

RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICY REVIEW TASK FORCE FOR COLLEGE COMPLETION

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA
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In Brief

This report describes the rationale for establishing a Policy Review Task Force, documents the process undertaken, and presents policy-specific recommendations as well as recommendations for reviewing, updating, and communicating policy in a more standardized way.

The task force was charged with developing an agenda for policy change through the lens of college completion and recommending next steps. Few examples exist nationally of a system-level policy review with a completion focus, if any, of this scale. In addition to making the process and recommendations transparent, this report can serve as a tool for other systems and institutions to engage in a similar body of work.

University System of Georgia policies and procedures determine what 31 institutions of higher education may do, what they're encouraged to do, and what they're not encouraged to do. Policy may also constrain or enable the creative thinking required to envision new methods to achieve student learning and success—the type of thinking necessary to make progress toward the state's college completion goals. Policy also, however, serves as a protector of quality, consistency, and equity.

Given policy's role in nearly all aspects of college completion and the need for preservation of quality and consistency in service to students, faculty, and staff, USG Academic Affairs formed the Policy Review Task Force for College Completion to perform the following:

- Engage in analytical and inclusive deliberation within the context of completion
- Develop an agenda for policy change (both priority areas and recommendations, where practical)
- Recommend ways to improve the process through which policy is crafted, communicated, and updated

The task force conducted a systematic review of policies from the Board of Regents Policy Manual¹ and the Academic & Student Affairs Handbook². The policy areas and specific policies selected for review were identified from multiple sources in an inclusive exercise. The task force met between November 2012 and March 2013, and during this time collected over 100 policy submissions; which, after removing duplications, were narrowed down to 65 distinct policy issues. Of these 65, a deeper analysis was conducted on nearly 20 of these issues.

1 <http://www.usg.edu/policymanual/>

2 http://www.usg.edu/academic_affairs_handbook/

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
CHARGE TO GROUP	Transparency in Financial Aid	Student Financial Aid Advisory Committee and the Admissions Directors Committee conduct in-depth review
	Educational Resources	Convene a cross-functional working group to review educational resources policies
	New Models for Learning	Convene an expert group to develop strategy for new models and the associated policy changes; Establish faculty group to define teaching effectiveness
	Remediation, Learning Support, and COMPASS	Establish a working group to perform a thorough, collective update to USG policy and procedures on remediation, learning support, and COMPASS related issues
CHARGE TO USG	Tuition Structure and Fees	USG should consider an alternate tuition structure to improve time to degree, while balancing affordability and a student's ability to succeed with the workload
	Associate's Degrees: Reverse Transfer and Area F	Ensure BOR policy encourages reverse transfer agreements and require institutions to tailor Area F to degree pathways, where appropriate
	Online Collaborative Degrees	Establish policy and procedures that guide formation of online collaborative degrees
	Prior Learning Assessment Opportunities	Create consistent prior learning opportunities for students across institutions
	Payment Plans	Upon evidence of success from the Georgia Tech pilot, seek to expand the option to other institutions to set up payment plans
	Required High School Curriculum	USG should clarify and communicate the purpose of the Required High School Curriculum policy
	Academic Renewal	USG should clarify and improve communication on this policy
FURTHER RESEARCH AND EXPLORATION	Advising	Conduct further research into advising models, guidance systems, and role of faculty and staff

THE REVIEW PROCESS

(1) Gather issues from a variety of sources

Given the scope of system-level policies and handbook procedures, the task force established prioritized areas to review in more depth based on issues identified from the following sources:

- Campus completion plans¹
- Online discussions at GACompletionLab.org
- In-person meetings with various campus groups
- Documents from foundations, other states, and research organizations
- An open electronic submission form at USG.edu²

(2) Develop a standard analytical framework

The task force next developed a review framework to standardize how to think about and discuss each policy area or issue. In developing the review process framework, a search was conducted to determine if examples of this process existed in other states and higher education systems. The limited number of examples suggests few have conducted a policy review of this scale and aim.

(3) Develop an agenda for policy change

From November 2012 through March 2013, the USG policy review task force reviewed over 60 policy issues, determined groupings and the underlying policy problem or opportunity reflected by the issues, and then made twelve recommendations in one of three categories:

- Charge to Group: These issues will be sent to inclusive groups or committees for deeper review and analysis
- Charge to USG: These policies will be addressed and revised internally by the system
- Further Research and Exploration: These policies are in need of further exploration and in-depth research

(4) Make recommendations for a sustainable process

The task force proposed strategies to implement a continual review process to achieve the following outcomes: Increase certainty surrounding policy and improve alignment to campus policy; increase relevancy of policy related to practical needs and the changing environment; and, provide an outlet for experimentation.

Link to Policy Manual and Academic and Student Affairs Handbook:

<http://www.usg.edu/policies>

Link to Electronic Submission Form:

http://www.usg.edu/educational_access/complete_college_georgia/policy_review

(See Appendix for screenshot)

¹ http://www.usg.edu/educational_access/documents/USG_Campus_Completion_Plans.pdf
² http://www.usg.edu/educational_access/complete_college_georgia/policy_review

Background

Statewide Completion Plan:

http://www.usg.edu/educational_access/documents/GaHigherEducationCompletionPlan2012.pdf

Campus Completion Plans:

http://www.usg.edu/educational_access/documents/USG_Campus_Completion_Plans.pdf

Complete College Georgia is a statewide effort to increase postsecondary attainment in Georgia from around 40 percent of young adults with a certificate or higher to 60 percent. Fulfilling this goal will require creative solutions to what are complex issues wrapped in access, equity, and preservation of learning and quality exemplified by University System of Georgia (USG) institutions. Policy may constrain or enable faculty and staff of the 31 USG institutions to develop the programs and services to achieve student learning and success and can even constrain or enable the thinking to envision those programs and services in the first place.

