# Atlanta Metropolitan State College

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Founded in 1974, Atlanta Metropolitan State College (AMSC) is a public college governed by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia (USG). The mission of AMSC is to provide high quality, low-cost access to post-secondary education, primarily to residents in the metro-Atlanta region. An essential component of the College's mission is to provide a holistic experience for students that integrates academics with a range of co-curricular activities, including experiential learning, life-skills, and civic/community services. A core expected outcome of the College's mission is to graduate a broad demographic of underrepresented, underserved students to achieve their career goals and to make meaningful contributions at all levels of society.

The College's student profile includes a 3,000-student population, with a 6:4 ratio traditional/non-traditional adult learner commuter population, and demographics of 90% African-American, 3% Caucasian, 4% Hispanic, and 3% Asian. Though 25% of students require at least one learning support class, beyond the degree course requirements, AMSC consistently maintains a graduation rate higher than the USG State College average, and leads the State College sector with associate degree graduation rates for African-American males. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the AMSC student population are first-generation college students. Seventy percent (70%) of students receive the Pell grant, and 90% of students receive some form of financial aid. Approximately 30% of students major in Business and Computer Science programs, 28% Social Science, 22% Humanities and Fine Arts 20% STEM and Allied Health programs.

The overall Complete College Georgia (CCG) priority for AMSC is to achieve national completion average rates by 2025: a 22% graduation rate for associate's degree seekers, and a 60% graduation rate for bachelor's degree seekers. The current graduation rate of AMSC is 14.8%. These rates will position AMSC to achieve its second CCG priority: to confer 600 post-secondary degrees annually, by 2025. The 4-year trend in degrees conferred, impacted by CCG efforts at Atlanta Metropolitan State College, is provided in the Figure below.

Degrees Conferred By Year (2025 Goal)
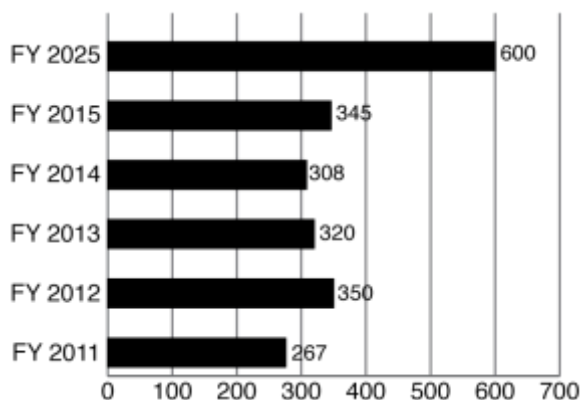
INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 1. Increase College Readiness of Incoming Freshman

How meeting this goal increases completion

Academically stronger students, particularly at the point of admission to the College, generally have higher completion rates because they can better navigate the rigors of college courses, repeat fewer courses, and successfully take a full load of classes, all of which decrease time to graduation. AMSC has employed two strategies to increase the number of college-ready students.

Strategy #1 - Ensuring Academically Stronger Students – Dual Enrollment:

AMSC has expanded its dual enrollment recruitment and outreach efforts to include five additional high schools to

increase the number of dual enrollment students for the FY2015 school year, with the goal of doubling the headcount of dual enrollment students from the previous year, and increasing the number to a target of 300 by FY2016, a 20% increase over the previous year. These efforts include providing transportation for select dual enrollment students who would otherwise not be able to participate. In addition, an AMSC Dual Enrollment Coordinator has been hired to manage these efforts.

Strategy #2 – Expanding BRIDGE Programs – Pre-MAT:
The College has expanded its Pre-Matriculation (Pre-MAT) Bridge program, which provides academic reviews in math, reading, and English for potentially new freshman students who do not perform well on the COMPASS admissions exam. The goal of Pre-MAT courses is to increase the COMPASS performance of students to exempt learning support requirements, which will reduce course requirements and reduce time to completion. The Pre-MAT program is more effective when students enroll in the 11th grade of high school, which gives them the opportunity to receive intervention strategies to close any academic gaps that might exist, before high school graduation. The Pre-MAT success rates average between 60 -70% on the first attempt, depending on the academic preparedness of the student enrolling in the class. This strategy has broad impact because both traditional students and non-traditional adult learners benefit significantly from this program. The target for Pre-MAT is to extend it to all high schools with which AMSC has dual credit programs.

