



# Fort Valley State University

## **INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE**

The mission of Fort Valley State University (FVSU) is to advance the cause of education with emphasis upon fulfilling commitments that our community members have undertaken collectively. As an institution of the University System of Georgia, Fort Valley State University naturally embraces the principles articulated by the Core Mission Statement for State Universities as approved by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. The university's primary commitments include, among others, enhancement of teacher training programs grounded upon a liberal arts foundation, as reflective of over 120 years of experience and tradition. As Georgia's only 1890 Land Grant institution, FVSU offers academic programs in a variety of disciplines which include agriculture, family and consumer sciences, technology, and a new program in supply chain management just to name a few. FVSU has a commitment to continue to further its traditions of excellence in programs in the liberal arts and humanities, social, natural and physical sciences.

### **STUDENT BODY PROFILE**

FVSU enrollment now stands at approximately 2700 students. The student retention percentage has grown over the last academic year to approximately 67%. FVSU administrators believe this increase is due to many initiatives that have been implemented. The majority of FVSU students are African-American (94%) and as of 2014, 84% of FVSU students received Pell Grant Funds. Approximately only 5% of the incoming freshmen class were considered adult learners (25 years or older), therefore the majority of the student body is comprised of high school graduates who are products of lower-performing high schools in the inner cities or rural areas. However, a shift has occurred in the enrollment practices and the reward for this is a higher retention rate and, hopefully, a future increase in graduation rates. Our slightly higher female population is consistent with national trends. These indicators were used as the committee devised the Complete College Georgia Plan for FVSU as benchmarks and as points of reference for strategies that should be developed to increase student success outcomes for the institution.

### **HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGY: IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

#### **RELATED GOAL**

**Goal 1:** To achieve a 77% retention rate for first-time freshmen by observing an increase of two percentage points each year.

**Goal 2:** Engage 80 % of freshmen and sophomore students in academic advising by the end of each academic year.

**Goal 3:** Engage 80% of first and second-year students in student engagement programs and services (e.g. civic engagement, service learning, lecture series, symposiums, first & second-year experience programs, and mentoring programs, etc.)

#### **DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY AND/OR IMPACT**

This priority demonstrates FVSU's commitment to increase its annual retention rate of first-time freshmen, increasing efforts that enhance academic advisement services and student engagement initiatives.

#### **PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT**

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#### **SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES**

During the Fall of the 2017-18 academic year, FVSU implemented a comprehensive University College (UC). The (UC) is an innovative, interdisciplinary approach to achieving student success and engagement outcomes for undergraduate students. The UC serves as the entry point for students, an innovator of new academic initiatives, and a catalyst for student success and retention for the campus. The UC will include academic advising, academic counseling and disability services, tutorial services, supplemental instruction, reading and writing lab services, learning support, the B.S. in Organizational Leadership and the First & Second-Experience Programs.

The UC provides direct intensive support to entering freshmen who are admitted under the provisions of the limited admit status; however, services are provided to all incoming undergraduate students. Establishing the UC transforms how the institution promotes student success, engagement, and retention.

## MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

### Measure, metric, or data element

As a method of evaluation, FVSU has chosen to assess the following student success outcomes:

- Increase the number of students achieving a grade of “C” or better in general education courses by 10%.
- Engage 75% of freshmen and sophomore students in academic advising and registration sessions provided by their academic advisor in the UC.
- Engage at least 80% of first and second-year students in first- student engagement programs and services. (e.g., civic engagement and volunteerism, tutorials, first and second year experience courses)

### Baseline measures

- The retention rate for the 2016-17 academic year was 67%, for the 2017-18 academic year, it grew to 75.2%

### Interim Measures of Progress

- The Center for Retention Services served as the previous academic support model for the university. This method has worked for quite some time; however, including the elements of civic engagement, leadership development and professionalism as components to complement services already in place will provides for a more comprehensive model for student success for the student demographic FVSU serves.

### Measures of Success

- With implementation of the UC, first-time freshmen retention is expected to increase to at least percent each year over the course of the next five years, providing for a rate of 77%.

## LESSONS LEARNED

FVSU has found that although there are academic support services in place, it is essential to enhance those services with other components of student development such as civic engagement, leadership development and professionalism in an effort to effectively serve the student body.

## HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGY: STRENGTHENING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

### RELATED GOAL

**Goal 1:** Increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG

### DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY AND/OR IMPACT

This particular strategy addresses a priority for FVSU as it complements Priority 3.1.1 of the strategic plan, which seek to increase student involvement. This high impact strategy has the potential to increase active participation in campus activities, increase faculty participation with student in service learning, internships, study abroad and increase undergraduate research opportunities.

