



Savannah State University

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

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.

STUDENT BODY PROFILE

The total headcount enrollment for Savannah State University was 4,429 students, with a full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment of 4,192. The Fall 2017 enrollment was down 10% from the Fall 2016 enrollment of 4,950. A total of 433 adult learners, 243 non-traditional undergraduate students and 190 graduate students enrolled during 2017-2018. First generation college students comprised 43.5% of the total undergraduate student body and 87% of the undergraduate student population was Pell-eligible.

The statement in our mission, “The university fosters engaged learning and personal growth in a student-centered environment”, drives our completion work’s key priorities. We realize that many of our students enter the university with challenges and we undertake the responsibility to ensure that we help them to overcome these challenges through intrusive advising, academic support, and high-impact and high-touch practices.

INSTITUTIONAL HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES, ACTIVITIES & OUTCOMES

Savannah State University focused on the redesign and refocusing of the Freshman Year Experience (FYE) course as the primary High-Impact Practice (HIP) for the 2017-2018 academic year. In addition to indoctrinating students into the Academic Mindset early in their matriculation, it also provides an opportunity to provide content that is aligned with the Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLOs) that undergird all degree program at the university.

The FYE HIP is aligned to two ISLOs:

1. Critical Thinking (CT): A habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.
2. Integrative Learning (IL): An understanding and disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus.

The scope of the first year experience at Savannah State University has largely been a freshman orientation course over one semester for two credits meeting two times a week for 50 minutes. The initial phase of implementing a high impact FYE occurred from June 2018 - August 2018, during which time the course was completely redesigned with a team of faculty and professional staff. The intent of this first phase was to place the 2-credit, one semester FYE course back under the purview of the four colleges with a focus on academic mindset, college-specific content and their related career opportunities, and an orientation to collegiate life and SSU.

The redesigned FYE course is being piloted this fall under the leadership of two coordinators who were instrumental in the redesign. They have since developed an instructor orientation and training program, online resources for instructors and students in the LMS, and a communication network with instructors with weekly tips and announcements. In addition, they hold monthly meetings for instructors and provide small group and one-on-one training in the tools used to track student work and progress. The second phase will be to make FYE a year-long first year experience with more integrative learning opportunities that are co-curricular in

nature and that scaffold students into undergraduate research, early internships, other HIPS following the first year experience.

ASSESSMENT OF THE FRESHMAN YEAR EXPERIENCE (FYE) HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICE (HIP)

The following qualitative and quantitative measures will be used to track the **Freshman Year Experience (FYE) High-Impact Practice (HIP)**:

1. Academic Mindset Survey results: pre- and post-test (CT)
2. Focus 2 Career and Education Planning Survey results (IL)
3. Critical Thinking: Components of the corresponding VALUE rubric (see 2.b.) to reflect the scope of the FYE course to assess a sampling from the following FYE assignments: a) Academic Mindset Written Reflections (pre- and post-survey), b) Learning Strategies Reflection, c) HBCU History and Legacy Assignment
4. Integrative Learning: Components of the VALUE rubric to reflect the scope of the FYE course to assess a sampling from the following FYE assignments: a) Focus 2 Career Written Reflection, Academic Map Assignment, Major Fair Passport Assignment
5. FYE course data to include: a) students' attendance, b) students' progress reports, c) mid-semester grades, d) students' grade contracts vs. earned course grades, e) student evaluation of the course, and f) DFWI rates using the EAB Student Success Collaborative Campus tool, the D2L Brightspace LMS, and the SSU Student Reactions to Instructor and Course Survey (administered online) as documented in the SSU Academic Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IE Plan)
6. Co-Curricular engagement using Tiger Stripe data retrieved from Student Affairs that tracks points earned for students' participation in co-curricular events

Instructors in FYE will collect and/or require students to upload written reflections to the LMS. The academic co-coordinator of FYE will retrieve samplings of evidence and use teams of scorers and the adapted VALUE rubrics to assess the critical thinking and integrative learning in the designated assignments. Sampling will be across two broad FYE course types: a) general and b) college.