Strategy #3 - Increasing Support for Adult Learners:
Adult learners constitute 42% of the overall student population (approximately 3000 students) at AMSC. Thus, achieving this strategy will have a marked impact on the success of AMSC's CCG initiative. The adult learner population is typically composed of students from varying backgrounds, including military, those requiring job retraining, or those pursuing new career options. Efforts associated with increasing adult learner graduation rates have proven very successful because of the high stakes associated with adult learners completing a degree/credential within a short amount of time. The following strategies to achieve this goal were implemented in FY2015. Strategies to support adult learners include: implementing adult learner "friendly" online courses designed to meet the needs of adult learners and to increase course delivery options, allowing them to consistently take more course credits that are compatible with their work schedule and family life, therefore graduating faster. Prior Learning Assessment, another strategy to assist adult learners, allows adult learners to submit portfolios outlining their prior learning experiences that may qualify for college credit(s), thus reducing the number of courses needed to complete the program of study/major, and reducing time to graduation.

Impact
600 -700, students annually

Needs/Challenges in Achieving this Goal
Although AMSC's Dual Enrollment program is progressing, there are needs/challenges. Among the challenges are (a) students' lack of funds to purchase text books, (b) insufficient preparation by many high school students to meet dual enrollment requirements, particularly meeting SAT and ACT minimum scores, and (c) students' lack of transportation prohibiting their participation. The Pre-MAT course has a fee of $89.00. While nominal, this fee is a barrier for some students to take the course. The long-term goal is to increase the number of fee waivers beyond those the College is currently providing, and through external funding support, expand the Pre-MAT program to more students.

CCG Progress

Goal	High-Impact Strategy Priorities	Summary of Activities Achieved	Measures of Success
Goal 1 Increase College Readiness of Incoming Freshman and Completion of Adult Learners	Increase numbers of dual enrollment students to ensure academically stronger and College-ready students at admission	Expanded service area recruitment/outreach of academically strong Dual Enrollment (DE) Students	**Metric -** Dual Enrollment Headcount **Baseline:** 82 Headcount (Fall 2013) **Target:** Increase DE enrolled by 5% annually. **Results:** Fall 2014, AMSC enrolled 225 dual enrollment students (174% increase); Target Achieved. In addition, AMSC decreased the gap between DE applications and those enrolled to 45%, marking a 35% reduction between 2011 and 2015. **2025 Aim:** 500 DE Students
	Expand the Pre-MAT program to increase the number of students exempting learning support	Expanded the number of students served by Pre-MAT from the previous year and added three new high school sites	**Metrics –** (1) LS Exemption Rate for Pre-MAT Students, and (2) Pre-MAT Enrollment **Baseline:** 350 students enrolled in Pre-MAT with a 70% learning support exemption rate (FY2014) **Target:** Increase headcount by 100 students annually; Increase learning support exemption rate by 3% annually **Results:** In FY2015, 550 students enrolled in Pre-MAT courses, exceeding the headcount target by 57%. The Learning support exemption rate increased to 73%; representing a 3% increase; Target Achieved **2025 Aim:** 1100 Students Enrolled, and a 88% Learning Support Exemption Rate
	Enhance opportunities and academic support for Adult Learners through "adult friendly" online classes, prior learning credit, and expansion of outreach and services for military students	Several Adult Learner "friendly" classes were offered in various disciplines; Adult learners achieved prior learning credits, and a one-stop shop was expanded, offering admissions/ financial aid to military students	**Metrics –** (1) LS Exemption Rate for Pre-MAT Students, and (2) Pre-MAT Enrollment **Baseline:** 350 students enrolled in Pre-MAT with a 70% learning support exemption rate (FY2014) **Target:** Increase headcount by 100 students annually; Increase learning support exemption rate by 3% annually **Results:** In FY2015, 550 students enrolled in Pre-MAT courses, exceeding the headcount target by 57%. The Learning support exemption rate increased to 73%; representing a 3% increase; Target Achieved **2025 Aim:** 1100 Students Enrolled, and a 88% Learning Support Exemption Rate **Metric -** Pass Rates of Adult Learners **Baseline:** 58% pass rate (Fall 2013) **Target:** Increase by 1% annually **Results**: Fall 2014, adult learners earned a 61% pass rate, increasing by 3%; Target Achieved **2025 Aim:** 85% Pass rate

Goal 2: Increase the likelihood of degree completion by transforming the way that remediation is accomplished.

How meeting this goal increases completion

Graduation rates of learning support students lag by 40-50%, when compared to other students. Therefore, any improvement in reducing the number of students in learning support or reducing the time students spend in learning support will have a significant impact on graduation rates and on the number of degrees conferred. The goal of transforming remediation is to reduce the time students spend in learning support. AMSC has successfully implemented two remediation change strategies that have resulted in reduced time students spend in learning support.

