



# Strategic Planning Steering Committee Report FY21



## NOTEWORTHY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Merit and Need- Based Scholarships

For each of the past 5 years the awards for merit and need-based scholarships have increased dramatically. The original goal of a 25% increase over five years has been more than exceeded. In FY 17, 57 merit and need-based scholarships were awarded; by FY21, that number jumped to 113, a five-year increase of 98%.<sup>1</sup> In FY17, 36 annual scholarships of \$393,981 and 182 endowed scholarships of \$776,737, an overall total of 218 scholarships of \$1,170,718 were awarded; by FY21, 50 annual scholarships of \$486,288, 231 endowed scholarships of \$857,970, and 49 matching endowed scholarships of \$21,369, an overall total of 330 scholarships of \$1,365,627 were awarded.

### Retention Efforts

The University Retention Task Force continuously monitors ways in which the university could improve the student retention rate. A variety of efforts have been implemented including the approval of an additional cohort of Nursing to begin in summer 2022, a BS in Data Science degree to begin in Fall 2022, and a proposal currently being considered by the University System for a BS in Finance. In addition to these academic efforts the GC Parent and Family Programs office implemented software called Campus ESP which has realized 8,071 users and on average generates approximately 27,000 emails per month to university families.

### Improved Graduation Rate

Georgia College's four-year graduation rate was over 50% for the first time in 2020 at 51.2%. Exceeding a 50% graduation rate has been a long-term goal for the university. This rate was maintained in 2021 with the 4-year graduation rate also reaching and exceeding the 50% mark (50.3% in 2021).

### Centralized Advising Model

The Academic Advising Center has changed their philosophy and advising approach to an Appreciative Advising model based on the framework from the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA). This model focuses more on relationship building and empowers students to seek out more connections and opportunities as part of their campus experience.

### GC Journeys/High Impact Practices

Georgia College was recognized as the recipient of the 2020 Campus-wide Award for Undergraduate Research Accomplishments (AURA) by the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR). In addition, GC Journeys won the 2021 Regents' Momentum Year Award for Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Innovation.

### Action Item Accomplishments

The 2016 –2021 strategic plan proved to be GC's first true living strategic plan with annual monitoring and reporting on action item accomplishments. The plan evolved over the course of its lifespan, with action items being modified and five new action items added. Out of 92 total strategic plan action items, 98% (or 90) have been completed, operationalized, or retired. Only two action items—both added in FY21—are ongoing.

<sup>1</sup>Note: An on-going review of funds existing prior to and during the periods above may result in the identification, and reporting, of additional or corrected merit- and need-based scholarships.



## AREAS OF CONCERN

---

### **Mental Health of Students**

Results from the National Collegiate Health Assessment (NHCA) demonstrate some concerning trends regarding the mental health and wellbeing of our students. Hindering efforts to address the mental health of our students is the extremely limited availability of counseling and psychiatric services in Milledgeville and an understaffed counseling services department.

### **Retention**

Georgia College's first year retention rate for Fall 2020 was 77.98%, a 4.35% decrease from the previous year. The Retention Committee reports that this is very likely related to the Covid-19 pandemic. During this same period, first year retention rates among USG institutions in the state university sector experienced a decline of 6.7%, which is 2.35 points more than the GC rate. While the decrease was less than our peers, the Retention Committee cites a lack of reliable and honest feedback from students who chose to leave GC.

### **Diversity and Inclusive Excellence**

It is unclear if many students in GC's potential pathway programs (Early College, High Achievers, Rising MiSTERS, Minority Youth in Business) are recruited and go on to enroll and graduate from Georgia College. Additionally, the Call Me MiSTER program currently has an average of 6 MiSTERS per year, but the target goal for the program is to have at least 20 MiSTERS enrolled each academic year.

### **Centralized Advising**

Staff turnover continues to be problematic in the Academic Advising Center. Many staff who left in 2021 cited reasons related to Covid-19 for leaving their positions.

### **Recruitment and Enrollment in Graduate Education**

Graduate enrollment decreased in Fall 2021 by 7%. This decrease is concerning and suggests that more centralized efforts in recruitment, admissions, and enrollment be a focus to best leverage the potential of the high-quality graduate programs offered at the university.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

---

### **Graduate Education**

More centralized efforts in recruitment, admissions, and enrollment are needed to best leverage the potential of the high-quality graduate programs offered at the university.

### **Mental Health Focus**

Continue to find ways to provide students with the programs and resources necessary to address the growing mental health crisis on campus, e.g., hire additional counseling staff for the Counseling Center.

### **Centralized Advising/Civitas**

Offer continued support for the implementation and reporting of student advising metrics in Civitas to assess and improve both student success and student-advisor relationships.

### **Diversity and Inclusive Excellence**

- 1 Potential pathway programs should be further explored and more understood in terms of their ability to increase underrepresented student enrollment, retention, and graduation. Further, actively recruiting from these programs could result in increasing numbers of program participants enrolling at GC.
- 2 Support growth and further development of GC's Call Me MiSTER initiative including recruitment efforts, marketing, alumni engagement, fundraising, and MiSTER retention.
- 3 Continue to assess the climate for underrepresented students in the next strategic plan. The specific mechanisms by which this is accomplished should be under the purview of the next Chief Diversity Officer and the leaders of the potential pathway programs.

