



Georgia Highlands College

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Georgia Highlands College (GHC) is a state college of the University System of Georgia (USG) with an access mission and limited baccalaureate degrees. Currently, the college only offers the BSN, but has been approved by the USG to begin offering the BS in Dental Hygiene in the Summer of 2015. The college’s purpose is to provide access to a teaching and learning environment that prepares students to thrive in a global society. The mission of GHC is to provide access to excellent educational opportunities for the intellectual, cultural and physical development of a diverse population through pre-baccalaureate associate degree transfer programs, career associate degree programs, and targeted baccalaureate degree programs that meet the economic development needs of the region.

The college had been seeing approximately 3% enrollment growth through fall 2011 with 5500 students. Fall 2013, GHC enrolled 5492 students. Fall-to-fall enrollment remained essentially flat until fall 2014 when enrollment declined by 2.3% or 5365 students.

The demographic make up of the GHC student body as of Fall 2013 is as follows:

Gender:		Residency:	
Male	37%	Georgia Residents	98%
Female	63%		
Race		Full or Part-time Status:	
White	71%	Full time	50%
African American	17%	Part time	50%
Latino	7%	Age	
Asian	2%	Average Student Age	24.1 years
Multi-racial	2%	Adult Learners (25+)	27%
Unknown	1%	Adult Learners (25+)	30%
Veterans		Financial Aid	
Number	142	Percent receiving some aid	69%
Percent of student body	2.6%	Pell-awardees	29%
		HOPE Scholarship awardees	21%

Over the past three years, the average income of the households of GHC students has dropped by 10% each year, sending more of them closer to the poverty level.

These demographic factors greatly influenced GHC’s decision to focus completion efforts on traditionally underserved populations, such as adults, veterans, lower-income students, and lower-prepared students. As a primarily-access institution, GHC’s mission is to assist students to succeed, whether that be in a career with one of GHC’s career programs (Nursing, Dental Hygiene, Human Service) or it be with a transfer associate’s degree on the way to a bachelor’s degree at a different institution. These priorities are reflected in GHC’s main goals for Complete College Georgia:

- Increase the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG institutions (mandatory).
- Provide intrusive advising to keep students on track to graduate.
- Award degrees to students who may have already met requirements for associate degrees via courses taken at one or more institutions.
- Increase the likelihood of degree completion by transforming the way that remediation is accomplished.
- Restructure instructional delivery to support educational excellence and student success.

Due to GHC’s access mission, the role of learning support courses in our completion agenda cannot be underestimated. 53% of GHC’s incoming freshmen required some form of remediation in Fall 2013. That is a typical percentage for the institution, so finding ways to track and guide students through the remedial pathway is key to assisting the students in achieving success. That accounts for the fact that two of GHC’s chosen Complete College Georgia goals relate specifically to remediation. In terms of the goals related to transforming remediation and restructuring instructional delivery, GHC has been working towards the completed adoption of new remedial strategies for three years, ever since the concepts were introduced large-scale within the USG. GHC has a pattern of early adoption, evidenced by the college’s adoption last year of the emporium model and the co-requisite model. Even though colleges are not required to adopt the current recommendations to change learning support regulations until Fall 2015, GHC has chosen to bring the mathematics recommendations to full scale this Fall 2014. The English recommendations are in the pilot stage now, scheduled to be at full scale in Spring 2015.

GHC’s key priorities are directly tied to the student body make-up and the access mission of the college, in that the focus is

on goals that relate to adult learners and underprepared students.

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Based on institutional mission and resources, Georgia Highlands College (GHC) has identified the following five Complete College Georgia goals:

1. Increase the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG institutions.
2. Provide intrusive advising to keep students on track to graduate.
3. Award degrees to students who may have already met requirements for associate degrees via courses taken at one or more institutions.
4. Increase the likelihood of degree completion by transforming the way that remediation is accomplished.
5. Restructure instructional delivery to support educational excellence and student success.

Goal 1 - Increase the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG institutions.)

This is a mandatory goal for all institutions. From this general goal, all of the others flow in more detail. Each of the remaining four goals for GHC feed this overall goal with specific strategies.