Strategy 1 - Remediation Transformation – New Pedagogy:

AMSC transformed the pedagogy and delivery method of Math 0099 learning support classes from a traditional lecture approach to a computer-assisted modular approach. This initiative was the College's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a SACS requirement for reaccreditation. This approach is based on the nationally recognized "Emporium Model," which provides students with a self-paced instructional delivery method driven by their individual learning styles, improving mastery of curriculum content and reducing time for students in learning support classes. The hallmarks of the modular approach that have proven successful in transforming learning support classes have been: (1) students engage in active learning, as opposed to traditional passive learning, and (2) the instructor remains in the class to assist student as a learning facilitator, thus freeing up time for individualized assistance to students within the class setting.

Strategy 2 - Remediation Transformation – Co-requisite Courses/Guided Pathways:

Over the past 1.5 years, AMSC has adopted and piloted a new structure for its Learning Support Program, set forth by the University System of Georgia. This new structure makes two fundamental changes: (1) learning support students who demonstrate potential and motivation are allowed to satisfy their learning support requirements as a co-requisite course(s) with their College level gateway course, and (2) learning support students follow a specific pathway of learning support (or "Foundation") courses that better align and prepare them for their program of study. Collectively, these two modifications reduce graduation requires, improve academic advising, and increase degrees conferred.

Impact

500 students, each semester

Needs/Challenges in Achieving the Completion Goal

Training and adapting faculty and support staff, as well as educating students to learning support transformations are slow, time-consuming, and meticulous processes. The task of re-designing and developing new requirements, implementing, tracking, monitoring, and providing BRIDGE intervention programs is a daunting process that requires significant planning, resources, dedication, and persistence.

CCG Progress

Goal	High-Impact Strategy Priorities	Summary of Activities Achieved	Measures of Success
Goal 2 Increase students earn/attempt credit ratio and reduce time to completion	Utilize more effective pedagogy and delivery methods in learning support classes that utilize an active learning, modular approach, allowing students to progress self-paced, with focused, individualized academic support	A modified Emporium, active learning, modular approach was applied to nine learning support QEP classes.	**Measures of Success** 1. **Metric -** Earn/Attempt Credit Hour ratio **Baseline:** Learning Support QEP earn/attempt credits - 83.7% (FY2014) **Target:** Annual increase of 1% **Results:** Learning Support (LS) QEP earn/attempt credits - 84.4%, increase of 0.8%; Slightly less than target. In addition, LS students, who score 30-36 on the Compass Admissions Test, credit hour requirements were reduced by 3 credits **2025 Aim:** 90% earn/attempt credit ratio
	Implement co-requisite classes to reduce credit hour requirements of LS students and increase their pass rate; A program of study guided pathway models will better align educational program requirements and increase student advising effectiveness	Pilot Math and English co-requisite classes were implemented. These classes provided a more effective implementation of the program of study guided pathway initiative during the fall 2015 semester.	**Metric** - Pass Rate **Baseline** : LS Student Co-requisite Course Pass rate – 65% **Target:** 2% higher pass rate than LS Students not enrolled in co-requisite courses **Results:** 68% pass rate for LS student enrolled in co-requisite course; 3% Increase, Target Achieved **2025 Aim:** 80% pass rate of LS students enrolled in co-requisite courses

Goal 3: Provide proactive, intrusive academic advising to keep students on track to graduate

How meeting this goal increases completion
    The leading factors that delay student graduation are: (1) errors or lack of good choices in course selection, (2) changing program of study resulting in loss of credits, thus extending time to graduation, (3) academic jeopardy, which places students on warning, probation or suspension, delaying completion or causing drop-outs, (4) Financial Aid problems linked to Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements, and (5) lack of early academic support, resulting in an increase in course attempts, earned/attempt credit hour ratio, and delay in completion. The following strategies address these barriers that reduce student progression, and ultimately graduation.