Higher education as a sector has seen unprecedented growth, influenced by surrounding technological change. Major challenges and opportunities are still on the horizon. Policy, as an inherently stable body of work, is in need of a systematic review in order to adapt to this changing environment and to preserve what is important for public higher education in Georgia.

The Policy Review Task Force was formed for the purpose of reviewing system-level policies and procedures and identifying potential enablers or barriers to access and graduation in this changing environment, while protecting rigor, quality, and equity.

Membership

The task force members include a number of campus experts, including faculty, administrators and student representation. Members also represent each institutional sector (research, regional, state university, state college and two year institutions) as well as a range of functional areas. Below is the list of policy review task force members as well as USG staff liaisons.

Policy Review Task Force Members

Ken Harmon, Chair	Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs Kennesaw State University
Kathy Boyd	Associate Audit Director Georgia Regents University
Sandi Bramblett	Executive Director, Institutional Research & Planning Georgia Institute of Technology
Tim Brown	Department Chair & Assistant Professor of Mathematics Georgia Perimeter College (Dunwoody Campus)
Tim Chester	Chief Information Officer University of Georgia
Chris Childress	SGA President Gordon State College
Michael Crow	Director of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment Savannah State University
Cynthia Evers	Vice President for Student Affairs Atlanta Metropolitan State College
Lee Fruitticher	Vice President for Fiscal Affairs Gordon State College
Julia Manzella	Economics Graduate Student Georgia State University
John McElveen	Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Management Columbus State University
Doug Tanner	Director of Financial Aid Valdosta State University

USG Supporting Staff

Linda Noble	Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Art Seavey	Director for Policy & Partnership Development
Brandee Tate	Policy Analyst
Lesley Anne Fenton	Project Coordinator
Virginia Michelich	Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Achievement
Teresa Betkowski	Interim Assistant Vice Chancellor for Transitional & General Education
Joyce Jones	Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
Susan Campbell-Lounsbury	Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research & Policy Analysis
Felita Williams	Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Planning
Jon Sizemore	Assistant Vice Chancellor for Distance Education

Process

In developing a review process, the task force examined external resources such as the HCM Strategy Labs¹, Complete College America, the Lumina Foundation, Southern Regional Education Board and literature from academic journals. In addition, a search was conducted of other states and higher education systems to determine examples of this process in other places. The limited number of examples suggests few have conducted a policy review of this scale and aim. The policy review task force's charge was to:

- Engage in analytical and inclusive deliberation in the context of completion
- Develop an agenda for policy change (both priority areas and recommendations, where practical)
- Recommend ways to improve the process through which policy is crafted, communicated, and updated

This section describes the review process in the form of four main steps: (1) Gather issues from a variety of sources; (2) Develop a standard analytical framework; (3) Develop an agenda for policy change; and, (4) Recommend ways to improve the process through which policy is crafted, communicated, and updated.

(1) Gather issues from a variety of sources

Given the scope of system-level policies and handbook procedures, the task force established a priority of areas to review in more depth based on issues identified from the following sources:

- Campus completion plans
- Online discussions at GACompletionlab.org
- In-person meetings with various campus groups
- Documents from Foundations, other states, and research organizations
- An open electronic submission form at USG.edu

(2) Develop an Analytical Framework

An analytical framework is a set of criteria to map against policy issues and potential changes to policy. The framework can be used to guide discussion, make deliberations transparent to others, and to aid in development of recommendations through comparing projected outcomes of potential policy changes in a standard fashion. Such a framework also begins the process of developing a long-term structure for reviewing policy. For this initial review process, the task force developed a framework that includes four main criteria:

- Impact on Completion: Effect on readiness, access, retention, progression and graduation
- Distribution and Equity: Affect on particular sectors, populations, communities, regions, and students in comparison to others
- Implementation Feasibility: Potential barriers to implementation such as costs, deficiency of resources, legality, or time
- Implication and Risks: An assessment of risk and likelihood of success

Link to Electronic Submission Form:

http://www.usg.edu/educational_access/complete_college_georgia/policy_review

(See Appendix for screenshot)

¹ <http://www.collegeproductivity.org/page/strategy-labs>

REVIEW PROCESS

GATHER ISSUES FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES

Campus Completion Plans
Completion Lab
Campus Administrators
Literature and National Partners
Web Form



DEVELOP ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Impact on Completion
Distribution and Equity
Implementation Feasibility
Implication and Risks



DEVELOP AN AGENDA FOR POLICY CHANGE

Establish List of Policies
Prioritize Policies Based on Impact and Feasibility
Categorize Draft Recommendations



SUSTAINABLE PROCESS

Standardized Process for Creating Policy
Standardized Process for Communicating Policy
Standardized Process for Updating Policy

Link to Policy Manual and Academic and Student Affairs Handbook:

<http://www.usg.edu/policies>

(3) Develop an Agenda for Policy Change

The task force focused on the Board of Regents Policy Manual and the Academic and Student Affairs Handbook, with the understanding that the scope of policies with “impact on completion” may extend in cases beyond these documents. The task force was originally presented with the following 13 areas as a way of organizing system policies and procedures.

