



Albany State University

INSTITUTION'S MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

The consolidation of Albany State University (ASU) and Darton State College (DSC) was approved by Southern Association of College and Schools Commission On Colleges (SACSCOC) and the Board of Regents (BOR) of the University System of Georgia (USG) in December 2016, with an effective date of January 1, 2017. The mission of the consolidated institution, approved by the BOR in March 2016, follows.

Albany State University, a proud member institution of the University System of Georgia, elevates its community and region by offering a broad array of graduate, baccalaureate, associate, and certificate programs at its main campuses in Albany as well as at strategically-placed branch sites and online. Committed to excellence in teaching and learning, the University prepares students to be effective contributors to a globally diverse society, where knowledge and technology create opportunities for personal and professional success. ASU respects and builds on the historical roots of its institutional predecessors with its commitment to access and a strong liberal arts heritage that respects diversity in all its forms and gives all students the foundation they need to succeed. Through creative scholarship, research, and public service, the University's faculty, staff, students, and administrators form strategic alliances internally and externally to promote community and economic development, resulting in an improved quality of life for the citizens of southwest Georgia and beyond.

Following SACSCOC and USG BOR approval in December 2016, an expanded Level IV Albany State University (ASU) was formed by the consolidation of two independent SACSCOC-accredited USG member institutions: Albany State University (ASU) (Level IV) and Darton State College (DSC) (Level II). The consolidated ASU offers certificates, transfer associate degrees, career associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and specialist degrees. Curricular consolidations were necessary only in the overlapping Core Curriculums and the RN to BSN degree programs of the two institutions. Other active educational programs of ASU and DSC prior to consolidation are largely complementary and will continue to be offered at the new ASU. The three Schools at DSC and the four colleges at ASU were consolidated into five colleges at the new ASU.

The consolidated university's main campus is the former ASU's campus on College Drive in Albany, Georgia (Dougherty County), and is known as ASU East Campus. ASU East Campus is currently the home of four of the university's five colleges: College of Arts and Humanities, College of Business, College of Sciences and Technology, and College of Education. The ASU West Campus, 5.3 miles away, and also in Albany, Georgia (Dougherty County), is a full-service instructional site of the consolidated ASU. ASU West is also home of the new Darton College of Health Professions, the fifth College of Albany State University. Learning Support programs continue to be offered at ASU West, along with core curriculum courses. The consolidated ASU offers a small number of degree programs at four additional off-campus instructional sites at the Cordele Center (Cordele, Georgia), South Georgia State College (Waycross, Georgia), Southern Regional Technical College (Cairo, Georgia), and Oconee Fall Line Technical College (Sandersville, Georgia).

The consolidated ASU serves more than 6,300 traditional and non-traditional students. On average, seven out of ten students are women and minorities. On-campus student housing at full capacity totals approximately 2,361 residents. The consolidated institution retains ASU's selective standards for freshman admission to baccalaureate programs, but also incorporates former DSC's standards for freshman admission to the new ASU's certificate and associate degree access pathways. Admission to some associate degree programs offered at the new Darton College of Health Professions at ASU will continue to be selective.

FALL 2017 STUDENT PROFILE SUMMARY

2017 ASU Total Enrollment	Fall 2017	Fall 2016	Fall 2015	% Change from 2016 to 2017
Freshman	2897	2608	3546	11.08%
Sophomore	1403	2768	3320	-49.31%
Junior	1062	541	611	96.30%
Senior	883	797	985	10.79%
Graduate	355	447	501	-20.58%
N	6600	7161	8963	-7.83%

ASU First-Time Freshmen	Fall 2017	Fall 2016	Fall 2015	% Change (2016 to 2017)
N	*1456	862	1296	66.36%

*= Preliminary Data

ASU STUDENTS	Fall 2017	Fall 2016	Fall 2015
African American/Black	87%	80%	70%
White	3%	14%	23%
Other	10%	6%	7%