Strategy 1 - Reducing Errors in Course Selection:
    Matriculation - An "Advisor Registration Hold" was placed on each student's academic account after acceptance and each semester, thus requiring students to receive proactive academic advising for their program of study / major before making course selections. Faculty Advisors were encouraged to reach out to their advisees before early registration to encourage students to evaluate and consider their academic plans. During the advisement period, students were encouraged to align their course selections with the approved program of study / major.
    Retention and Progression - Degree Works, a web-based advisement tool, combines degree requirements and the coursework a student has completed into an easy-to-read "real-time" worksheet that allows students to: (1) learn the degree requirements and courses needed for their program of study / major; (2) select the right courses for the next term; and (3) find out, before they change their program of study / major, how the courses completed meet the new program of study / major requirements. In addition, Degree Works allows Faculty Advisors to enter notes, and it records a student's degree completion plan for the student to access electronically at all times. DegreeWorks is used to evaluate degree progress for new students who entered Atlanta Metropolitan State College in fall 2012 or later and for continuing students who have a catalog term of fall 2012 or later.
    Graduation - The Office of Academic Affairs developed proactive, intrusive and structured program maps for full-time and part-time students to keep them on track to degree completion without taking courses unnecessary for their program of study / major. Milestone / critical path courses are identified as a guided pathway for each program of study / major to ensure students take the "right courses" at the "right time" in a specific sequential order for retention, academic progression and timely graduation.

Strategy 2 - Reducing Major/Program of Study Changes:
    A specified Divisional Faculty Advisor is assigned for each student according to his or her Program of Study / Major. This affords students the opportunity to develop a mentoring relationship with a representative of the College who is also associated with their professional academic goals. In FY2015, there were six hundred and fifty-four program of study / major changes by students of which forty-seven of those students changed their program of study / major more than once in an academic year. The College's First Year Experience office processes each major change but office members are not able to meet with each student due to limited staff. One hundred and thirty-four students out of the total number of major changes received academic services from the College's First Year Experience office because their program of study / major was undecided. Furthermore, the process for a student to change his or her program of study / major was amended by the Office of Academic Affairs to include approval by the receiving academic division dean/department head in order to encourage students to make appropriate academic decisions. This effort will allow the College to meet with all students who want to change their program of study / major instead of only meeting with undecided students.

Strategy 3 - Improving Academic Performance:
    Students with GPA's that drop below 2.00 are required to meet with a representative in the Center for First Year Experience and Academic Advising to develop an Academic Improvement Plan. Students are prescribed appropriate academic and student support services such as tutoring and counseling if indicated. Follow up meetings are mandated. In addition, The Office of Academic Affairs has restructured the College's Academic Support Center (now called the "Center for Academic Success") services to directly align with the College's Early Alert and First Year Experience programs so that once an Early Alert signal is triggered, students will receive immediate academic support, providing a wider array of support strategies, including supplementary learning, "real time" workshops that align with student-identified difficult class topics, and an increased academic support staff to include Peer Teachers to assist and expand more services to students.

Strategy 4 - Sustaining SAP Requirements and Retaining Financial Aid Funding:
    A SAP Registration Hold is placed on academic accounts for students who are not making Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) as defined by the Office of Financial Aid (overall GPA being less than 2.0 and/or completing fewer than 67% of their total attempted hours), thus requiring students to meet with a representative in the Center for First Year Experience and Academic Advising to develop an Academic Improvement Plan. Students are prescribed appropriate academic and student support services such as tutoring and counseling. Follow up meetings are mandated.

Strategy 5 - Providing Early Academic Support for Students:
    An Early Alert Student Referral Program has been implemented, which allows faculty to seek additional assistance for at-risk students when a threat to their success in a course is identified. Early Alert is a process that provides students an opportunity to understand "early" if their academic performance is unsatisfactory. The Office of Academic Affairs restructured the Early Alert Program by mandating that faculty members provide "early" graded assignments within the first three weeks of class. These early assignments help acculturate students to the value of "studying" course materials and attendance, especially with first-year students. It is important to note that not all first-year students

understand what is "expected" when matriculating. In FY 2015, attendance issues represented fifty-four percent of the early alert referrals, followed by forty-five percent for late and missing assignments. In addition, faculty members were provided with early alert "recommended" referral due dates to encourage "early" referrals. Early alert referrals indicate if students have academic performance or attendance issues as well as raise a student's awareness of his or her progress. Prior to program restructuring, it was common for students to be unaware of or over-estimate their academic performance in classes, usually after the mid-term grading period. After a referral has been submitted to the Center for First Year Experience and Academic Advising, students meet with a professional academic advisor, develop an Academic Improvement Plan, and are referred to the Center for Academic Success. The Center for Academic Success provides a wider array of support strategies, including supplementary learning, "real time" workshops that align with student-identified difficult class topics, and an increased academic support staff to included Peer Teachers to assist and expand more services to students. Follow-up reports are provided to the referring course instructor for all early alert referrals.