1. Institutional Reporting
2. Admissions and Entrance Requirements
3. Transitional Education (Learning Support, Dual Enrollment, AP/IB)
4. Transfer and Articulation Intra-and Inter-System
5. Financial Aid, Tuition, Fees and Payment
6. Registration, Scheduling, and Enrollment Management
7. Quality, Learning Outcomes, Content, Assessment, Certification
8. Faculty Organization and Development
9. Academic Programs
10. Student Support Services
11. Instructional Modes and Spaces
12. Student Academic Requirements and Student Incentives
13. Continuing Education

After gathering issues from a variety of sources, the task force focused their work around the following eight areas. Then, after consideration of impact and feasibility, the group narrowed the focus to the four bolded areas.

- **Admissions and Entrance Requirements (included learning support)**
- **Financial Aid, Tuition and Affordability**
- Registration, Scheduling, Enrollment and other Logistics
- **Transfer and Articulation (a precursor to new model issues)**
- Institutional Reporting and Data
- **Student Populations and Support Services**
- Credit Hours and Degree Completion
- Other (included academic deficiency and policies to be referred)

In an iterative process of discussing the broad areas and examining specific issues already identified within each area, the task force used two criteria: impact on completion and implementation feasibility to establish a candidate list for a policy change agenda.

From those areas, specific issues were then prioritized using a low to high axis of projected outcomes with the same two criteria: impact and feasibility, creating a four-quadrant matrix.

- High Impact, High Feasibility – This was the optimal category and policies placed in this category should be acted upon now.
- High Impact, Low Feasibility – These were identified as having a strong impact but require long-term planning
- Low Impact, Low Feasibility – Policies in this category were unlikely to be acted upon
- Low Impact, High Feasibility – These policies would be addressed as time permits





The matrix exercise resulted in a map of issues that provides a picture of the challenges and opportunities for completion as seen through a specific lens. The issues, however, are in many cases interrelated and when examined holistically and through the analytical framework lead to more robust problem definition. That is, moving from the matrix to recommendations is not necessarily a one-to-one relationship of issue to recommendation.

As a diverse body that is charged with developing an agenda for policy change, the task force is not meant to draft specific policy changes but to elevate certain issues, provide guidance for a change, and to ensure that change happens. Practically, these guidelines led to recommendations that fell into categories with one of three broad designated next actions:

- Charge to Group: These issues will be sent to inclusive groups or committees for deeper review and analysis
- Charge to USG: These policies will be addressed and revised internally by the system
- Further Research and Exploration: These policies are in need of further exploration and in-depth research

(4) Recommend ways to improve the process through which policy is crafted, communicated, and updated

The task force made recommendations about how to sustain a policy review process moving forward. This sustainable process involves standardizing the use of a framework to decide both when and how to review and update policy. These recommendations also suggest how to create an internal infrastructure to maintain this process.

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	FURTHER RESEARCH AND EXPLORATION	Advising

Recommendations

The Policy Review Task Force conducted an in-depth review of the selected policy issues, leading to the summary recommendations shown on the previous page. These policies were placed into one of the three recommendation categories (Charge to Group, Charge to USG, Further Research and Exploration). Each policy issue was reviewed using the criteria of the framework (Impact on Completion, Distribution and Equity, Implementation Feasibility and Risks and Next Steps).

CHARGE TO GROUP

Policy areas included in this category will have a substantial impact on completion but require strategic planning to determine the next course of action. These issues should be sent to inclusive groups or committees with appropriate expertise for deeper review and analysis. Where the scope of the issue matched the scope of an existing group, the policy was referred; however, given the complexity and long-term implications of many of these issues, most call for new or temporary groups to be formed.

1. Transparency in Financial Aid

Impact on Completion

Financial aid procedures and the notification process are cited as complex and confusing for students¹. A cumbersome financial aid process not only is difficult for students to navigate but also may complicate the larger issue of affordability, a substantial barrier for many students to access and continue attending postsecondary institutions. Clarifying the financial aid process will ease the burden many students feel when attempting to secure financial assistance.

Distribution and Equity

This has an impact on most students and particularly those who are in need of financial assistance to fund their education, by definition, low-income students and often first generation students.

Implementation Feasibility and Risks

While the complexities of financial aid are often related to external factors including state policy (e.g. Hope Scholarship) and Federal policies and practices, communication and support offered to students working with financial aid primarily falls under USG and USG institutional purview. Common tools and standards for communication and processes, although perhaps costly to develop, may be used or adapted across all institutions. Changes to financial aid policies and procedures, however, is an inherently high risk area and should be researched thoroughly prior to implementing any change to determine the specific risks to students and ensuring conformity with external policies.