Goal 2 - Provide intrusive and appreciative advising to keep students on track to graduate

Keeping students on track to graduate is clearly a key to student success. At GHC, there are several issues to address in terms of academic advising. After first-time student orientation, students are not required to meet with an advisor before registering for classes. This is, of course, more convenient for the student, but it does make it incumbent upon the student to stay on track, which is a task that is beyond some of our students, based on the hours that they accumulate. Often, it is not simply an issue of students not knowing how to formulate an appropriate pathway; frequently it is a change in program of study that slows the student down. At GHC, we have a very healthy and popular Nursing program. Due to this program alone, the college averages approximately 700 pre-Nursing students each year. Only 150 or so will make it to the Nursing program, leaving the others to find a different academic pathway, often with accumulated Nursing credits that are not applicable to other programs of study. Situations such as this highlight the need for intrusive advising and thus the need for programs such as Early Bird advising created at GHC. This program offers students the opportunity to create (with an advisor) an academic plan that spans at least a year, taking into consideration contingency plans, rather than simply choosing courses for the next semester.

Another area of concern is individual course success. A student needs to have all of the information possible about his or her level of performance in a course during the semester so that the student can make a good choice about their possibility of success. To this end, the college has created an Early Warning Program to alert students. Faculty members report student progress at two checkpoints during the semester (in addition to typical classroom evaluation and assessment). If a student is not performing at a level of acceptable success, the student is alerted to this fact and directed to an advisor. Advisors are also alerted and reach out to these students so that they can counsel them. The desire here is to recognize performance gaps and make adjustments before it is too late for the student to be successful.

As faculty and advisors work with students as part of the Early Warning Program, the need for campus or community services is sometimes noted, particularly for some target populations for our CCG effort: adult, veteran, and low-income students with responsibilities outside the classroom. To meet these needs, GHC has developed outreach programming and a database of campus/community partnerships that can provide stop-gap measures to support students who are at-risk for stopping-out of college due to sudden disruptions in their personal lives. Such services meet the basic needs of students struggling with issues related to childcare, financial literacy, hunger, emergency shelter/housing, energy assistance, counseling and medical issues.

Goal 3 - Award degrees to students who may have already met requirements for associate degrees via courses taken at one or more institutions.

Students at GHC frequently bring credits with them from other institutions (such as one of our technical college partners) or change programs of study, as indicated above in Goal 2. Thus, they often accumulate credits without seeing the larger picture of how the credits can lead to a degree. The college has created a program whereby students who have accumulated 90% or more of the appropriate credits toward a degree but have not petitioned for graduation are identified by the Registrar's Office. If the students actually have enough appropriate credits toward a degree (commonly a General Studies degree), those students automatically have the degree conferred upon them. If they are close to a degree, they are counseled as to how best to accomplish finishing their degree. To further ease the conferral process, GHC has eliminated a graduation fee.

Goal 4 - Increase the likelihood of degree completion by transforming the way that remediation is accomplished.

GHC has been at the forefront of transforming remediation over the past three years of the Complete College Georgia initiative. Approximately 50% of entering first-time freshmen at the college require some form of remediation, so facilitating successful exit from remedial courses is among the highest priorities of the college. GHC has had a productive track record of successfully exiting students from learning support courses, ranking high among the institutions in our sector. In fact, for the 2010 first-time, full-time freshman cohort, GHC ranked first in our sector for successfully exiting students upon their first

attempt in learning support Reading and English. Overall, students at GHC successfully exited learning support Reading at 67% and English at 74%. It was thus an easy choice for the college to be in the group of early adopters of remedial transformation. The college piloted the flipped classroom concept two years ago, and is currently bringing the co-requisite model to scale. In fact, the mathematics co-requisite model will be at scale this Fall, a full academic year earlier than is required.

Goal 5) (Restructure instructional delivery to support educational excellence and student success.) – Along with the college’s engagement in new instructional models such as flipped classrooms and the emporium-model, GHC has been moving forward with online and hybrid classes. The college has had a healthy eLearning program for over a decade now, and with that experience has come growth and maturity of the program. Out of the 5,500 students enrolled at GHC, approximately 1,000 of them at any given time are enrolled in at least one eLearning course. Over sixty courses are offered in an eLearning format (online or hybrid). Our eLearning Division has also worked on quality measures, instructional resources, and student success strategies. The college is currently working towards re-joining eCore to expand opportunities for students.

