

University of North Georgia Complete College Georgia Status Report (June 2013)

Updates, Progress and Future Work

For the University of North Georgia, the fact that the first year of our Complete College GA plan has coincided with the work of consolidating Gainesville State College (GSC) and North Georgia College & State University (NGCSU) has provided both great opportunities and challenges to the implementation of our plan. The process of consolidation has given us the opportunity to integrate the goals and strategies of our Complete College GA plan into the fabric of the university and into our strategic planning process. However, the pace of some of the recruiting efforts we proposed in our original plan have been stymied by the need to create totally new publicity materials with a new institutional name and mission, new admission standards, new tuition structures, and also changes in academic programs. Additionally, the website for the institution has been totally rebuilt and is still under construction in many areas.

We have made huge strides in meeting the policy-oriented goals of our plan. In the process of developing our mission statement and tuition structure for the new institution, we adopted a model of multiple pathways that preserves access. Students may choose the associate degree pathway which has admissions standards and a tuition structure consistent with the admissions standards and tuition of the state college sector, or they may choose direct admission into the baccalaureate degree pathway which follows the admission standards and tuition structure of the state university sector. (Goal 2.1, Tactic 2.1.1)

While GSC had been a member of the Adult Learning Consortium (ALC) prior to consolidation, NGCSU was not. In the process of consolidation, work groups reviewed new policies as they were developed to ensure that they met both ALC guidelines and Servicemembers Opportunities Colleges (SOC) guidelines. The University of North Georgia is a member of ALC and SOC now. We have adopted all of the ACE recommendations for credit by examination for CLEP, DANTES, and AP, as well as the awarding of credit for military experience, and developed procedures for the awarding of that credit. In addition, the new institution adopted the use of the FLATS test for foreign language credit, which had previously only been used at GSC. This test is particularly useful in assessing ability and awarding academic credit for languages that are of strategic use in the military but often not taught in the university. The PLA course and the policy for awarding credit by examination or portfolio has been approved by the faculty. We have also established residency requirements consistent with SOC principles for the institution. (Goal 3.1, tactics 3.1.1, 3.1.2) Another of our Goals, expanding online courses and programs by affiliating with eCore, involved substantial work by faculty and staff working groups, first for the faculty to approve the core, and then to build the courses and registration into our new banner system and catalog. We have signed an MOU with eCore, and anticipate offering eCore courses as an affiliate institution in spring 2014. This is one area in which the complexity of consolidating technology has dictated the pace at which we can proceed.

Good, targeted academic advising is a key component of the UNG Complete College GA plan for addressing our Goal 3.2: decreasing excess credits earned by degree completion. In our plan we had micro-level targets identified, but the work we have done in this area has expanded beyond our original vision, attacking the macro-level, addressing the overall advising culture and comprehensive structure of advising at the institution. We have had the opportunity within our institution to “share lessons learned”

across our four campuses, combining the best of what was taking place at our previous institutions as well as those lessons learned from research into best practices in the field, and applying them to the building of a new advising structure. This new structure includes mandatory advising for all students up to 42 credit hours, expanding the Academic Success Plan model used with students Not in Good Standing at the former GSC campuses to all campuses of the institution and to Financial Aid Appeal students, assigning all undecided students to professional advisors in the advising centers who can help them identify a major and avoid excess credits early in their college careers, and working with the deans to develop professional advisors in the schools, particularly for highly competitive majors, so that targeted advising to those students who have declared that major, but are not on track for admission into those programs can be delivered most effectively.

Strategy 4: Restructuring instructional delivery is another area in which we have benefited from sharing successful practices from our previous institutions and are creating structures to support the expansion of those activities across the entire institution. The use of Supplemental Instruction has been expanded to include courses on the Dahlonega campus, targeting in particular STEM courses. In the areas of undergraduate research, service learning, and study abroad, faculty liaisons to each campus have been created and/or professional development activities for faculty have been offered on all campuses to encourage expansion of these programs, including a year-long Faculty Academy comprised of 10 faculty fellows, focused on using engaging pedagogies and high impact practices in the classroom. There were also faculty seminars on civic engagement sponsored on three of our campuses by the AACU Bringing Theory to Practice Project and the UNG Center for Teaching, Learning and Leadership.