General FYE courses are categorized as TIGR 1101. These are FYE sections that have been redesigned but are more general in terms of specific college content until all colleges implement the college specific FYE course. The college sections of FYE that have been implemented fall 2018 are in the College of Education (EDUC 1103) and the College of Sciences and Technology (COST 1103). In spring 2019, the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences plans to implement (CLAS 1103), as does the College of Business Administration (COBA 1103).

Updates on Freshman Year Experience courses are shared at Momentum Year Implementation Team meetings, updates to faculty and staff, at monthly meetings with FYE instructors, and the president's cabinet and with executive and senior level administrators at monthly leadership council meetings.

MOMENTUM YEAR

The Momentum Year Implementation Team has been established and has been meeting regularly since Spring of 2017. The team include representation from all of the college of the university, with the majority of the faculty representation from the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, where English (ENGL 1101 and 1102, English Composition I & II) and Humanities (HUMN) 1201 Critical Thinking and Communication) courses are taught, and the College of Sciences and Technology, where mathematics courses (MATH 1111 College Algebra) are taught.

PURPOSEFUL CHOICE OF MAJOR/METAMAJOR/FOCUS AREA

Prior to Fall Semester 2018, students admitted to Savannah State University were able to select "Undeclared" as an option on the admission application, and many students chose to do so. The challenge that this presented is that, although students were advised each semester and were encouraged to choose a major as soon as possible, many would enter their sophomore year or even junior year without having chosen a major. When a major was chosen, quite often, some course that should have been taken earlier in their matriculation had not been taken, which of course increased the time to degree completion.

Beginning in Fall 2018, "Undeclared" is no longer an option for incoming students, as they are required to select a major upon initial admission. For those students who do not have a major or focus area identified, the Focus 2 instrument is administered to help them narrow their options based on their interests, aptitudes, and talents. Once the focus area has been identified, students are provided with information on the majors offered at the university via advisement sessions, presentations in Freshman Year Experience courses on

different majors and focus areas, and university-wide activities designed to assist students with the selection of a major, such as Major Fairs, one of which is scheduled for September 24, 2018.

To assist students with the selection of metamajors and focus areas, Savannah State University has aligned the general focus areas provided by the University System of Georgia with the majors offered at Savannah State, and has convened a subcommittee of the Momentum Year Implementation Team to further refine the focus areas to more closely align with majors offered at the university.

ACADEMIC MINDSET

One of the first steps in addressing the academic mindset of the students at Savannah State University was to get a true reading of the mindset of a critical mass of our students. Realizing that the e-mail strategy for administration of the survey that was employed in the 2017-2018 Academic Year yielded very few responses from students, the strategy for administration was revisited and it was decided that the Mindset Survey would be administered in the Freshman Year Experiences courses that all new incoming students are required to take. This strategy resulted in over 700 respondents to the Fall 2018 administration of the survey. Analysis of the data collected this semester will be used to inform sessions in the FYE course that focus on the academic mindset.

It was also determined that there is a need to expose faculty and staff members to the academic mindset and the role that it plays in student success. To that end, an Academic Mindset workshop was conducted on campus by Jonathan Hull, which provided valuable information to faculty and staff on the role of the academic mindset and strategies that can be employed to develop the mindset in students.

CLEARLY SEQUENCED PROGRAM MAPS

Program maps have been developed for all of the majors at Savannah State University that include (1) English and Math in the first thirty hours of matriculation; (2) Nine semester credit hours in the students' identified focus area; and (3) thirty credits in the first year, usually by either taking fifteen semester hours in fall and spring, or twelve hours in fall and spring and six hours in the summer.

Beginning in Fall 2018, schedules for incoming freshman students are monitored to ensure that they meet all three of the Momentum Year criteria above.

