during the Suicide Prevention month of September.
  - **QPR training** was made available to all staff in the Division of Student Affairs, Resident Assistants, campus police, cabinet members, and academic advisors. MGA received QPR training booklets for our students, faculty and staff who received QPR training. The training will be opened to the broad campus community in September.
  - A **certified Peer Educator program** was created through the Center for Career & Leadership Development’s student leadership program, iLEAD. The program was established in spring and summer and launched in the fall. The iLEAD peer educators are going through their 10-hour certified peer educator training now through September and will provide at least 2 peer-led programs for the MGA student body on multiple campuses each semester.
  - The **Knights Care Kit** was created in the summer semester and is being sent to faculty and staff for distribution as needed. The Knights Care Kit provides resources and guidance to assist students struggling with mental health issues as they navigate the uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic and the pressures of college. Knights Care Kits will reinforce the message that there are things students can do, people they can talk to, and resources available to help.

## Career and Leadership Development

### I. Activities:

#### Career Development

- Implemented the Focus 2 Career Assessment to provide students with a more comprehensive career assessment platform.
- Implemented appointment scheduling via Handshake to increase student access to career advisor.
- Expanded access to career development services through more virtual options.

#### Job & Internship Opportunities

- Promoted Handshake as a virtual way to connect students with employers in 2020/2021.
- Increased opportunities for employers to connect with students through targeted networking activities.

## Student Leadership Programs

- Recruited and facilitated the second cohort of the Knights LEAD Student Leadership Program for first-year students.
- Launched Emerging Leaders Student Leadership Program to support students at the sophomore level in the development of soft skills and connections with MGA and the community.
- Hosted the Student Leadership Conference in-person.

### II. Outcomes

- Since July 1, 2020, 228 students have completed at least one assessment in the Focus 2 Career Assessment platform.
- Student and alumni activated Handshake accounts increased by 67%, from 2,181 to 3,643.
- With the ability to schedule appointments online and to choose a virtual option when needed, individual student career advising appointments in AY2021 increased by 18% in comparison to AY2020.
- In AY2021, the CCLD added additional networking events to expand its’ reach to students for a total of 49 activities (compared to 17 in the previous year). These events included mock interviews, panel discussions, small in-person career fairs, and virtual career fairs.

- A new position to hire an Assistant Director for Internships and Career Readiness was approved.
- 13 students participated in Emerging Leaders and 12 students participated in Knights LEAD for the 2021 AY. As of July 15, 21 of the 25 program participants were registered and returning for the fall 2021 semester. An in-person Student Leadership Conference was hosted for 69 students with a nationally recognized speaker. In late spring, the iLEAD Peer Educator Program was launched to provide returning MGA students with an opportunity to help their peers connect with campus resources.

### III. Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Increasing virtual access to career development services was an important step toward increasing the number of MGA students engaging with career development. More virtual access increased student appointments and helped staff maximize their time when serving multiple campuses. Virtual appointment, workshops, career fair, and scheduling practices will continue indefinitely to complement in-person services and requests. However, we need increased support from faculty to encourage students to use Handshake. Faculty buy-in is critical as we move to make Handshake the centralized place to post internships received by the university.

The new position, Assistant Director of Internships and Career Readiness, will focus on developing and implementing a strategy for getting students connected to internships and prepared for employment after graduation. Faculty members do want more assistance with how employers connect with the university in order to expand opportunities for students. In addition, a centralized way to track internship experiences is needed so that the university has information on which employers are offering the experiences. This position will work closely with Student Leadership Programs to ensure that students are not just prepared for campus leadership opportunities but also leadership within their own careers.

To help students make more informed career decisions, all incoming undergraduate students (including Transfer students) should take Focus 2 and talk with a career advisor in a group or individual setting so that they are using appropriate occupational resources.

Student Leadership Programs need to be adjusted to fit our student populations. Emerging Leaders should be redefined to include any undergraduate student who has finished their first official year of college. This change will help expand the opportunity to more students and eliminate confusion over how many credit hours are needed to participate. This change will also help more transfers be able to get involved. Virtual programming did not work as well for student leadership programs, so in-person sessions will be the focus moving forward so that students can use and develop their communication, networking, and teamwork skills in these programs.

New cohorts of Knights LEAD and Emerging Leaders will be launched for the 2022 year with the intent of hosting in-person sessions on the Macon and Cochran campus. In addition, 28 – 30 students will serve as iLEAD Peer Educators across all five campuses where they will plan and implement programs each semester to connect their peers to resources at MGA.

In partnership with the Momentum initiative, additional ways to market career and major exploration resources such as Focus 2 to students will be identified. Work is ongoing to establish Career Readiness Quest in Presence that will launch in October and provide students with a way to track their career development progress.

### Diversity, Inclusion, & Equity

For the past academic year 2020-2021, the Office of Diversity made progress in increasing diversity and inclusion initiatives and in communicating the responsibility for diversity and inclusion as an institutional and as a campus-wide effort. There was an increase in facilitating more conversations regarding issues of diversity and inclusion in higher education as well as an increase in training, social, and educational programming focused on diversity and inclusion. The main challenge was the pandemic and the way the pandemic reshaped the ability to engage with others in person including an increase in virtual options. The change in approach regarding diversity and inclusion included more focus on asking the campus community about the sense of belonging and what that means to the faculty/staff/students who engaged in the conversations. The Office of Diversity learned that the sense of belonging on campus has a different meaning depending on who is asked. Moving forward, the Office of Diversity will continue to explore what “belonging” means among the campus community and how to capture the various meanings in a way that offers tangible experiences of belonging for all.

### Student Life initiatives

#### MGA Knight Life

Using the Presence software, student engagement was tracked at all events. Academic programming was adjusted to intentionally include growth mindset as a learning outcome as well as to help students develop a sense of belonging.