In the area of transforming remediation, we have several pilot projects going across all three areas of learning support, and have received permission to eliminate the COMPASS exam as an exit exam for those students who earn an A or B in their remedial course. In math we are continuing with our Quantway Math project, and results from data collected in the first year are very promising. At our Oconee campus, we have piloted two Accelerated Learning English classes, allowing students to complete ENGL 1101 and 0099 in a single semester. We plan to expand this configuration of courses to the Gainesville and Dahlonega campuses after we get more data. Additionally, we recently received an external foundation grant to develop a modularized approach to English 0099 and Reading 0099. Our first summer bridge program begins in a few weeks.

Our work in this first year has led to two new areas of concentration for our plan. Although we included dual enrollment in our original plan, we did not at the time give it the prominence that it deserved. Conversations in the community, with frontline staff, and the response we have received to an interest meeting at our Cumming campus have shown us that we need a strategic plan for the implementation of our dual enrollment program that includes a mix of delivery modes tailored to the needs of the individual school systems and the circumstances of the students. In Forsyth County, we have had much success with a cohort model that brings groups of high school students to our campus for a specific line-up of courses scheduled in conjunction with the high school. In other parts of our service area, the mobility of the students and/or distance from campus is an issue. We are beginning conversations with those school districts to determine which courses they need, and if we can deliver them at the high school or even virtually. We have redefined the role of our Director of Academic Transitions to focus more heavily on building the relationships with the high schools and communicating these opportunities to the students and their parents.

As we have worked internally with the transition of students between our associate and baccalaureate programs, we realized the opportunities offering a reverse transfer policy could present for our students. Now that the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students is located on our Dahlonega campus, we have local expertise that we can take advantage of in creating an effective policy. We have formed a team that is drafting an initial policy. Since our institution now offers the full range of degree programs from certificates and associate degrees to graduate degrees, we can contact those students who left NGCSU or GSC previously without completing a baccalaureate degree and invite them to apply for an associate degree. This would allow those students to earn a credential for the work that they did complete, and provide an opportunity to reach out to them and inform them of the opportunities we now provide to earn credit for prior learning as well. We hope to have the new policy and procedures in place this fall, followed by our outreach campaign to former students. We are developing metrics to measure the impact of these changes in policy.

Although the hiring of a Complete College GA Director was not explicitly stated in our plan, we quickly realized that it would take the full attention of someone to coordinate the large number of tactics included under the five basic strategies across four campuses. We have hired a director whose anticipated start date is July 1, 2013.

Partnerships

In March, we held a briefing on our UNG Complete College GA plan for both internal and external constituents. The purpose of this briefing was to share our plans with educational and community leaders, inviting TCSG and K12 partners and representatives of local industry, in order to begin engaging them in the conversation with us. This summer, under the leadership of President Jacobs, the University of North Georgia with additional support from United Community Bank and McDonalds, is hosting a series of REED (Regional Education and Economic Development) Task Force meetings. The REED Task Force is a collaboration between education and community leaders to identify opportunities and the necessary resources for preparing an educated workforce to sustain economic vitality for our region and state. This information will be used to guide a REED Summit in September, as well as our future work in the UNG Complete College GA plan. We are also engaged in direct conversation with specific industry leaders such as the area hospitals and the economic development offices of area chambers of commerce as a follow-up to the briefing we had in March.

In our outreach specific to our K-12 partners, the change in job description for the Director of Academic Transitions will strengthen our relationship with the high school counselors and principals in our service area in a systemic sustained way that a single conference or summit cannot. We will also work through the professional development committees being run by our School of Education that bring K-12 teachers together with college faculty on issues related to aligning curriculum.

Key Observations and Evidence

In developing our Complete College GA plan, we were working with the data originally provided to us from the USG. Because we were in the midst of consolidating, we had that data broken down by GSC data and NGCSU data. Comparisons of these data demonstrated the very real need to be able to break our future data sets as the University of North Georgia down by campus. Our four campuses have different student populations with different needs, and the delivery of support services and programs is

not uniform across all four. We need to be able to identify which practices are having the biggest impact on each campus so that we can allocate resources and expand those practices appropriately. For example, our Learning Support program is most developed on the Gainesville campus because that is where we have the largest population of students needing that type of support. We have a more modest population in Oconee. When we opened the Cumming campus in the fall of 2012, we did not anticipate having a population that needed learning support on that campus. However, in the first semester we discovered that we do have enough students there with learning support needs to justify offering courses on that campus, and we will begin doing so fall 2013.