¹ (On Page 3) A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education. 2006. <http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/reports/pre-pub-report.pdf>

Next Steps

The USG Policy Review Task Force recommends that two existing Regents' administrative committees, the Student Financial Aid Committee and the Admission Directors Committee be charged to work together to:

- Conduct a more in-depth review and analysis of financial aid procedures, within the context of enabling completion
- Devise methods for ensuring the process is clear across USG
 - Explore the possibility of standardizing the language used in financial aid policies and procedures
 - Consider new methods (or construction of common content) for issuing award letters and notification letters
 - Assess adoption of the Financial Aid Fact Sheet recently released by the U.S. Department of Education or other standards

2. Educational Resources*Impact on Completion*

In addition to tuition and fees, the cost of academic textbooks and other course materials may create cost barriers to some students. The cost of these materials can quickly accumulate over the course of a student's academic career and surveys show the cost to be a financial burden¹. Some institutions or individual courses may have policies or practices in place that requires students to purchase a textbook at a university bookstore when the price may be lower with another vendor. There are also circumstances in which a student needs to purchase course materials prior to the disbursement of their financial aid funds, preventing a student from buying these necessary materials in a timely manner, if at all. The advent of electronic course materials bundled with physical materials creates issues for reuse. Further, with the movement toward open educational resources nationally² and greater availability of such content through growing shared repositories, USG and its institutions could significantly reduce student costs by supporting faculty to choose and use certain low-cost or "open" resources, where appropriate.

Distribution and Equity

Institutionalizing access to open resources, which are free of charge or low cost to students, could be substantially beneficial for those struggling to secure necessary course materials and resources. Increased use of open educational resources would benefit all student populations.

Implementation Feasibility and Risks

This could have a high impact on costs for students but may prove difficult to arrive at an agreed change. Such a policy change would affect a number of stakeholder groups internal and external to USG and its institutions, potentially with financial implications. The focus; however, should be kept on student affordability and success, which includes selection of best quality resources to support learning.

1 <http://www.publicagenda.org/files/theirwholelivesaheadofthem.pdf>

2 (California Legislative Bill) http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=2011201205B1052. (News Article) <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/09/california-takes-a-big-step-forward-free-digital-open-source-textbooks/263047/>

Next Steps

Given the cross-cutting role of educational resources (academic, financial, information technology, libraries, etc.) the task force recommends a working group be formed to investigate the following issues:

- Update the USG policy on textbooks¹
- Determine practices and/or a policy floor for institutions regarding textbook/resources selection and purchasing processes, including relationship to financial aid and on campus bookstores
- Examine the possibility of encouraging or providing preference to open educational resources, where practical
- Make recommendations for faculty involvement in the production or adaptation of educational resources, including emerging resources like Massive Open On-line Courses (MOOCs)

3. New Models for Learning*Impact on Completion*

New Models as discussed by the task force encompasses the three following operational definitions:

1. Movement from inputs of the learning process to interim and outcome-based measures
2. Envisioning the role of the “home” institution as only one of many potential instructional sources of learning and knowledge
3. Reinforcement of general education as a value unique to higher education

Various methods of instruction already exist throughout USG campuses, from lecture, to lab, to online, and to experiential. System and institutional policies and practices, however, largely focus on inputs to the learning process, rather than progress measures and outcomes. USG institutions have made recent strides in the development of learning outcomes for general education and core courses² and there is increasing capacity and interest in alternative models including prior learning assessment and competency based education. In a sense, all USG institutions currently participate to some degree in outcomes based models of learning through programs like Advanced Placement (AP) and the College Level Examination Program (CLEP).

The concept of new models also includes breaking down institutional walls—that knowledge in general may be acquired from institutions or non-institutional entities outside the USG. These may be formal or informal arrangements for both faculty and students to benefit from the growing availability of educational resources, assessments, and whole courses (e.g. maturing MOOCs).

Finally, as a system of higher education, much importance is placed on the personal and professional value of a general education and the common basis it provides for students. Preservation of such is important to protect the quality promised by USG institutions and the unique role the USG plays in building a more educated state. However, construction of a general education curriculum often takes place based on a zero sum game for competing disciplines. A growing alternative approach is one that focuses on the knowledge and skills all students should have, then next determine and design the most appropriate learning experiences³.

¹ BOR Policy 3.10 <http://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section3/C345>

² BOR Policy 3.3.1 <http://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section3/C338/?highlight=learning+outcomes>

³ See Appendix for supporting resources on new models

New models hold the promise to more accurately account for quality; decrease time to degree completion; improve student success through providing intervention and reinforcement points; and in the long term lower instructional costs with the intention of reinvesting in student supports and affordability.

Distribution and Equity

New models for assessing learning would have an impact on all students across demographic groups and every institution. An equity argument could be made that students directly from high school and those enrolled in AP specifically are afforded more new model learning opportunities than adults or those students who do not, or potentially cannot, engage in the same opportunities. Currently, new models that focus on prior learning assessment may benefit adults with work experience; but, an expansion of new model opportunities would benefit all students, providing other avenues to obtain instruction and progress toward a degree. Reinforcement of general education and an improvement of student success in this area would by definition benefit all students at all institutions.

Implementation Feasibility and Risks

This area of higher education has seen recent strides, improving the feasibility of implementing ideas that were not under much discussion even a year ago. USG institutions have been on a path toward focusing on outcomes and have a strong basis to start from core curriculum courses. Much progress has been made building capacity at select institutions to perform a subset of new models including portfolio assessment and challenge exams. USG and Columbus State University were awarded a Next Generation Learning Challenges grant to explore a whole new degree program model¹. Georgia Tech has become a national leader on the MOOC stage² and Georgia State University was one of the first public institutions to announce the intention to determine methods to integrate MOOC experiences³. Externally, there is a chorus of voices examining alternatives to the credit hour⁴ and open indications from the Federal level to entertain different forms of learning measures.⁵

The risk is both in inaction and stifling of experimentation. It is important to bring these efforts together and to determine quality control procedures and guidelines, without compromising the investigative and entrepreneurial spirit already employed by institutions, faculty, and staff. General education, as an area that touches on many disciplines must involve inclusive and thoughtful deliberation.