COURSE REDESIGN

While course redesign is a requirement of Savannah State University's participation in Gateway to Completion (G2C) with the John N. Gardner Institute, it is also an integral component of our Momentum Year initiative. The courses selected for redesign were ENGL 1101 and 1102 English Composition I & II; MATH 1111 College Algebra; and HUMN 1201 Critical Thinking and Communication. The rationale for selection of these courses was the fact that all students are required to take the composition sequence, and College Algebra and Critical Thinking and Communication are core courses. All of the courses have high DFWI rates and redesign of the courses to reduce these rates and improve students' writing and computational skills would improve their performance, not only in the general education core, but in upper-division courses in majors across the campus, as well.

Course Redesign Committees have been established for ENGL 1101/1102 MATH 1111 and HUMN 1201. Following are team chairs for course redesign:

ENGL 1101/1102 English Composition I & II

Dr. Jordan Dominy, Assistant Professor of English

MATH 1111 College Algebra

Dr. Tilahun Muche, Assistant Professor of Mathematics

HUMN 1201 Critical Thinking and Communication

Dr. Lisa Yount, Associate Professor of Humanities

Following is a synopsis of the course redesign activities since Spring 2018:

ENGL 1101/1102

Student achievement data for ENGL 1101 and 1102 is being analyzed to determine if course redesign in English, which began in Fall of 2017, has resulted in gains in achievement or reductions in DFWI rates in ENGL 1101 and 1102.

Results of analyses will be used to inform further redesign of courses.

MATH 1111

Course content was reviewed and it was determined that the course included too much material. To better utilize the course time and better prepare students for pre-calculus, more emphasis placed on content that moves student toward pre-calculus. One unit was eliminated from the course (Exponential and Logarithmic

functions) and content was redistributed into the other units of the course, reducing the total number of units in the course from eight units to six.

The redesign of MATH 1111 will take place in Fall 2018. Two redesigned sections will be taught by faculty on the committee in Fall 2018, along with two non-redesigned sections for control, to determine if there were any differences in student achievement in the two course formats. Students who are taking redesigned MATH 1111 in Fall 2018 will be encouraged to take MATH 1113 with same instructors who taught redesigned MATH 1111 sections to monitor their progress in MATH 1113 to see if the redesign of MATH 1111 improved performance in MATH 1113.

A proposal will be developed in Spring 2019 and taken through the curricular review process to change the course structure from 3-0-3 (3 lecture/0 lab/3 SH) format to 2-2-3 (2 lecture/2 lab/3SH) format.

In order to make the course more affordable for students, the textbook for the course was changed from a \$100.00 textbook for MATH 1111 alone to textbooks for MATH 1111 College Algebra and MATH 1113 Pre-calculus for 75.00 (\$37.50 per semester).

HUMN 1201

The course redesign committee for HUMN 1201 Critical Thinking and Communications is focused on three primary areas of redesign:

1. Refreshing the writing assignment to ensure that are able to solve an ill-structured problem;
2. Improve expectations and evaluation of the students' presentation skills, specifically speeches and oral delivery. A presentation rubric is being developed to assess those skills; and
3. Piloting the use of group testing for quizzes in the course. This process is designed to assess content mastery on individual quizzes and group quizzes.

SAVANNAH STATE MOMENTUM YEAR: SELECT 90-DAY MILESTONES AND ACTIVITIES

Following are select milestones identified in the Momentum Year Implementation Plan for Savannah State University and the status of each milestone:

We will create a set of clear degree pathways to guide new and returning students in the identification of academic focus areas that will lead to careers or graduate education.

All degree programs at Savannah State University were converted from program grids program maps. Program grids which were essentially lists of courses that the students would need to complete to earn the degree arranged by Areas A-F, followed by upper-division courses in the major. While this format did provide students with the coursework need to complete the degree, it did not illustrate to student ho they move through the curriculum from the first semester of their matriculation to graduation. Program maps are arranged by semester and clearly indicate which course are to be taken, by semester.