SUMMARY OF GOALS, HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

This section of the update will focus on the four goals that Georgia Highlands College (GHC) has specifically chosen, with the understanding that the overall, mandatory goal (Increase the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG institutions.) acts as an umbrella for the four following goals:

Goal	Provide appreciative and intrusive advising to keep students on track to graduate.
High-Impact Strategy	Early Bird Advising; Early Warning Program plus Outreach Programming
Summary of Activities	<p>Early Bird Advising is designed to help students think about their academic careers in the long-term, not just take a semester-to-semester approach. Formerly, students did not take the opportunity to see an advisor for long-term career/academic advice. We do not assign advisors at GHC. While advising is still a voluntary process, we have created Early Bird Advising and incentivized it. A student who makes an appointment with either a professional or faculty advisor during the three-week Early Bird period each semester and maps out a two-semester course of study is now allowed to register early for the next semester. This incentive has proven extremely effective in persuading students to participate in Early Bird Advising.</p> <p>The Early Warning Program at GHC creates two markers during the semester at which faculty members report on the progress of each student. At week two of the semester, faculty report non-attendance. If a student has never attended class, they are administratively withdrawn, which protects the financial aid and academic standing of those students who have not appropriately dropped the course during the drop-add period. At week six of the semester, faculty report satisfactory or unsatisfactory progress. If a student is marked with unsatisfactory progress, he or she, along with the Advising Office, receives notification by email with instructions on how to reach out to the Advising Office. Students who do not reach out are contacted personally by the Advising Office. The hope is that students will be certain of their status in the courses and can get help if need be before it is too late to either withdraw from a course or to make improvements in their course performance.</p> <p>GHC is actively working to address difficulties revealed by results of the Early Warning Program that are not strictly academic in nature with outreach programming to align support from both campus and community sources. This effort has a special focus on adult learners.</p>
Interim Measures of Progress	<p>Early Bird Advising -- GHC is looking for increased participation from students in the Early Bird Advising program as one key outcome. Longer-term, GHC’s goal is a 5% increase in retention rates for students that participate in EBA and overall 2% increase in graduation rates. To accomplish that, the college will need increased use of our SCORECard degree audit program by faculty and professional advisors as another outcome.</p> <p>Early Warning Program – GHC analyzes the course success vs failure rates of the students who were notified of unsatisfactory performance.</p> <p>Outreach Programming—GHC is putting into place a new model for tracking students identified for this programming and will be setting targets for increased retention, progression, and graduation of these students during 2014-15.</p>
Measures of Success	<p>Early Bird Advising – With the incentive program, student participation in Early Bird Advising rose from 364 in Spring 2013 to 1805 in Fall 2013. These numbers far exceeded our goal of a 20% increase in the number of students meeting individually with a faculty member to discuss their educational goals and complete long term course planning. The intent of these personalized advising sessions is to reduce student registration errors and ensure that more students stay on track to meet their educational goals and degree attainment. In order to accomplish our retention and graduation goals for students participating in EBA, faculty will need to become more proficient in the use of DegreeWorks, referred to as SCORECard on campus. Since all faculty advisors have to use SCORECard to authorize a student for early registration after going through their Early Bird session,</p>

there has been significant numerical rise in the number of faculty users (from 41 users in the 2012-2013 school year to 108 users in the 2013-2014 school year). Our next step of assessment is to analyze the impact of these advising sessions on retention and graduation rates.

Early Warning Program – The success rates of students in those courses for which they were notified of unsatisfactory performance has proven somewhat difficult to characterize. Since we started the program, we have tracked the percentage of students who received a warning, and then went on to withdraw and the success rates of those who remained in the course. The percentage of students who withdrew has gradually gone down (currently at 21%), but for the students who remained in the course, their failure rate is rising (currently at 24%). Our most recent look at the data, comparing DFW rates to ABC rates, suggests that the number of students who go on to pass their courses after an unsatisfactory report has risen gradually over the life of the program. Additional analysis is in progress.

