Savannah State University
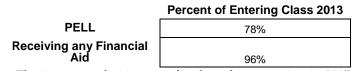
Mission

Savannah State University, the oldest public historically black university in the State of Georgia, develops productive members of a global society through high quality instruction, scholarship, research, service and community involvement. The University fosters engaged learning and personal growth in a student-centered environment that celebrates the African American legacy while nurturing a diverse student body. Savannah State University offers graduate and undergraduate studies including nationally accredited programs in the liberal arts, the sciences and the professions.

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

As the oldest public HBCU in the State of Georgia, Savannah State University continues to educate and develop students who will join the ranks of builders and leaders of communities and societies, regionally and farther afield. The university provides educational experiences grounded in quality instruction and practical experience within the disciplines, through research and scholarship and service to the wider community.

The university has stayed the course in its long history of service to the underserved. Savannah State University currently educates an increasingly diverse student body in a wide range of disciplines at the undergraduate and graduate level. The student body, however, continues to consist of a significant proportion of first generation learners and of students with great financial need. The overwhelming majority (96%) of students at Savannah State University receive some form of financial aid. For the previous academic year, 76% of the entering class was PELL eligible.

	Percent of Entering Class 2013
PELL	78%
Receiving any Financial Aid	96%

The 6-year graduation rate for the cohort entering in 2007 has declined with respect to the previous year. This is specifically the case for graduations at Savannah State University, while the graduation rate of entrants at all USG institutions continues to rise. It must be noted that this cohort has only been slightly affected by the changes adapted in recent years by our CCG initiatives.

	SSU Specific	System-wide
Six-Year Rate for the 2006 Freshmen Cohort	32.1%	38.25%
Six-Year Rate for the 2007 Freshmen Cohort	28.8%	40.2%

As an access institution, SSU is authorized to admit individuals requiring learning support to transition towards completion of a four year degree program. These students are those who have not satisfied our SAT/ACT entrance requirements and have not passed the requisite COMPASS test and have not been adequately prepared for college during their prior education. Such students take learning support courses prior to engaging in college level study. In Fall Semester 2013, these underprepared students comprised 23% of the entering class, a percentage that has remained relatively constant over the past 5 years.

The larger portion of the student body consists of students who are indeed ready for college study. As shown in the tables below, it remains a cause of concern that students requiring learning support are retained at a lower rate than the overall cohort. Also, a lower percentage of these Learning Support students are in good academic standing at the end of each semester. The number of students not in good academic standing has a direct impact on the rate of progression and completion.

FALL 2012 ENTERING CLASS

RETENTION	SP13	FA13	SP14
All Frosh	92.2%	70.7%	62.4%
Learning Support	86.0%	67.0%	51.0%

% IN GOOD ACADEMIC STANDING	SP13	FA13	SP14
All Frosh	78.1%	83.9%	84.9%
Learning Support	54.7%	53.7%	66.7%

The university still faces numerous challenges as we advance our completion goals. Improving outcomes for students in Learning Support is a key dimension of our CCG effort. These include transforming remediation and progression of students requiring learning support classes.

Stimulation of our capable students in classrooms and laboratories is also an urgent priority. Our emergent honors program and undergraduate research elevate education at SSU.

Advising remains a key dimension as we seek to empower all students through advisement and enable them to clearly and successfully follow their tracks to degree completion. The hiring and training of professional advisors will help us to minimize opportunities for students to take unnecessary courses that do not lead to the degree. We are reviewing with the faculty our major programs requiring more than 120 credit hours, with respect to requisite courses. We are also developing policies and practices that will better guide students toward appropriate course selection along clearer, more streamlined pathways toward degree completion.

We are increasing our efforts at early identification of students in academic difficulty. Grades First early alert, used by faculty to identify students who are struggling in their classes, is in its second year. Our work with the Educational Advisory Board and their Student Success Collaborative will provide an additional technology tool to identify and assist at-risk students, and sustain the path to completion.

In the following section, strategies and tactics that advance our CCG goals are discussed.

SUMMARY OF GOALS, HIGH IMPACT STRATEGIES, AND ACTIVITIES

We implement these high impact approaches with one common goal to increase the graduation rate; likewise, we continue to identify erroneous processes that hinder student success and ultimately prevent students from earning their degree. The following approaches will reduce the number of students listed as unsatisfactory academic standing.

