

**Georgia Highlands College
Complete College Georgia Status Report
September 2013**



Part One: Updates, Progress, and Future Work

Since the initial Complete College Georgia (CCG) report, Georgia Highlands College (GHC) has expanded existing completion strategies and initiated new strategies. Several of these strategies are highlighted in this status update. The three main completion goals of the college included in the initial CCG report involved retention, graduation and degree production. GHC set as a goal a 10% increase in each of these areas. Although the college saw increases in all areas, we only met one of those target goals, in degree production:

- 1) Retention – for full-time students, the Fall to Fall retention rate used in last year’s CCG as a baseline was 60.23%. This year, the Fall to Fall retention rate for full-time students was 62.58% for a 4% increase, which is short of the 10% increase goal.
- 2) Graduation – for full-time students, the four-year graduation rate used in last year’s CCG as a baseline was 12.01%. This year, the four-year graduation rate for full-time students was 12.81%, for a 7% increase, which is closer to our 10% increase goal, but still slightly short.
- 3) Degree Production – the college conferred 500 degrees last year as a baseline in the CCG report. This year, the college conferred 600 degrees, for a 20% increase, which is double our 10% increase goal.

The higher success for degree production is attributed in large part to the college’s new strategy of reaching out to students who have acquired the appropriate credits for a degree, but who have not applied for graduation. The college has done away with a graduation fee to facilitate the process, and the Registrar’s Office has worked with students personally to have degrees conferred.

While GHC did not meet the 10% increase goal for retention and graduation, the college believes in the efficacy of the strategies that have been put into place and will continue to pursue them. Some of the higher-impact practices include the following:

- In terms of remediation, GHC has piloted both the flipped classroom model and the co-requisite classroom model in all three curricular areas of reading, English and mathematics. The co-requisite model presents exciting possibilities in accelerating students through their remedial courses, as this model allows students to participate in the credit-level course while receiving tutoring and support in a co-requisite course taken simultaneously. Over the course of the next two academic years, the college will make the transition away from a traditional remedial model (stand-alone remedial courses) to the co-requisite model. During the pilot phase, the co-requisite classes showed no decline in student success rates. (In fact, no student in a co-requisite class made below a grade of C.)
- GHC is also making great strides forward with a non-algebraic pathway through learning support mathematics. The college has created a classroom model based on statistics and a practical application of mathematics, as opposed to the traditional base of algebra. While STEM majors will still need the traditional pathway, non-STEM majors will benefit from this alternate curriculum.
- As part of the college's expansion of eLearning (distance education), during the 2012-2013 academic year, the college has created Collaborate classrooms. The college purchased Blackboard Collaborate, which provides students with webinar-style access to classes. This access allows the college to run a course at a home campus while having other students at other campus locations join in via Collaborate, which expands the course offerings at the smaller campuses thus accelerating students through a program of study at their home location.
- As mentioned above, GHC has long been aware that some students who transfer to a four-year institution are eligible to graduate with an associate's degree, yet do not apply to graduate and do not have a degree conferred. The college has developed a protocol to identify such students who may be eligible for a degree and work with these students towards conferral of that degree. There is double benefit to this situation, as it obviously benefits college completion rates and also provides an additional credential to these eligible students.

Part Two: Partnerships

Since the last CCG Summit, GHC has engaged with its educational partners in the effort to find meaningful ways to improve student success. Two areas illustrate these efforts:

- **Regional Team** – following up on the regional sessions that were held at the most recent CCG Summit, the colleges of Region 1 (GHC, Dalton State College, and Georgia Northwestern Technical College) decided to continue the discussion with additional work sessions. We have found this continued conversation to be extremely informative and beneficial, as we learn best practices from each other. Determining ways to share resources is one of our goals. The ongoing discussions focus on working as a team within our communities to educate high school students about their post-secondary options as well as looking for ways to share information such as transcripts across institutions to facilitate students navigating through both higher education systems.
- **P-12 Work** – One of the most promising P-12 programs at GHC is Fabulous Fridays, an opportunity for sixth grade students to visit campus and interact with faculty members in a classroom setting. In order to strengthen this program, the insight of school superintendents from across GHC’s service area has been gathered. Because of this insight, the college has shifted the focus of the program to the ninth grade, a time when students must choose an initial career pathway, in part to help students identify their interest. Since GHC has strong Nursing and Dental Hygiene programs, STEM and Health Care are large components of this re-designed Fabulous Fridays program. Additionally the college is working with the Blue Ridge AHEC (Area Health Education Center) to hold a Spring health care workshop with our faculty for older high school students who have already committed to a health care pathway.