Outreach Program – For the 2013-2014 academic year, GHC engaged 103 campus/community partnerships and over 700 students through outreach programs and supportive services. To assess the impact on retention, GHC has developed a new case management and concierge model for the 2014-2015 academic year, to identify, serve and track at-risk students, particularly adult learners, who are identified by faculty/staff for intrusive measures.

Award degrees to students who may have already met requirements for associate degrees via courses taken at one or more institutions.

High-Impact Strategy Summary of Activities

Automatic conferral of degrees

The Registrar's Office has instituted a program whereby a student information system (Banner) report is run once a semester that will indicate the students who have 90% or more of the appropriate credits toward an associate's degree, but have not yet petitioned for graduation. These credits can have been attained at GHC or transferred in from another institution. If a student has 100% of the appropriate credits, the college confers the degree automatically. This process is being facilitated by the fact that GHC has stopped charging a graduation fee, and thus eliminated that barrier to graduation. If a student is close to the appropriate credits, they are paired with an advisor who will outline for the student the most efficient way to gain the needed credits. The students included in the report are those who are currently attending the college or who have been in attendance at some point in the past two academic years.

Interim Measures of Progress Measures of Success

GHC is tracking the number of degrees awarded through this program.

The college was hoping for a 5% increase (5% based on awards given through this new program) in the number of degrees awarded from 2011-2012 to 2012 to 2013. We increased from 500 to 600 degrees awarded, but only 44 of those were due to the new program. However, that is still an 8.8% increase over the previous year. Degrees awarded via this effort may decrease over time as we identify and award to students who are complete or near complete. The farther from complete a student is, the longer completion requires. For this reason, our target is 10 additional degrees awarded for 2013-14 and 6 more in 2014-15.

Increase the likelihood of degree completion by transforming the way that remediation is accomplished.

High-Impact Strategy Summary of Activities

Acceleration of remediation – co-requisite model

Over the past two years, GHC has been experimenting with new remedial models, based on feedback coming from the Complete College Georgia initiative. GHC has always been proud of the rates at which students successfully exit learning support courses, but faculty at the college are fully aware that testing into learning support puts a student behind on credit-level courses and presents a barrier (especially in mathematics) that some students cannot overcome. With this in mind, the college wholeheartedly began to work with the new models in learning support. First, two years ago, the college piloted the flipped model for the classroom. This tactic gleaned much good information, revealing that the flipped model worked well in Reading and English, but was not well received by the students in remedial Mathematics, because they felt that they needed more direct instruction on content, and thus the students in the pilot Mathematics courses struggled. Accordingly, GHC suspended the Mathematics pilot of the flipped classroom. However, the co-requisite model has been very successful in the pilot stages, both in Mathematics and Reading/English. This model allows a student to take credit-level courses while still receiving the extra attention (or scaffolding) that they need through a remedial required co-requisite course. Taking this pilot success into account, GHC is taking the co-requisite model fully to scale in Mathematics this Fall 2014. Next Fall 2015, the new

combined Reading/English remedial courses based on the co-requisite model will be taken to scale. Allowing all learning support students to jump to the credit-level work while still providing tutoring and special attention via the co-requisite course will accelerate their path to completion of these remedial requirements.

Interim Measures of Progress

GHC has been comparing the student success rates of the traditional remedial courses with that of the newly re-designed remedial courses. Additionally, the college tracks success rates in the subsequent follow-on credit-level course for each remedial area (Mathematics and English).

Measures of Success

In general, success rates in the newly re-designed remedial courses are greater than those in the traditional format. For example, success rates in traditional remedial English and Reading sections hover at 60%; however, the success rate in the re-designed English sections is 71% overall and the rate is even higher in the newly re-designed Reading, at 90% overall. The same is true for Mathematics, with one caveat. Success rates in traditional remedial Mathematics sections are historically lower than English or Reading, hovering at 56%. With the re-designed courses, the success rate for Mathematics has gone from 69% to 41% to 80% over the past two academic years. The drop to 41% was a direct result of implementation of a flipped classroom pilot. As mentioned above, students had difficulty with the subject matter in the flipped environment. When we discontinued that pilot, success rates rose dramatically.