1. Use predictive analytics to guide students toward timely completion.
2. Decrease the number of students who are unable to complete their degree due to financial difficulties in their final semester.
3. Increase first- and second-year retention through high-touch academic advising and mentoring.
4. Decrease time to degree and increase access through co-requisite learning support.
5. Increase access and completion for Latino students through targeted recruitment and specialized programming.

Predictive analytics will allow us to identify students who are not progressing to degree. Such reporting will allow the Center for Academic Success to quickly identify, intervene and advise students in academic crisis or otherwise. It also allows us to assess the efficacy of academic programs.

Intensive advising must assure that students attend courses contributing to their degree requirements and reduce instances of inappropriate registration. We have also identified insufficient controls at the Registrar level that permit students to enroll in courses without satisfying the necessary pre-requisites. We continue to examine solutions or reporting in BANNER that will establish such controls. Advising must be the first gatekeeper and the registrar's office plays a key role in enabling all university academic personnel to perform at high levels.

Retention and completion are affected to a significant extent by our success, or lack thereof, in transitioning our Access (learning Support) students. They have represented 20-30% of the respective entering class. Efforts to transform remediation and to focus on successful transition to college level learning remain crucial to our completion agenda.

Our response to the Latino students of Georgia is consistent with our historical mission to serve the underserved. As we served the sons and daughters of former slaves and catalyzed integration as full citizens, today Savannah State University collaborates to provide educational opportunity with Savannah Technical College, Armstrong University and our regional government through the CAMINO Initiative sponsored by the Lumina Foundation.

SUMMARY OF GOALS, HIGH IMPACT STRATEGIES, AND ACTIVITIES

Goal One	**Use predictive analytics to guide students toward timely completion**
High Impact Strategy/Tactic	Implementing Student Success Initiative in Collaboration with Educational Advisory Board
Summary of Activities	Savannah State University is in the early stages of implementing EAB's Student Success Collaborative predictive analytics tool to support academic advising and student degree completion. This tool will impact all students, faculty and advisors on campus by providing data about individual student progress and likelihood of completion; course success and risk profiles; and student at-risk information for entire degree programs and colleges. This year SSU signed on with EAB as a member school and began data extraction and implementation planning.
Interim Measures of Progress	Use of EAB tool by advisors. Percentage of at risk students reached (The tool is working as indicated by the percentage of at-risk students who have been contacted.)
Measures of Success	Assessment metrics will include advisor utilization data for the software tool, student recovery data from at-risk to not-at-risk status, and degree completion rates for students identified as at-risk
Goal Two	**Decrease the number of students who are unable to complete their degree due to financial difficulties in their final semester**
High Impact Strategy/Tactic	"Closing the Gap" Initiative
Summary of Activities	The "Closing the Gap" initiative provides small scholarships of a $1000 or less to students in their final semester who do not otherwise have sufficient funds to enroll and complete their degree. On the average for the past 2 years, SSU has provided 50 closing the gap grants of $1000-1500.
Interim Measures of Progress	Assessed by the number and percentage of recipients who complete their degree in the term of their award

Measures of Success	Increased Graduation rate in six years of less

Goal Three	**Increase first- and second-year retention rates through high-touch academic advising and mentoring**
High Impact Strategy/Tactic	All students under 60 earned credit hours are now assigned to professional advisors in the Center for Academic Success (CAS).
Summary of Activities	All students under 60 earned credit hours are now assigned to professional advisors in the Center for Academic Success (CAS). These advisors mentor students, assist with major and course selection, and provide outreach to connect students with resources that support their success, with the anticipated outcome of increased retention. This year additional advising staff was hired, and plans are in progress to equip the advising team with new technologies to support their work (see Goal One above).
Interim Measures of Progress	Assessment metrics include percentage of students who meet with a CAS advisor and retention rates for first- and second-year students who participate in advising.
Measures of Success	Increasing percentage of students in good academic standing and retention at end of first year and second year.

Goal Four	**Decrease time to degree and increase access through co-requisite learning support.**
High Impact Strategy/Tactic	Restructuring the delivery of learning support
Summary of Activities	In conjunction with the USG's Transforming Remediation initiative, SSU is in the process of restructuring delivery of learning support. Curriculum for combined English/reading courses at both Foundations and Co-Requisite levels was developed and approved this year, and a working group to develop new math courses was established. Efforts are also underway to determine appropriate Area A math pathways for each major and to link these to separate learning support math courses as well. Target implementation for the new English/reading curriculum is Spring 2015, with implementation of new math curriculum and all new policy guidelines by Fall 2015.
Interim Measures of Progress	Increase the percentage of students completing LS requirement on first attempt.
Measures of Success	Assessment metrics will include the percentage of students who complete their LS requirement on the first attempt and the success rate for students in the subsequent core course in their LS area.