Next Steps

The USG policy review task force has three sub-recommendations:

1. Convene an expert group comprised of members internal and external to USG. This group should be charged with the following:
 - Enable institutional experimentation via policy and procedures
 - Determine quality assurance measures and an agenda to evaluate effectiveness
 - Accommodate movement via policy toward outcomes based models
 - Determine methods and implications of evaluating and providing benefit or credit for knowledge gained outside USG institutions
 - Determine long term goals and a plan to provide more consistent new model opportunities to students

1 <http://www.nextgenlearning.org/grantee/board-regents-university-system-georgia>

2 <http://www.gatech.edu/newsroom/release.html?nid=170831>

3 <http://www.gsu.edu/news/63587.html>

4 http://higheredwatch.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/Cracking_the_Credit_Hour_Sept5_0.pdf

5 http://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/files/FINAL%20GEN%2013-10%20Comp%20Based%203-14-13%20282%29.pdf

- Envision faculty and staff roles in a higher education environment based on new models
2. In conjunction with the work of this group the task force challenges a subset of the General Education Council and other institutional representatives (as well as respective Area F discipline area committees as appropriate) to examine the following:
- A plan to build on learning outcomes already identified
 - Employment of new models in the core
 - Preservation of transferability in the core
 - Re-examine the purpose and construction of Area F and its impact on completion
 - Engage in a process to re-examine the core curriculum from a student perspective
 - Determine alternate ways to achieve learning outcomes and overlay requirements other than by credit hours in distinct disciplines
 - Review alternative budget and staffing structures to facilitate implementation of the new approach, should it be adopted
3. The Policy Review Task Force also endorses a request by the USG Faculty Council to establish a faculty group to define teaching effectiveness and the metrics used to evaluate effectiveness. New models, combined with increasing availability of data and the systems to compare data, provide new opportunities to document and assess student success. This data-rich environment, however, must be carefully navigated to ensure valid conclusions are drawn and the right decisions are made.

4. Remediation, Learning Support, and COMPASS

Impact on Completion

A student is at greatest risk in his or her first year of college. System level policy and guidelines in handbooks currently prescribe, primarily through the use of COMPASS, what is college-ready and subsequently in what educational experience students will be placed. For many students this means placement into an even higher risk experience by requiring completion of non-credit bearing courses prior to even enrolling in actual college-level courses. Nationally, this model has resulted in dismal student success. Indications point to the culprit being the structure, not necessarily to an issue of students that are not “college material.” The concept of remediation also relies on a standard cutoff for college readiness that results in either a “yes” or a “no” while student learning is more complex. A philosophical shift toward pushing students to mastery and providing support as needed may result in improved completion over the current model that has only two options: remediation or no remediation. Data from Complete College America shows that 37 percent and 18 percent of Georgia freshmen are enrolled in remediation at two-year¹ and four-year institutions, respectively. Of this population, only 7 percent graduate in three years from a two-year institution² and 24 percent graduate in six years from a four-year institution³. Improvements in the structure of learning support and enabling new methods could result in a high impact on completion.

Distribution and Equity

Any changes to learning support and COMPASS policies will have a significant impact on applicants and current students who struggle academically to meet the minimum requirements. The current structure of learning support places a financial burden on students as they are required to pay for additional courses as compared to other students.

¹ Includes technical colleges

² Includes technical colleges

³ http://www.completecollege.org/docs/Georgia_remediation.pdf

Although nearly all institutions offer some form of learning support, the issue is particularly important for institutions that provide needed access and operate in regions of the state with lower college readiness performance.

Implementation Feasibility and Risks

A system policy change would result in significant program change at the institutional level. Given the aim of affordability, new methods for learning support would also require institutions to reinvest pre-enrollment resources. Models already exist nationwide and there is much work to build from based on the Complete College America Transforming Remediation grant¹ and the ongoing work of the Math Task Force to establish a template model for a select learning support population. As with many issues, the impending change to the funding formula makes this an opportune time to proceed with changes.

Next Steps

The USG policy task force recommends establishing a working group to perform a thorough, collective update to USG policy and procedures on remediation, learning support, and COMPASS related issues, especially to:

- Rethink the label of “remedial” and associated student designations under policy
- Improve institutional flexibility in use of COMPASS, currently a cut-off and pre-enrollment instrument²
- Move away from pre-enrollment, exit-rule based, non-credit bearing models
- Move toward a diagnostic-based continuum of learning support levels
- Align system and institutional policy with upcoming Common Core and PARCC work
- Update course replacement policies to match desired learning support model³

CHARGE TO USG

These policies have a substantial impact on completion and can be addressed immediately through policy changes that USG should make.

5. Tuition Structure and Fees

Undergraduate tuition policy (#7.3.1.1) prescribes a specific structure for institutions to follow: Full tuition rate for students taking 15 credit hours or more, and a per credit hour rate for less than 15. Exceptions are made for Georgia Tech and University of Georgia only to charge a flat rate for any hours above 6 “...to encourage students to graduate in four years.” Distance education programs have more flexible rules under the “eTuition” policy (#7.1.3.6).

In terms of completion, however, a student pursuing a bachelor’s degree will not finish within four years unless 15 hours of credit are earned every semester. Policy, as written, in the short term may create a financial incentive to pursue fewer credits than necessary, with long-term implications. The tuition structure then is important to timely graduation. Further, as online education becomes more commonplace, including online options provided to on-campus students, the separation of tuition and eTuition may become less and less tenable.