Success rates in follow-on credit-level courses are healthy, but could be improved. For students taking remedial English, 71% of them successfully complete ENGL1101 within two semesters. For students taking remedial Mathematics, 67% of them successfully complete MATH1111 or MATH1001 within two semesters. Our initial target as we continue to pursue the new learning support methods in USG is to increase the pass rates of learning support students in the credit-level gateway classes in math and English to the average pass rate for non-LS students.

Restructure instructional delivery to support educational excellence and student success.

High-Impact Strategy Summary of Activities

Classroom innovation – new models and online courses

In addition to the classroom innovation in remedial courses, GHC has been expanding and improving upon its distance course offerings. The college currently offers approximately sixty courses (making up 190 individual sections) via a distance format, and almost 1000 students each semester participate in some form of distance learning, whether that be strictly online, hybrid, or via our Collaborate system. Despite the fact that GHC has had a healthy online presence for over a decade, the college is always looking to improve what we offer to the students. To that end, we created an eLearning Division to ensure academic quality in our distance courses. This division has spent the last two years working on various quality measures, including a Policy and Procedure Manual, the implementation of Quality Matters (a benchmarking system for academic rigor), the creation of a Master Course program, the improvement of online tutoring (using the Brainfuse program), and the detailed tracking of all data related to distance education (such as comparative DWF rates). While these measures improve our product and ensure quality, GHC also wants to provide the widest variety of options for our students. Hence, the college is poised to rejoin eCore, the distance education system sponsored by the University System. We anticipate that this new model will not only provide additional course offerings for GHC students, but also new teaching opportunities for our faculty.

Interim Measures of Progress

GHC has been comparing student success rates in traditional courses versus eLearning courses for some time now. We will also be monitoring participation in eCore courses to see whether we can find evidence that the additional sections and especially the different course durations available via eCore help students to progress more quickly than would otherwise be possible. Our adult and veteran students, in particular, may benefit from more 8-week offerings.

Additionally we are tracking the numbers of our online courses in comparison with traditional courses to balance the growth of our program with any possible detrimental effects upon our traditional course offerings.

Measures of Success

When GHC began intentionally tracking success rates in eLearning courses, there was a 20% DWF rate in those courses, as compared with a 10% DWF in face to face courses. Although this mirrored trends nationwide, GHC set as a goal to bring the eLearning DFW rates down to 10%, to be equal to the face to face course success rate. During the 2013-2014 academic year, the college achieved that rate so that currently our success rates are similar across the board. With student success rates in a satisfactory range (one target accomplished) and ongoing monitoring of success rates in place, we will be developing additional metrics for retention, graduation, and progression of students in course loads of greater than 50% during 2014-15.

The number of online courses offered at GHC has steadily increased since we began tracking them

in Fall 2009. Students sign up for them quickly and the courses fill regularly. For that reason, our work to even the success rates in the online sections has been critical. There does seem to be a relationship between increasing numbers of students taking online courses and the number of students enrolled in traditional courses. Further analysis will be undertaken when the college re-joins eCore to determine the best steps.

OBSERVATIONS

Georgia Highlands College has not deviated from its original Complete College Georgia plan, and has been building upon the strategies initially laid out two years ago. We have tried to give each strategy enough time to produce results rather than abandoning it before it had time to really flourish. Typically, that would mean approximately three years. The exception to this was the flipped classroom model in remedial mathematics. Once we determined that the students were being adversely affected by the methodology (student success rates for the pilot sections dropped), we stopped offering this format and went back to a more traditional model for mathematics. Particularly in learning support course modification, close tracking and being adaptable has been key.

We have been quite proud of our degrees conferred success as well as the work we have done to bring remedial mathematics course redesign to scale. In a more general sense, the Complete College Georgia initiative has brought a renewed focus on graduation to the college. As a primarily access institution, the college's focus has been largely on transfer, but over the past two years we have come to see the associate's degree credential as more important in the lives of students. We are pushing the student body to graduate, regardless of their transfer status, with the understanding that the additional credential is important in the job market as well as recognition of work accomplished thus far