Part Three: Key Observations and Evidence

Key evidence on course success is gathered and analyzed in several areas of the college. The Office of Strategic Planning, Assessment and Accreditation carries out grade distribution analyses each semester for all courses, and passes that information to the academic divisions. Higher-level USG data, such as graduation and retention reports, are gathered through this office. Comparison reports on these metrics are compiled using local Banner

data system information. This local data allows the college to break out data by race, gender, campus location, and other pertinent demographic markers, which aids in targeting certain strategies to certain groups. The college's Brother 2 Brother program, for example, utilizes data broken out by race to create mentoring and tutoring opportunities in the needed academic areas for their membership, a traditionally underserved group.

Another area for data analysis is the Academic Success and eLearning Division. Because many of the completion strategies relate to remedial courses, the academic dean of this division charts the success of any new strategy (as well as of the overall remedial program) at multiple points during the semester. One creation of this division two years ago was the Early Warning Program, whereby all faculty members in all courses now mark the progress of their students at two times during the semester (week two and week six). This intervention strategy is designed to provide time for the faculty member and the student to assess success (or lack thereof) early on in the semester and make adjustments to improve the student's chance of being successful in the course. This office also regularly charts course pass rates for all remedial courses and exit rates for the three different remedial curricular areas, plus comparative studies of any new pilot. This tracking allows the college to make necessary tweaks to any new program in real time, to maximize student success.

The new Office of Community Outreach and Engagement (COE) focuses its data analysis on adult learners and veterans. Approximately 27% of GHC's enrollment is age twenty-four or older or a veteran. In light of this fact, the COE Office has created both new orientations geared towards adult learners and a cohort model of courses solely for adult learners. The students report that they appreciate learning with, and from, students of a similar age and life experience. The COE Office is also currently working on strategies related to the assessment of prior learning experience and CLEP testing, to help students take advantage of their existing skill and knowledge sets within the college setting.

Part Four: Sharing Lessons Learned

Because GHC has focused on retention, graduation and degree production, the CCG plan has become an extension of the college Retention, Progression and Graduation plan. Over the past three years, these two efforts have led the college to become more intentional about tracking student success, which in turn led to new student success initiatives. These

initiatives have been instrumental in helping the college achieve an increase in the graduation rate last year, both in three-year rates (from 6.8% to 9.7%) and four-year rates (from 12.01% to 12.81%, as mentioned earlier in this report). The CCG plan itself has generated many conversations about completion as a concept that have been useful to the college. Prior to this activity, we identified ourselves as a transfer institution. We encouraged graduation, but we did not see graduation as our mission – rather, it was a byproduct of our transfer mission. Over the past three years, the college has worked to create a culture of graduation and to emphasize the merits of the associate’s degree as a final product as well as a step to the baccalaureate degree. To this end, the college now promotes graduation more fully as an expected part of the access mission at GHC.

As an access institution, GHC is always aware of its at-risk population, and as such, creates programming to assist these students in being successful in college through graduation and transfer. While the Community Outreach and Engagement Office works closely with the adult population, other underserved groups are tracked as well. One of the most successful programs at GHC is our Brother 2 Brother project, an arm of the African American Male Initiative. The college just received additional grant funding through a competitive USG process to continue and strengthen this program, which provides mentoring and tutoring for African American and Latino males at GHC. As a result of this program, the Brother 2 Brother group has a much higher graduation rate than the overall student population (38% this last Spring, as opposed to 12.8% for the overall population), illustrating the potential of student success initiatives that are clearly focused and targeted.

In addition, GHC has become more flexible, adaptable, and willing to experiment with pedagogy and student services. The faculty members are excited about new possibilities and have taken on additional responsibilities (such as organizing cohort learning communities or modifying the traditional methodology of the remedial classroom) in order to create new learning experiences for the students. We have also learned that every strategy may not produce the intended results, but each experiment adds to our knowledge base and gives the college the experience necessary to make quality judgments about what works and does not work for our student population.