ASU Students by Gender	Fall 2017	Fall 2016	Fall 2015
Male	31%	34%	38%
Female	68%	66%	62%
Unknown	1%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Average Age of 2017 ASU Undergraduate FTF Student	Average Age of 2016 ASU Undergraduate FTF Student	Average Age of 2015 ASU Undergraduate FTF Student
18	19	21

AVERAGE FTF CREDIT HOURS (13.68)		
	Fall 2017	Fall 2016
The students are registered for 15 or more credit hours	38%	47%
The students are registered for less than 15 credit hours	62%	53%
Total	100%	100%

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS, HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES & ACTIVITIES

HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY 1: PEER TUTORS IN COURSES WITH HIGH DFW RATES

Albany State University has assigned peer tutors to assist students enrolled in courses with high rates of failure through recorded grades: D, F, or W. Peer tutors primarily work in a designated tutoring or learning center and conduct one-on-one or small group (fewer than 3 students) tutoring.

COMPLETION GOAL:

This strategy aligns with the USG goal of restructuring instructional delivery to support educational excellence and student success.

DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY OR IMPACT:

Retention and progression are major concerns for the consolidated institution. This strategy is designed to assist students who are experiencing difficulty in completion of courses, which in turn, delays completion of a credential. The strategy is implemented to provide academic support to improve student performance in courses with high failure rates.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES:

During the 2016-2017 academic year, Albany State University modified its peer tutoring program in an effort to consolidate services that prior to the 2016-2017 academic year had been inconsistently delivered. Currently, peer tutors work in a centralized tutoring or learning center. Peer tutors conduct one-on-one or small group sessions in courses associated with high rates of recorded failing grades: D, F and W. The tutoring centers are open from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. every Monday through Thursday. Friday is reserved for training for the peer tutors. Students in need of assistance that cannot attend tutoring during these times are encouraged to make appointments directly with a tutor.

MEASURE OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS:

During Fall 2016, there were 140 unique visits to the tutoring centers. The passing rate, at midterm, of students who attended tutoring was 53.96%. The passing rate at the end of the semester (i.e. final grade) was 77.14 %.

Midterm Grade	Final Grade
Total A, B, C, S- 75	Total A, B, C, S- 108
Total D, F, U- 64	Total D, F, U- 32
Total W, WF, WU-0	Total W, WF, WU-0
Total - 139	Total - 140
Passing Rate- 53.96%	Passing Rate- 77.14%

During Spring 2017, there were 129 unique visits to the tutoring centers. The passing rate, at midterm, of students who attended tutoring was 40.94%. The passing rate at the end of the semester (final grade) was 79.07%.

Midterm Grade	Final Grade
Total A, B, C, S- 52	Total A, B, C, S- 102
Total D, F, U- 75	Total D, F, U- 27
Total W, WF, WU-0	Total W, WF, WU-0
Total - 127	Total - 129
Passing Rate- 40.94%	Passing Rate- 79.07%

LESSONS LEARNED: T

his has proven to be a very successful strategy for students who take advantage of peer tutoring. We have learned that most students are not aware of the services offered. To address this issue, more targeted messaging has been distributed in first year experience classes. The

website for Academic Advising has also been updated to provide more details on the program and to encourage participation. Locations in which peer-tutoring services are offered have been strategically consolidated to make it easier for students to gain access.

PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT:

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HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION PORTAL

Albany State University has implemented a scholarship process that promotes student access and retention through the award of financial assistance based on both need and merit. The multi-pronged approach provides better access to scholarship information, applications, and assistance through collaborative efforts of multiple departments. This new strategy enables electronic and paper copy applications to be submitted, reviewed, and awarded in an efficient manner.

COMPLETION GOAL:

This strategy supports the ASU and USG strategic goal of increasing the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by providing assistance to students with financial barriers to continuous enrollment and progression.

DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY OR IMPACT:

This activity aligns directly with the university's strategic plan, specifically ASU Institutional Goal 4, which states: *Expand Access to Higher Education - Albany State University will promote student success for all by welcoming students from varying levels of academic preparation, keeping costs low, offering flexible class times and instructional modalities, and pairing high student expectations with exceptional mentoring, advising, and tutoring.* It is also directly related to Institutional Goal Five (5), which states: *Elevate Historically Underserved Populations - Albany State University will recognize and address the many challenges that face African Americans and other students of color, adult learners, first generation students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and others from underserved populations, and form strong partnerships with K-12, government agencies, and community outreach organizations to increase access and success rates.*

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES:

During the 2016-2017 year, ASU elevated its scholarship application and award process in order to streamline application procedures, create opportunities for more students to apply for assistance, and document student receipt of scholarship awards in order to study the correlation between scholarship awards and students' success. On the heels of consolidation, the university appointed a dedicated person to assist students with application for university scholarship opportunities. ASU also began preparation to integrate an online scholarship portal, which allowed for identification and review of available scholarships by students and more effective matching of students' applications to appropriate opportunities. Matching of students to appropriate scholarships was accomplished through incorporation of an online scholarship application process that took into account student demographics including but not limited to desired course of study, current academic standing, and ability to finance education. The online application portal is linked to the Financial Aid tab of the university's website under "Types of Financial Aid." Furthermore, scholarship opportunities were marketed through faculty, staff, and student email accounts; announcing deadlines, and locations of the scholarship portal as well as hard-copy applications. The opportunities were also distributed by the Office of Financial Aid. Awards were made in a timely fashion as a result of collaboration among the Office of Institutional Advancement, institutional Foundation and Office of Financial Aid.

MEASURE OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS:

In the Fall 2016, Spring 2017, and Summer 2017 semesters, Albany State University allowed the continued use of the paper submission process. In April 2017, the university launched its AwardSpring online portal for scholarship applications. The application serves as a central location for applying for all scholarships available from the Albany State University Foundation and Darton State College Foundation. It included a three-part questionnaire (General questions, academic questions, scholarship specific questions). The chart below is a summary of awards made in the reporting period and indicates an increase in applicants as a result of introduction of the paper application and implementation of the software.

Term	Scholarships	Amount
Fall 2016	167	\$ 150,089.25
Spring 2017	228	\$ 121,585.96
Summer 2017	40	\$ 17,999.51
Totals	435	\$289,674.72

LESSONS LEARNED:

There have been numerous lessons learned from implementation of the online scholarship portal. One of the most important is the need for adequate marketing, training, and orientation for students and parents. This would include informing them of the availability of the online applications and the necessary documentation for consideration of an award. The Office of Institutional Advancement will collaborate with the Enrollment Management unit to include a session on the AwardSpring portal in the schedule for new student orientation sessions. More direct communications will be distributed via email.

PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT:

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HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY 3: IMPLEMENTATION OF ELECTRONIC FINANCIAL AID DOCUMENT SUBMISSION PORTAL

To address complaints from students related to document submission to the Office of Financial Aid, Albany State University instituted an electronic document submission process for all applications for federal financial aid. This process streamlines the financial aid process by simplifying financial aid forms and allowing students to upload requested documentation online. Documents are also stored and can be reviewed by financial aid counselors from this site.

COMPLETION GOAL:

This strategy aligns with the ASU and USG goal of increasing the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG institutions by removing barriers to timely review and award of financial aid funds, where students are eligible. This award of funds to eligible students, in turn, allows student to continue progression toward timely completion of a credential.

DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY OR IMPACT:

This process increased efficiency of document submission and packaging for financial aid review and verification; thereby reducing complaints that previously submitted paperwork was lost or misplaced.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES:

During the 2016-2017 academic year, there were 703 students processed for verification, which is a Department of Education requirement to verify income, asset and household information for students and parents. Once the university receives the Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR)/Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the student is notified by the system that there are outstanding requirements. The system provides step by step instructions to the student regarding how to access the document submission website and create an account. Once all documentation is uploaded into the portal and submitted electronically, the file goes into a virtual workflow that can be retrieved and reviewed by the institution's financial aid counselors.