Goal Five	**Increase access and completion for Latino students through targeted recruitment and specialized programming.**
High Impact Strategy/Tactic	Cultivating recruitment of Latino students and establishing a culture of programming and support for their success at SSU.
Summary of Activities	To respond to the educational needs of the Latino population in the state and nation, SSU is expanding its recruitment of Latino students and establishing specialized programming to support their success on campus. This year, a Latino recruiter was hired in Admissions; a Coordinator for Multicultural Outreach in the Center for Academic Success was hired; and SSU energized its participation in the CAMINO initiative, a grant-funded partnership with Armstrong, Savannah Tech and numerous local non-profits and businesses. As part of this partnership, SSU hosted cultural awareness training for faculty and staff, as well as the recruitment and admissions event for Latino students and their families. In addition, SSU was awarded one of the USG's Hispanic-Latino College Completion Grant, allowing for the implementation of the SOMOS Tigres College Transition program, a first-year success program for Latino students, including a summer bridge experience and year-long academic and social support. Outcomes of these initiatives are to increase the number of Latino applicants to SSU; increase the number of Latino students who attend SSU; and increase the number of Latino students who graduate from SSU.
Interim Measures of Progress	Assessment measures will include the number of applications from Latino students; the number of Latino students enrolled;
Measures of Success	The number of degrees conferred to Latino students.

Updates and New Initiatives

Savannah State is updating its efforts to improve progression and completion of its students through the following initiatives

Goal Six	**Articulation with 2 Year Colleges**
High Impact Strategy/Tactic	Seamless Transfer from 2 year colleges to Savannah State Baccalaureate Programs
Summary of Activities	Establish articulation agreements with Savannah Technical College and other 2 year institutions so that students have clear roadmap of courses they must complete at the two institutions to achieve the bachelor's degree
Interim Measures of Progress	Articulation agreements with Savannah Technical College with roadmaps for SSU majors with corresponding tracks at the technical college.
Measures of Success	Increase in the number of transfer students

Goal Seven	**Adult Learning and Online Course Delivery**
High Impact Strategy/Tactic	Establishing a Directorate for Adult Learners
Summary of Activities	Processes for evaluation of Prior Learning Assessments will be finalized. Policies have been approved already. SSU will extend its capacity for online course delivery and will increase the number of online courses.
Interim Measures of Progress	Process for Prior Learning Assessment implemented. Increased number of online courses. Development of fully online programs reliant on ECore for students to accomplish core requirements.
Measures of Success	Increase in the number of non-traditional students and transfer students

Goal Seven	**Flexible Degree Program**
High Impact Strategy/Tactic	Bachelor's Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies
Summary of Activities	The BS in Interdisciplinary Studies has been approved by the Board of Regents. Now we must advise students and approve their curriculum of study. Advisement will be localized in the new College of General Studies
Interim Measures of Progress	Number of students enrolled in the interdisciplinary tracts
Measures of Success	Number students graduating with the BS in Interdisciplinary Studies and improved undergraduate completion rates

Goal Seven	**Honors Program**
High Impact Strategy/Tactic	Honors at SSU to respond to the need for challenging curricular and co-curricular experiences among our high achieving students.
Summary of Activities	Appointment of a Director of Honors and advisory body for the honors college. Development of honors track for the core.
Interim Measures of Progress	Enrollment of students in the honors program. Appointment of the director and establishment of advisory committee.
Measures of Success	Decreased attrition between the second and third year.

OBSERVATIONS

Our outreach to Latino students has been a success. We attest to an increase in recruitment of new students. Our SOMOS Tigres summer experience is helping to orient the new cohort of students.

It is too early to see the fruits of our collaboration with the Educational Advisory Board and implementation of the Student Success Collaborative. Engagement with the Educational Advisor Board is a change in our CCG activities toward more robust advising and academic support.

We are increasing our efforts to get full utilization by faculty of the GRADE First early alert.

Reengineering of our learning support promotes faster integration of this student population into college level courses. There are risks to this approach that can be mitigated only by stronger advising and individualized tracking of student progress. To support these students, it is important that our advisors fully utilize the Student Success Collaborative.