Impact
 1500 Students, each semester

Needs/Challenges in Achieving the Completion Goal

Proactive intrusive academic advising activities to address Goal 3 strategies are time consuming and require dedicated staff. While AMSC continues to grow its academic advising center and initiatives, the needs of students often outpace resources. AMSC uses a combination of Faculty Advisors, Professional Academic Advisors, and support Staff to advise and provide interventions for students. Students in good academic standing receive advising from faculty who are experts in the discipline. Professional Academic Advisors in the Center for First Year Experience and Academic Advising advise students who are in academic jeopardy (grade point average less than 2.0), and those who are considered "high-risk," as identified through the AMSC Early Alert Program, Student Academic Progress (SAP) warning, and other referral triggers on campus. Increasing the number of dedicated staff in the Center for First Year Experience and Academic Advising will reduce the professional academic advisor /student ratio and will allow increased individualized attention to student needs. Increasing or reallocating the College's limited resources to align students' needs with optimal levels of support staff and resource allocation is a very challenging task.

CCG Progress

Goal	High-Impact Strategy Priorities	Summary of Activities Achieved	Measures of Success
Goal 3 Provide proactive intrusive academic advising to increase the student retention rate and degrees conferred	Integrate proactive intrusive academic advising strategies with various institutional academic and non-academic activities, targeting academic jeopardy and high-risk retention and graduation student cohorts	The AMSC Early Alert Program was expanded and realigned with the College's First Year Experience Program to ensure that academic jeopardy and high-risk students are served first.	Early Alert Interventions **Baseline:** 103 Interventions (FY2014) **Target:** 12% Increase Annually **Results:** 218 interventions, 117% Increase, Target Achieved **2025 Aim:** 656 Interventions Annually
	Provide additional academic advising support for high-risk first-time, full-time (FTFT) students.	The AMSC Early Alert Program was expanded and realigned with the College's First Year Experience Program to ensure that academic jeopardy and high-risk students are served first First-time Full-time students participated in proactive intrusive academic advising program activities, which included meeting twice during the semester with a faculty and professional academic advisor, ensuring the accuracy of their degree plans, and addressing other barriers that limits this cohort from progressing to graduation.	2. **Metric** - 1 Year Retention Rate **Baseline:** Retention Rate (FTFT 2013 Cohort) – 42% **Target:** Increase of 3% Annually **Results**: 52% (FTFT 2014), 24% increase; Target Achieved **2025 Aim:** 22%

Overall CCG Progress

Goal	High-Impact Strategy Priorities	Summary of Activities Achieved	Measures of Success
Overall CCG Goal of increasing the number of post-secondary credentials awarded to 600 annually, by 2025.	Utilize multiple strategies outlined in this report, with full engagement of all stakeholders to achieve the CCG goal.	All activities in this report are coordinated and implemented campus-wide to achieve the overall CCG goal.	**Metric** - Degrees Awarded **Baseline:** 308 (FY2014) **Target:** At least 8% Increase Annually **Results:** 346 (FY2015), 12% Increase; Target Achieved **2025 Aim:** 600 Degrees Awarded Annually

OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Observation #1 – Improving the coordination of campus efforts (e.g. communication, planning, assessment, tracking resource allocations) in achieving CCG goals is paramount.

Lessons Learned – Campuses need a centralized process/workflow to engage, inform, and coordinate RPG initiatives/efforts*.*

Observation #2 – Accurate metrics and powerful predictive analytics tools are essential in planning/implementation strategies and maximizing results. CCG planning must be data driven.

Lessons Learned – As a result, AMSC is incorporating analytics tools for future CCG activities. The Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment and Office of RPG will coordinate efforts to create a robust analytics strategy for predicting and tracking student academic needs, monitoring and tracking student success throughout their tenure, and implementing a more effective early alert mechanism for notifying the right people to address specific problems in a timely manner.

Observation #3 – Students' full engagement at all phases of CCG implementation strategies significantly improves results.

Lessons Learned – Strategies, such as the use of students for teacher assistants and peer tutors in the College's supplementary instruction program, have proven very successful. Supplemental instruction is very popular with students in the College's newly restructured Center for Academic Success. The Supplemental Instruction (SI) Program is designed to help students master material in difficult courses while increasing their learning strategies and study skills. Student performance is improved by combining "what to learn" with "how to learn." Peer teachers for the SI Program are available to assist all AMSC students in various courses (e.g., math, English, foreign languages, biology, chemistry and physics).