1 <http://gov.georgia.gov/press-releases/2011-08-04/deal-announces-1-million-grant-complete-college-georgia-initiative>

2 http://www.usg.edu/academic_affairs_handbook/section2/handbook/C769/#p2.9.1_administrative_procedures_for_learning_support_programs

3 Academic and Student Affairs Handbook Policy 2.9 http://www.usg.edu/academic_affairs_handbook/section2/C769; BOR Policy 3.3.2 http://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section3/policy/C338/#p3.3.2_learning_support_programs

Recommendation: USG should consider an alternate tuition structure to improve time to degree, while balancing affordability and a student's ability to succeed with the workload. This structure should include an overall simplification of options available to students, and potentially a requirement that students are presented with the outcomes related to total cost and time to degree depending on choice of tuition structure.

To enable new learning models, USG should provide institutions the opportunity to pilot, as a carefully evaluated undertaking, alternative tuition structures that may limit reliance on the semester schedule and credit hour unit. This of course, would have implications for financial aid and must be designed with student ability to receive aid in mind. The viability of eTuition as a continued separate structure in light of expanding distance education options should be reviewed.

6. Associate's Degrees: Reverse Transfer and Area F

The practice of reverse transfer involves awarding an Associate's degree from a student's previous institution once that student successfully completes requirements at the current institution. The conferral of an Associate's degree can serve as a motivating intermediary marker and can also provide students a credential should their pursuit of a Bachelor's degree end unsuccessfully. From 2010 to 2011, over 3,800 students with 30 to 75 hours of credit transferred from a USG Associate's degree program, without earning an Associate's degree. The potential for high impact on completion rests in redefining the value of an Associate's degree and providing students consistent opportunities to be awarded the degree when credit is due. As envisioned, this primarily impacts students entering a two-year program that then transfers to a four-year program; however, it could be envisioned as a larger effort to provide students an intermediary marker in four-year programs, should they not finish the bachelor's degree.

Implementation wise, the transferability of the core and Area F provides a common enabling academic policy. Technically, the task of auditing progress toward degree based on the transferring institution's policies, flagging eligible participants, then sharing that information across institutions is unfeasible to be done at a system perspective. However, there are examples of institution-to-institution agreements already in place awarding reverse transfer degrees on a small scale.

Recommendations:

Modify policy to remove any uncertainty and to increase incentive for institutions to enter into reverse transfer agreements for the benefit of students (Policy # 3.3.5.1 and AA Handbook #2.3.5).

Require institutions and respective discipline area committees to tailor Area F, where appropriate for the institution, to degree pathways, making the Associate's degree a standalone degree rather than primarily a marker for transfer.

Engage in an effort to authorize four-year institutions to award Associate's degrees on a limited basis, if desired, as a retention strategy or upon unsuccessful exit of a Bachelor's degree program.

(Long-term) When resources and technical systems make reverse transfer on a central scale more feasible, pursue a requirement for reverse transfer practices among institutions.

7. Online Collaborative Degrees

Online collaborative degrees provide students, particularly those who are returning to school, flexibility in course scheduling and offerings. This flexibility may encourage timely completion. Collaborative programs also allow for creation of niche expertise, providing institutions the opportunity to build strong, unique academic specializations.

System policy does not proscribe or endorse collaborative degree programs, except in as much as it relates to limiting a separate technology fee (Policy #7.3.4.2), and with regard to more traditional joint degrees (AA Handbook # 2.3.10). This absence of policy creates uncertainty and may result in different interpretations of other System policies as they relate to collaborative programs.

Recommendation: Establish guidelines in policy and procedure for online collaborative degrees, setting a standard for a program review process and a model for sharing of credit hours.

8. Consistent Prior Learning Assessment Opportunities

While certain campuses have made strides in prior learning assessment, student opportunities are inconsistent, or in cases unavailable, across institutions. As an interim step to Recommendation #3, "New Models for Learning," the opportunity exists to expand and standardize prior learning assessment opportunities. Further, while the bulk of advancements have taken place due to the efforts of the Adult Learning Consortium, the use of alternate learning assessments could be recast as a viable pathway to credit for any student. For example, applying provisions in AA Handbook #2.16 to a population broader than those with military service.

Recommendations:

Standardize and expand learning assessment options for all students.

Define learning assessment options institutions should make available to students including appropriate methods encompassing Advance Placement, International Baccalaureate, College Level Examination Program, DANTES, ACE equivalencies, portfolio creation, and challenge exams, among others.

Encourage institutions to develop a clear mapping of credit for students based on identified options for learning assessment.

Clarify number of hours institutions are allowed to accept based on these alternate learning assessments aligned to SACS policies.

9. Payment Plans

Installment payment plans provide students with financial flexibility, critical for those otherwise struggling to make timely payments. Payment plans require technical and financial infrastructure and careful navigation of state policies, including gratuity issues. Currently, Georgia Institute of Technology has implemented a payment plan option as a pilot program.

Recommendation: Upon evidence of success from the Georgia Tech pilot, seek to expand the option to other institutions to set up payment plans.

10. College Preparatory Course/Required High School Curriculum

The Required High School Curriculum (RHSC) policy is a larger stakeholder discussion that involves Georgia Department of Education, local education groups, the Technical College System and the Governor's Office, among others. There is regular discussion on the number and type of math courses, for example, in coordination with GA Department of Education.