MEASURE OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS:

Adoption of the portal has resulted in a 100% paperless environment for verification of hundreds of files, reducing stress and frustration for students submitting documentation. An additional consequence has been more successful audit and compliance results because the paperless system streamlines documentation requested, prevents conflicting information from being accepted and stores documentation for easy retrieval.

LESSONS LEARNED:

This has proven to be very successful in streamlining the document submission process. We have learned that many students submitted documentation that was not requested because they did not fully understand the instructions. To address this issue, we will create how-to

videos to walk students through the process of verification, submission of documents via this portal, and how to use the help features on the site to ensure they are submitting the appropriate documentation.

PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT:

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HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY 4: LAUNCH OF A UNIVERSITY CALL CENTER TO PROVIDE DIRECT CUSTOMER SERVICE TO STUDENTS

Albany State University launched a call center for the Office of Admission and Recruitment in response to feedback from students that call wait times were too long in critical offices at the institution. The call center's primary function is to provide intrusive customer service to prospective and current students as well persons in need of general and detailed information related to admissions and recruitment procedures.

COMPLETION GOAL:

This strategy aligns with the ASU and USG strategic goal of improving access for underserved and/or priority communities.

DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY OR IMPACT:

The call center has a direct impact on recruitment and retention of students by providing high-touch guidance, technical assistance and support to callers/students. Center staff are liaisons and first responders to prospective students and others who are attempting to communicate with the institution.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES:

The call center was launched on May 19, 2017. Center staff immediately began to respond to callers by either directly addressing the caller's inquiry/concern or routing the call to the proper department within the university to address the inquiry/concern. During the peak enrollment season for Fall 2017 (June 1 – September 1), the call center had a handle ratio of ninety-five percent (95%) on over nine thousand calls (9000) received during that time frame.

MEASURE OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS:

The call center measures throughput based on metrics generated by an independent partner, Cisco Unified Intelligence Center. From May 19th to June 30th, the call center handled 2,001 calls. From July 1st to August 30th, the call center handled 7,432 calls. With the assistance of the call center, the Office of Admissions and Recruitment was able to enroll over 1,600 first time freshmen, in addition to assistance provided to returning students.

LESSONS LEARNED:

The call center has proven to be successful in providing direct guidance to thousands of prospective and newly admitted students. As a crucial function of recruitment and admissions processes, the lesson has been learned that effective communication with "live" operators, in parallel with efficient online systems, is vital to a successful enrollment strategy as well as overall student success.

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REFLECTIONS, OBSERVATIONS & PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

As the consolidated institution continues to enhance systems and processes that will promote successful student recruitment, retention, progression and completion of a credential, adjustments will be made to goals, strategies and associated measures for optimal alignment with locally identified needs and resources. Also, the high impact strategies identified by USG and other national thought-leaders who promote college completion (Lumina Foundation, etc.) will be integrated into the operations of various divisions at the institution as much as possible in the next year. This will lend itself to more strategic measurement of impact and reporting on standardized performance indicators.

Other strategies will be implemented starting in Fall 2017 in a number of departments across the university, including the following:

1. Distribution of program maps for all majors
2. Realignment of professional advisors to better meet the needs of freshman and sophomore students
3. Mandatory orientation for students taking university-based online courses

4. Implementation of an enhanced academic summer bridge program
5. Targeted support to assist military students who have stopped out to achieve reinstatement
6. Offer additional workshops and training for prospective and current students and parents related to online financial aid systems
7. Offer additional outreach to high schools to promote pursuit of higher education and the importance of being college-ready.
8. Integration and increased utilization of platforms that track student performance “real time” in classes to allow for early intervention during the semester.
9. Restructuring of student support services to provide optimal guidance and assistance to students who exhibit signs of either distress in academic performance or mal-adjustment to college life.
10. More targeted study of the factors and barriers that inhibit retention, timely progression and completion.

Strategies will be evaluated on a quarterly basis through Summer 2018 to determine level of impact and/or to remove any barriers that may arise that impede progress toward achievement of completion goals. Those strategies that lead to greatest progression and completion by students will be scaled up and possibly included in future reports.