All three of these campuses are part of our access mission, and yet the variations in the population and their needs dictate different formats for the delivery of those services. As we pilot the various programs of remodeled remediation, campus location is one consideration in creating the pilot group. Institutional Research has developed systems this year to be able to provide us with data that are broken down by campus. The metrics we identified to be tracked at the campus level include: UNIV ID, DOB, name, gender, race, ethnicity, state of origin, full-time/part-time status, Pell award, credit hours attempted, credit hours earned, math remedial enroll, English remedial enroll, math remedial complete, English remedial complete, math enroll (post remedial enroll), English enroll (post remedial enroll), math complete (post remedial enroll), English complete (post remedial enroll), year one fall to fall retained, year two fall to fall retained, major code, minor code, graduation date, degree code, and degree type. Additional metrics we are adding include transfer status, transfer institution, and joint enrollment status.

The Institutional Effectiveness Office has also identified liaisons with each department responsible for one of the tactics in our plan in order to establish the baseline measures and on-going tracking systems for each of the CCG tactics. One of the primary responsibilities of the new Complete College GA director will be to review and analyze the data coming in from each of the programs along with the campus-based data so that we can identify those strategies that are having the most success, those that are not progressing as anticipated, and make adjustments to our plan as needed.

Another data gathering mechanism that we are very excited about is the institution of a swipe card system to collect student data. Both Student Affairs and University Affairs will begin using a swipe card system this fall to collect data on student participation in student activities and academic support services. Although NGCSU previously had a Saints card that served as an identification card, payment card, and entry to residence halls, its use in collecting data on student participation in academic services was limited. In addition, GSC had no such card. The addition of a second magnetic stripe to the cards makes such data collection possible using the OrgSync platform. This fall, the card system is being implemented on the Gainesville campus. An Incubator Grant from the USG is providing the financial support for us to send our Academic Support people for training in how to use the system this summer, and to purchase the additional units we will need in order to monitor student use of academic support services. Because the OrgSync system can be tied to Banner student records, we believe it will allow us to better assess the impact of academic support services on student progress and retention. Working with faculty and building on the results of a pilot project in the math lab, we believe this card swipe system will facilitate the creation of scalable, timely intervention strategies for students that are struggling, not only in math, but other areas as well.

Sharing Lessons Learned

Two key lessons we have learned in the process of creating our Complete College Georgia plan are the importance of internal communication and the use of data. There were many successful projects at both NGCSU and GSC prior to consolidation that we have built into our plan. However, these successful projects had often remained at the project stage, thus they had limited impact. Those projects that had good data to demonstrate their results were easy to target for incorporation into our plan and for expansion. The issue of scalability is an important consideration in an institution of approximately 15,000 students across four locations. Good data on the campus level is necessary in order to determine which programs should be operating on which campuses. Good data also enabled us to make the case for allocation of resources and to attract external funding to support some of our efforts.

The second lesson learned relates to internal communication, particularly with those in the trenches. As we developed our plan it was important for us to have conversations with those actively engaged in the work across all four campuses. This process helped bring to light some issues that needed to be addressed in the implementation of the plan in order for it to be successful. Conversations with areas such as academic testing, academic advisors, the business office, IT and the Banner group, academic affairs groups and admissions counselors led to tweaks in the implementation of the expansion of CLEP and Dantes testing, the implementation of the Academic Success Plan through the advising centers on each campus, the timing of eCore affiliation and the change in emphasis on our ACCEL program. Data collected in the tutoring labs, studies done by the Director of Learning Support, close work with the office of Grants and Sponsored programs, and conversations with faculty has led to a variety of pilots in transforming remediation and external funding to support those projects. The conversations held broadly across all areas of campus allowed us to leverage the work being done in Student Affairs with swipe cards in order to implement the program for academic support services and reduce costs. In order to achieve our goals for Complete College GA, the plan for any institution cannot remain a static document, completed with boxes checked, and placed on a shelf. It must remain a living, dynamic plan that is flexible, has broad buy-in, and in which data is collected and used to inform decision-making.