While a specific need to change this policy outside ongoing conversations did not surface, there seems to be confusion. For example, a claim was made that policy does not allow credit for those college level courses taken to remedy a high school deficiency.

However, Policy # 4.2.1.1 reads: "The college credit courses used to satisfy RHSC deficiencies will count as degree credit, but the hours earned will not count toward a student's degree program. The student must earn a "C" or better in each of these courses."¹ If the issue is the desire in a small number of appropriate cases to count hours toward a degree program, then perhaps USG should determine the impact of providing institutions the option to waive this policy on a case-by-case basis. While such issues primarily affect out of state students, transfers, and students not directly from high school, the ability to reduce unnecessary credit hours is of significant impact to these students.

Recommendation: USG should clarify and communicate the purpose of the required high school curriculum policy, seeking approval avenues for institutional flexibility for a small number of cases.

11. Academic Renewal

A student who has returned to school after a five-year or longer absence may have left school with a low grade point average. With the Academic Renewal policy, these students may have their previous GPA waived (Policy # 3.5.3). Based on the identified sources of policy issues, there appears to be confusion about if such a policy exists. Clear communication of this policy to institutions and students would be of interest to adult learners.

Recommendation: The USG Policy Review Task Force recommends clarifying and improving communication on this policy, especially as it relates to potential returning adult students.

FURTHER RESEARCH AND EXPLORATION

12. Advising

A systematic advising approach could be difficult to implement because advising needs and costs vary among individual students and institutions. There is strong evidence to suggest that advising is a critical component of student success and could be an area of high impact on college completion. However, there are a wide variety of advising models, from those that are faculty and discipline-driven, to those that use professional advisors and guidance systems. It is unclear as to the role, or if there is a role for system policy, but it may involve designation of roles of faculty, staff, and others in terms of expectation for involvement in the advising process or incentives for creation of degree maps for students.

Recommendation: Conduct further research into advising models, guidance systems, role of faculty and staff, and a cost-benefit analysis to compare the potential increase in advising costs to the additional benefit of increased completion rates in the long run.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In their discussions, the members of the task force emphasized three areas supporting college completion policy issues, but not necessarily aligned to a specific issue or charge. These include:

Student Populations—ensuring policies do not adversely impact certain student populations, especially those with relatively lower completion rates.

HOPE Scholarship—although understanding this program is outside the purview of USG policy, issues of caps and especially attempted hours were of regular discussion.

Data—policy change should be based on data and often insights from analytics can highlight unanticipated areas for change. State data collection, sharing, tracking, and reporting is imperative to improve college completion.

TOWARD A CONTINUOUS REVIEW PROCESS

In addition to reviewing specific issues, the task force was charged with making recommendations to sustain the process. To structure this discussion, the task force identified:

1. Desired outcomes of a continual review process
2. Practices from other states
3. Strategies for implementation

1. Desired Outcomes of a Continuous Review Process

Increase certainty surrounding policy and improve alignment to campus policy

During the review process, the task force encountered a number of submissions for policies that are no longer stated in the policy manual or handbook or were misinterpreted. Clear communication about policy would diminish this policy “folklore.” Furthermore, without the documentation of a policy change, institutional knowledge could be lost during job turnover.

Increase relevancy of policy related to practical needs and the changing environment

With rapid technological and external policy advances, the ability to evaluate policy and ensure its relevancy is increasingly important. Instituting a periodic review process and transparent tools for soliciting feedback would capture these new topical areas as they arise. Through this process, policy becomes more than a top-down mandate. Instead policy is recast as a “living” body of work that takes into account the experiences of those affected by it.

Provide an outlet for experimentation

Policy changes should be evaluated to determine the impact on college completion and institutions should feel comfortable proposing changes. A systematic policy review could build this experimentation and evaluation into the process, ensuring that institutions have options to pursue carefully monitored exceptions and to share these practices.

2. Practices from Other States

Three states in particular have relatively comprehensive sites. Minnesota, Colorado and Oregon all have some iteration of a policy library website. These library sites contain a list of policies under development, new and reviewed policies, individual contacts or a sponsoring office that monitors compliance to policy, as well as any feedback from stakeholders regarding policy updates.

The University of Minnesota system has the most comprehensive policy website that includes a policy maintenance tool kit where a policy owner can log into the site and view the policy usage history, the number of revisions for a policy, as well as any feedback about changes (see appendix for screenshots of the site). The University of Minnesota also has two policy committees, a President's Policy Committee that meets every 3 months and a Policy Advisory Committee that meets every month. The website has a "Policy Post" in which any policy updates are communicated through a newsletter-style brief¹.

3. Strategies for Implementing a Continuous Review Process

After consulting the work of other states, the policy review task force devised a strategy for implementing a continual review process:

Create a Policy Committee consisting of the heads of other committees that serves as a steering committee for the policy review to "feed" policies to system-level staff on a periodic basis.

System-level staff would funnel these policies to the appropriate functional or administrative group.

These groups would include the review of relevant policy into their current work. As such, they could also serve in a sponsorship role.

These groups would report back to the system office with recommendations.

Those engaged in the review process should use a standardized framework, similar to that used by this task force (See Appendix), to ensure common due diligence for policy change. The framework has the added benefit of documenting the analysis process and helps to account for future reference the logic and understanding driving the policy change.

Improve communication of policy change through adopting technology and practices similar to that of University of Minnesota.