The Office of Student Affairs will expand Career Days Fair into the colleges.

The Director of Career Services is a member of the Momentum Year Implementation Team and is working with deans, chairs, and program coordinators in each college to develop Career Day Fairs and other activities specifically targeted to careers and graduate school opportunities in the colleges.

All incoming students will take the FOCUS 2 online inventory, either prior to or during orientation. The link could be sent in the welcome letter.

All incoming freshman students received a letter welcoming them to the university and including information on Week of Welcome and other activities. The letter included a link to the FOCUS 2 inventory that students could use to access them instrument before arriving on campus.

The completion of this online inventory will be available to incoming students during New Student Orientation in August 2018.

Those students who did not complete the FOCUS 2 inventory prior to arriving on campus for the Fall 20178 semester completed the inventory during the Week of Welcome, which took place August 4th - 12th.

A web-based training process will be developed coupled with guided instruction by the SSU Innovation Team for department chairs and faculty over the summer. This will be launched during the Fall General Assembly as the beginning activity for the Fall 2018 semester.

Meeting of the Momentum Year Implementation Team took place throughout the summer of 2018, focusing on course redesign and the roles of department chairs and program coordinators in ensuring that clear degree pathways were developed for each program prior to the beginning of the Fall 2018 semester.

During the Fall General Assembly, which took place on August 3, 2018, Momentum Year updates were provided to faculty and staff and on August 7, 2018, a Professional Development Day took place, during which a session on Momentum Year was conducted.

The Academic Affairs Office has developed a web-page that includes the following information, which can be accessed via the corresponding links:

Momentum Year: <https://www.savannahstate.edu/academic-affairs/momentum-year.shtml>

Academic Mindset: <https://www.savannahstate.edu/academic-affairs/academic-mindset.shtml>

The web page is updated frequently and includes the most current information relative to Momentum Year and Academic Mindset.

Vet the redesigned orientation programming with Student and Academic Affairs deans and directors.

The deans and directors in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs have reviewed the redesigned orientation programming and will monitor progress going forward. This semester, both redesigned sections and sections utilizing the previous format are being taught simultaneously. Analysis of results of examinations and other course activities

Share and review Academic Mindset Survey results and use this to inform Student and Academic Affairs programming and workshops for freshmen.

As stated above, the Academic Affairs Office makes Mindset Survey data available on its web page (<https://www.savannahstate.edu/academic-affairs/academic-mindset.shtml>).

These data are being reviewed to determine trends in the data and to identify areas in which the academic mindset is reinforced, as well as those in which additional reinforcement is needed.

TRACKING OF MOMENTUM YEAR ACTIVITIES AND MILESTONES

One of the challenges that was recognized at the outset of implementation of our Momentum Year initiatives was the myriad of concurrent activities and data collection, analysis, and reporting requirements to effectively manage the initiatives. In order to establish a framework in which to collect data from a number of sources, a tracking system was developed by a faculty member in Engineering Technology, Dr. Bryan Knakiewicz. Dr. Knakiewicz developed a Gantt-chart format tracking system that allows for data input from various sources into a shared drive. This helps tremendously as the Implementation Team moves systematically through the milestones for each element the Momentum Year Implementation Plan.

SUMMARY

Savannah State University has made significant progress with its Complete College Georgia (CCG), Gateway to Completion (G2C), and Momentum Year initiatives over the past academic year. The entire campus is invested in developing strategies and initiatives to shorten the time to degree completion for our students and better prepare them for graduate school or the world of work upon completion of their degrees. These strategies include development of clear degree pathways; redesigning the Freshman Year Experience courses to better align them with the college in which students earn their degrees; and engaging the entire campus in training and discussion of the Academic Mindset and its implications for student retention, progression, and completion.

We look forward to continuing the implementation and tracking the progress of the many activities designed to increase the likelihood that our students, many of whom come to Savannah State University with various challenges, are able to fully realize their potential and become productive citizens of the State of Georgia and beyond.