In relation to this, FVSU has implemented the iHelp Center for Civic Engagement and Volunteerism. During the 2017-18 academic year 30% of the freshmen class was identified as a pilot group to complete community service and volunteerism hours within the surrounding community in an effort to increase their leadership and professionalism capacities.

Research related to student development by Astin and Sax (1998) emphasize the importance of this type of student engagement and its positive influence on student success outcomes. In the 2018-19 academic year, FVSU will fully launch a new requirement for all undergraduate students to complete at least 30 hours of community service and volunteerism before graduation.

### PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT

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#### SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

During the 2017-18 academic year, the university assembled a task force chaired by Drs. Stevie L. Lawrence II and Andrew Lee to investigate the status of student engagement at the institution. There were a number of institutional stakeholders who were a part of the process.

Ultimately, the work of the task force provided a final report, which included a series of recommendations to strengthen student engagement at FVSU. Each recommendation was fully endorsed by senior administration, and specifically, President Paul Jones. To date, the work of the task force has yielded the development of the Center for Student Engagement, which houses three programmatic student development units, which are Career and Professional Development, Civic Engagement (the iHelp Center for Community Service & Volunteerism), and Student Leadership Development.

In relation to these structural developments, beginning Fall 2018, each new freshmen must complete a minimum of 120 hours of services over a course of four years.

#### MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

Currently, the Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness, is developing a survey, which institutionally measures student engagement relative to this initiative. Students will take this survey as a part of the FVSU 0100 course, also known as the First-Year Experience course. Upon exiting the University College at 60 credit hours, they will be evaluated in a post assessment, and finally upon graduation to assess growth and development in the areas that the Center for Student Engagement seeks to impact student development the most, which are professional and leadership developing and creating within students, a service oriented philosophy.

#### Measure, metric, or data element

After implementation of this initiative fully during the 2018-19 academic year, data will be provided which highlights the implications of civic engagement, volunteerism and community service on student success and retention.

#### Baseline measures

- Data provided from the last administration of the National Survey on Student Engagement in 2014 revealed that approximately 46% of first year students indicated that they were involved in some form of community service and/or service learning project.

#### Interim Measures of Progress

- N/A

#### Measures of Success

- The National Survey of Student Engagement and an institutional survey, as referenced above.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

Through implementation, expected barriers will be how to ensure that students complete the required service hours and how will they be captured.

#### HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGY: INTRUSIVE FINANCIAL AID ADVISING

#### RELATED GOAL

**Goal 1:** Increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG

#### DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY AND/OR IMPACT

As over 90 % of the student body at FVSU receive some form of federal student aid, it is essential that the university provide intrusive financial aid advising. The university has taken steps to implement technology that enhances customer service in this area; specifically with the implementation of Qless and CampusLogic software packages. These technology

upgrades have tremendously improved the process for awarding financial aid for students and the university expects to continue to experience success in this area.

#### PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT

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#### SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The University continues to make a commitment to enhancing technology and providing training for the financial aid staff in order to increase the level of intrusive financial aid advising for students. To complement this effort, the Office of Financial Aid has hired an Outreach Counselor to assist students and their families with the financial aid process; educating them on financing higher education and the necessary steps that should be taken in order to be awarded federal student aid.

#### MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

The success of intrusive financial aid advising can be measured by outcomes of the following: growth in the number of students that complete their FASFA by the deadline and before they depart the institution at the completion of the academic year. In addition to this, there should be a continued decline in default rates, the percentage of students that make satisfactory academic progress, and the quantity of financial aid outreach activities and services conducted on an annual basis.

##### Measure, metric, or data element

The university's financial aid office will continue to conduct annual reports and analysis of the measures of progress and success that outlined above.

##### Baseline measures

As the measures of progress and success have been recently identified during the 2017-18 academic year, the Office of Financial Aid must move forward with developing baseline metrics in order to assess improvement in the areas listed above. These baselines will be developed by assessing the year-to-year progress in each area described in the *measures of progress and success* section of the report above.

##### Interim Measures of Progress

The total enrollment for the 2017-18 academic year was 2,752 students. Of this population, there were 2,318 undergraduate students. Statistically, approximately 95% of the undergraduate student population are Pell eligible, or receive some form of federal financial assistance to attend the institution. Therefore, the Office of Financial Aid was able to successfully award approximately 2,200 undergraduate students federal student aid, with implementing technological systems, which enhance customer service, providing for increased efforts in financial aid advising.

##### Measures of Success

Measures of success would include the percentage of students who successfully complete the financial aid process each academic year.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

The university continues to experience barriers with the ability to convey information to first generation college students and their parents about the financial aid process. Especially as it relates to the process for applying for Parent Plus Loans. However, with developing an outreach initiative, led by personnel to assist in this area, the institution foresees continued advances in this area.

#### HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGY: INTRUSIVE ACADEMIC ADVISING

##### RELATED GOAL

**Goal 1:** Increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG institutions.

**Goal 4:** Provide intrusive advising to keep students on track to graduate.

**DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY AND/OR IMPACT**

This specific strategy contributes greatly to the number of students who persist to graduation in a timely manner to graduation. Intrusive advising is tremendously important, as it ensures that students understand their degree requirements and follow them closely. Essentially, it also contributes to providing a better understanding of their undergraduate core curriculum.

Therefore, through implementation of the UC, FVSU has proven its commitment to providing intrusive academic advisement services. Furthermore, the University has implemented Degree Works to aid in the academic advising process, along with providing degree maps for students as a guide for better understanding and following academic degree program requirements.

**PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT**

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**SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES**

The current structure for academic advising is twofold at FVSU. The UC provides academic advising services for freshmen and sophomore students (0-60 credit hours). There are a total of five staff persons who provide academic advising services for this student population. Each advisor is responsible providing academic advising for specific majors. Students undergo a two-step advising process which includes pre-advising just before registration begins in an effort to assess their progress in their current classes, and once registration begins, they undergo a the process for actually registering for classes each semester. In addition, advisors monitor the progress of their students each semester.

**MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS:****Baseline measures**

Eighty-percent (80.2%) of credits attempted were successfully completed.

**Interim Measures of Progress**

- Increase the percentage of GEC credits successfully completed by two percentage points each year over the next five years.

**Measures of Success**

- Realizing these goals will provide for a higher quantity of students graduating within a four or five year timeframe.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

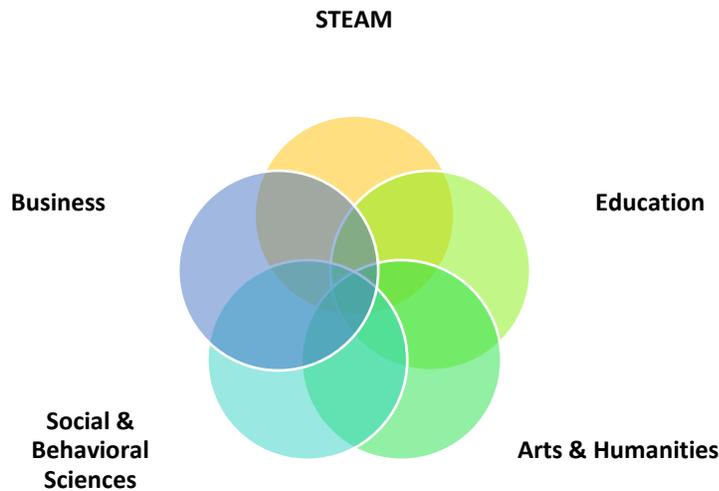
- None at this time.

**MOMENTUM YEAR UPDATE**

The Momentum Year Project (MYP) is just underway at FVSU. Since the inception of the UC, much of the work of the MYP has been led by efforts of the UC. Specifically, elements related to purposeful major choice, developing clear paths for students and productive academic mindset have been a tremendous focus in developing what students experience in the first year. Each of these topical areas were incorporated in the weeklong New Student Orientation program before classes started in mid-August.

In addition to this, the institution has completed the development of degree maps and they are being used in the academic advising process in the UC, and at the junior and senior levels. Moreover, additional work has been completed with developing academic focus areas for first-time freshmen. This year, the FVSU 0100, or First-Year Experience course has been designed using academic focus areas. The academic focus areas created are Arts & Humanities, Business, Education, Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture and Mathematics (STEAM), and Social and Behavioral Sciences:

## FVSU ACADEMIC FOCUS AREAS



As these academic focus areas have been adopted, students enrolled in the course this Fall and beyond will have an opportunity to become involved in service projects coordinated through the newly established Center for Student Engagement that will connect students with organizations and industries which are representative of the five academic focus areas developed as a part of MYP. This will allow first-year students the opportunity to learn more about the possible career opportunities available to them, and the coursework associated with the academic areas they have chosen. Thus, allowing for an innovative way for students to identify their strengths, weakness, and assess whether they have chosen the correct academic and career paths in a purposeful way. In addition to this, students will also take a series of career development assessments that will highlight their innate abilities and characteristics that may further emphasize what their academic focus area should be.

In relation to the work that remains for the MYP, leadership within the academic colleges (e.g. deans and department chairs) will continue to work to identify coursework that students can take within each academic focus area in the first two semesters of a student's matriculation. Doing so will allow students an opportunity to better understanding the academic expectations and rigor associated with their chosen area of interest and ultimately their academic major.