- Make transparent policies under review and development
- Showcase new policies and changes
- Provide a mechanism for feedback and transparent display of feedback on issues
- Track policy changes and document rationale aligned to policy review framework

Identify a policy owner for areas and/or issues in the manual and handbook, or at a minimum a point of contact.

Beyond audits, determine a policy change management process to ensure campus alignment.

¹ http://policy.umn.edu/User/POLICYLIB_POLICYPOST.html

1. An open electronic submission form at USG.edu

http://www.usg.edu/educational_access/complete_college_georgia/policy_review

Policy Review Submission Form

Policy Idea or Feedback (1500 characters maximum)
Please include a reference or link to an existing policy if relevant.

What area would you say this best falls under?

- Institutional Reporting
- Admissions, Entrance Requirements
- Transitional Education (Learning Support, Dual Enrollment, AP/IB)
- Transfer and Articulation
- Financial Aid, Tuition and Fees
- Registration, Scheduling, and Enrollment Management
- Quality, Assessment, Certification, Learning Outcomes, Content
- Faculty Organization and Development
- Instructional Modes and Spaces
- Academic Programs
- Student Support Services
- Student Academic Requirements and Student Incentives
- Continuing Education
- Other (Please specify:)

Please describe yourself

- USG Institution Faculty
- USG Institution Staff
- USG Institution Student
- System Office Staff
- Other

Your Name (optional)

Email Address (optional)

2. University of Minnesota Policy Library Webpage

<http://policy.umn.edu>

UWIDE POLICY LIBRARY

Official administrative policies and procedures are retained and maintained in this Policy Library to guide and direct the University community (faculty, staff and students).

[Forms Library](#) [Contracts Library](#) [Delegations Library](#)

[Home](#) [Policies](#) [Policy User Resources](#) [Policy Owner Resources](#) [Campus Policies](#)

GOVERNANCE POLICIES

Board of Regents

Umbrella policies that provide the framework for administration to implement and comply with the intent of the board policy.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

Administration & Operations

Policies that are of a general administrative or operational nature.

Finance

Policies related to accounting, budgeting, procurement, travel, and other financial functions.

Information Technology

Policies that cover systems, access, data, and related issues.

Education & Student Life

These policies cover many areas that affect students and faculty.

Human Resources

Policies, rules, contracts, related procedures & information impacting your working relationship with the University for all employee groups.

Research

Policies that cover research and outreach topics for researchers and support staff.

POLICY POST

DEC 2012

Missing a receipt?

A process change has been made. See this update and more on the Policy Post! [Read more](#)

Policies Under Review

Policies in development go through a 30 day public review before they are published. See which policies are in the review stage. [Read more](#)

Recently Updated Policies

Policies that have had major revisions within the last three months are listed here. See if a policy you frequently use had been updated.

3. From University of Minnesota Policy Library webpage, this is a form for University affiliates to find those polices which are particularly relevant based on their role.

<http://policy.umn.edu/categories/polaudienceform.cfm>

Create a Customized Key Policy List

Select from the choices below to view key policies that apply to your role at the University.

Note that this list does not reflect the total number of policies that may relate to you, but rather captures those that are most commonly applicable. To search the entire library for a particular policy subject, or policy category, enter a key word in the Search Box above or browse by category.

Select the group that is most appropriate for you.

Faculty	Staff	Student
<input type="radio"/> All Faculty	<input type="radio"/> Bargaining Unit	<input type="radio"/> Graduate/Professional Student
	<input type="radio"/> Civil Service	<input type="radio"/> Undergraduate Student
	<input type="radio"/> P&A	
	<input type="radio"/> Student Employee	


Select one or more activities in which you are engaged at the University.

- Teaching
- Research
- Travel
- General Financial Management
- Financial Transactions
- Budgeting

4. From the University of Minnesota Policy Library webpage, this details the role of the policy owner and outlines the process for routine maintenance of policy.

http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Operations/Compliance/UPOLICY_PROC02.html

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

Routine Maintenance of Administrative Policy

Related Policy: [Establishing Administrative Policies](#)

Policy owners are responsible for ensuring that their policy and procedure information is current, accurate, and readable. The owners are also responsible for compliance monitoring compliance, measuring effectiveness, and evaluating feedback. Tools are provided by the University Policy Program (UPP) to assist in this task.

1. The policy owner notifies the UPP in the event of a minor change to a policy or procedure, typically via email as an attachment. The UPP will update the online document and send notification back to the policy owner. Examples of minor changes are:
 - o New contact information
 - o Additional related information references
 - o Office name changes
 - o Rate changes, if applicable
2. Each policy has a feedback box that is used by viewers of the policy to ask question, respond as to whether or not the policy/procedure satisfied their information need, or provide any other comments. Those submissions that require follow-up will be forwarded to the policy owner. The policy owner should provide a timely response to the viewer.
 - o Feedback received by policy is available to policy owners so that the feedback may be viewed in aggregate to determine if there are patterns suggest the need for additional policy or procedure clarification.

Resources continued from Page 15 footnote:

Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU)- Toolkit
http://leap.aacu.org/toolkit/wp-content/files_mf/gened_potholes_excerpt.pdf

Institute on General Education and Assessment
http://www.aacu.org/meetings/institute_gened/goals.cfm

Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU)- The Essential Learning Outcomes
http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/EssentialOutcomes_Chart.pdf

Lumina Foundation - Degree Qualifications Profile
http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The_Degree_Qualifications_Profile.pdf