



AUGUSTA
UNIVERSITY

Augusta University

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

As one of the state of Georgia's four research institutions, Augusta University has the unique designation as the state's only public, academic health center. Augusta offers a broad range of traditional liberal arts, allied health sciences, cyber studies, business, education, nursing, dental medicine, and medicine programs – making Augusta one of handful of institutions in the United States with this curricular array. Further, in the higher education arena, we are one of the few institutions to undergo a major organizational transformation and blending of two institutional cultures in the 21st century. Less than five years into this transformation, Augusta University has become a dynamic, responsive institution that places student success at the core of our vision to become a top-tier university that is a destination of choice for education, health care, discovery, creativity, and innovation. Guiding this vision is our mission.

“Our mission is to provide leadership and excellence in teaching, discovery, clinical care, and service as a student-centered comprehensive research university and academic health center with a wide range of programs from learning assistance through postdoctoral studies.”

Our mission statement explicitly states that we are student-centered, and we believe firmly in holding student success at the core of all our educational activities. As such, we explicitly focus on our students within our education mission strategic plan. The plan guides our new initiatives both as a dynamic institution and as they relate to retention, progression, and graduation of our undergraduate student body.

In fall 2016, Augusta University enrolled 5,133 undergraduate students at the institution, representing an increase of 157 students from fall 2015. Of the undergraduate students enrolled in fall 2016, 61.5% were female and 38.5% were male. The enrollment of females versus males remains comparable to previous years. The ethnic diversity of the student body remains comparable to previous years but with slight increases in our multiethnic and Asian student populations: 55% White; 24% Black (Non-Hispanic origin); 6% Hispanic; 7% multiracial; 5% Asian; <1% American Indian or Alaska Native; <1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; and 2% unknown or non-disclosed. The average age of our undergraduate student body is 22, which represents a slight move toward a more traditional college student population. Maintaining diversity is important to the institution as we further develop into a student-centered comprehensive research institution.

Approximately 73% of the fall 2016 incoming cohort of new freshmen had a higher freshman meeting or exceeding the research institution minimum (2500). While the increasingly higher freshman index means some local students who would have had access to Augusta University are not eligible for admission, we judiciously use the opportunity to offer Limited Admissions as well as promote our partnership with East Georgia State College (EGSC), which operates on our campus. EGSC provides an access point for local students who may not meet Augusta's admission criteria with the expectation that those who continue into baccalaureate program will enroll with Augusta. To date, 247 students have benefited by successfully transferring to Augusta. These enrollment patterns and demographics of our undergraduate students continue to inform the development of Augusta University's student success initiatives.

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS, HIGH IMPACT STRATEGIES, AND ACTIVITIES

We continue to refine our Complete College Georgia completion goals, high impact strategies, and activities to meet the needs of current and future students. Our four goals are slight modifications from our original goals proposed in “Our Path Forward” (2012). The faculty and administration see these goals and activities as a means to enhance the culture of the institution and the way Augusta University supports the success of our undergraduate students. Our strategies fall within four of the overarching goals defined by Complete College Georgia:

- Goal 1: Increase the number of undergraduate degrees awarded,
- Goal 2: Increase the number of degrees that are earned “on-time,”
- Goal 3: Decrease excess credits earned on the path to getting a degree, and
- Goal 4: Provide intrusive advising to keep students on track to graduate.

GOAL 1: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES AWARDED

Augusta University’s aim is to increase the number of all undergraduate degrees awarded across all constituent groups (i.e., first generation, gender, race/ethnicity, age, military) aligning with the University System of Georgia’s goal for all institutions. We have intentionally chosen not to focus on a particular demographic group because we recognize there are needs across all our populations.

Number of Degrees Awarded per Year by Augusta University					
2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
898	985	1036	1042	934	985

Over the past five years, we have maintained our original goals and strategies in the pursuit of higher rates of retention, progression, and graduation. Many of the strategies have now become part of institutional culture. We have used this opportunity to concentrate on certain programs we believe will have the greatest impact. We have discovered several high impact strategies and activities for Goals 2, 3, and 4. These are listed below.

II.A. HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY: 4YEARS4U

To help keep students on target to graduate “on time” we implemented our “4Years4U” campaign in fall 2013, which was rebranded “I Chose 4 Years” in 2016 to align with other enrollment initiatives. The campaign has created an institutional culture shift in course load expectations. Student expectations that they must take 15 credit hours per term or 30 credit hours per academic year to progress in four years are set at orientation. Expectations are reinforced through a request for students to sign a pledge to take at least 15 credit hours per semester and yard signs posted around campus.

Further, students are encouraged to take full course loads through a “flat tuition” model where students enrolled in 10 or more credit hours pay the full-time equivalent rate for 15 credit hours. Students who might have only registered traditionally for 12 hours now have a financial incentive to take more.

Faculty support has come from openly sharing data on the success of professional academic advising in the first two years and the ability of faculty to concentrate on advising their majors.

COMPLETION GOAL 2:

Increase the number of degrees that are earned “on time”.

DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY OR IMPACT

The faculty and administration of Augusta University continue to identify a need to increase undergraduate retention, progression and graduation rates. By highlighting the “I Chose 4 Years” campaign, registering freshmen for 15 credit hours in their first semester, and seeing successful completion of these hours, the students view this load as the normal course load and continue to register this load in subsequent terms. In determining the schedule of each student for those first 15 credit hours, the professional advisors take into consideration the students declared major or area of interest (e.g., humanities, social sciences, business), if undeclared, to ensure that appropriate math and science pathways are being achieved.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Continuing what began with fall 2013, the Academic Advisement Center advises all freshmen and sophomore students. At convocation, new students sign the “I Chose 4 Years” pledge. During subsequent advising sessions, students and advisors continue to focus on enrolling in 15 hours for the upcoming term.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

We employ two measures of success for this strategy, the percentage of students who attempt 15 or more credit hours in the fall term of their first year, and, the percentage of students who earn 30, 60 or 90 credit hours by the start of their second, third or fourth year, respectively.

BASELINE MEASURES

Fall 2012: 8.0% of undergraduate students attempted 15 or more credit hours in fall term of first year

Fall 2012: 14.2% of undergraduate students earned 30 or more credit hours by start of second year

INTERIM MEASURES

% of Freshman Cohort Attempting 15 or more credit hours in Fall Term of First Year				
2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
8%	72%	89.5%	86%	81%

The “I Chose 4 Years” campaign also provides leading indicators to reach the benchmarks of earning 30, 60, and 90 credits by the start of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year respectively. The attainment of these credit hour benchmarks is more important due to how individual semester credit hour loads are balanced based on specific courses.

Credit Hours Earned					
Fall Freshman Cohort	Earned 30 Credits	Earned 60 Credits	Earned 90 Credits	4-Year Graduation Rate	6-Year Graduation Rate
2012	14.2%	12.1%	10.8%	8.2%	TBD
2013	37.1%	24.7%	18.6%	14.0%	
2014	47.1%	33.0%	TBD		
2015	54.2%	TBD			
2016	TBD				TBD: Data available fall 2017 or later

FINAL MEASURES

The “I Chose 4 Years” campaign uses a series of metrics to determine the progress of students toward a degree “on time” for those students beginning in the fall 2013 and later. We used the fall 2013 cohort to establish new goal. By 2020, 60% of first year students (fall 2019 cohort) will earn 30 or more hours by the start of their second year; 46% of second year students (fall 2018 cohort) will earn 60 or more hours by the start of their third year; and 32% of third year students (fall 2017 cohort) will earn 90 or more hours by the start of their fourth year. We will also have 20% four-year graduation rate (fall 2017 cohort) and have a 40% six-year graduation rate (fall 2014 cohort).

LESSONS LEARNED

Sustaining the engagement of students to continue to pursue 15 or more credit hours past the first semester and into the major is the challenge. Many programs have courses sequenced to earn 14 credit hours in the first semester and 16 credit hours in the second semester. In this manner, a student may not earn 15 or more credit hours in a given term but may earn 30 hours during the entire year. For this reason, we see 15 credit hours as a leading indicator, but focus on 30, 60, and 90 as progression benchmarks. We continue to enhance our analytic capabilities to identify populations of students who need more targeted interventions. We are working with our newly opened Academic Success Center to provide academic coaching and other outreach for students.

PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT

Katherine Sweeney, Assistant Vice President for Student Success and Director of Academic Advisement,
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II.B. HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY: CURRICULUM REDESIGN AND REVIEW WITH A FOCUS ON HIGH IMPACT PRACTICES

The redesign continues to encompass every undergraduate academic program at Augusta University. As a natural expansion of looking at each course, the redesign and review focuses on entire academic programs. While bottlenecks are being discovered as programs map their course-level student learning outcomes to program-level student learning outcomes, a new focus is to ensure that programs incorporate high impact practices as defined by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). The promise of this approach is that students will remain engaged in all courses and thus reduce extra credits earned on the path to graduation.

COMPLETION GOAL 3

Decrease excess credits earned on the path to getting a degree.

DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY OR IMPACT

The faculty of 25 of 48 undergraduate programs have elected to participate in curriculum review and redesign orientation.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The Office of Faculty Development and Teaching Excellence (OFDTE) oriented faculty in over half of our undergraduate programs on the curriculum review and redesign process. Many of these are still in the process of understanding how their program level goals align with their courses and curriculum. In tangent with these actions, OFDTE collaborated with the Student Retention Manager to present analytics on student retention and progression to help guide curriculum redesign. During this process, programs have been asked to report where High Impact Practices are incorporated in their curriculum as part of syllabus review.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

This is the first year of this approach to review and redesign. Measures include:

- Identification of issues in course sequencing that may impact student progress
- Addition of high impact practices to the program curriculum
- Faculty designated as “experiential learning trained faculty” or “EXL”

LESSONS LEARNED

The Office of Faculty Development and Teaching Excellence has collaborated with the Office of Experiential Learning to support the use of active and experiential learning throughout the curriculum. The Innovative Teaching and Experiential Learning Symposium provided a forum for local faculty who incorporate active and experiential learning and various high impact practices in their teaching context to highlight these activities. Originally, a group model for addressing these concerns was thought to be a best practice; however, individual consultations with faculty members from each program was deemed to be critical to the success of the program by ensuring faculty buy-in and to offer opportunities for adapting the process to unique needs of some programs (e.g., expectations of accrediting bodies). We also discovered a need to understand how we could measure curricular changes to understand impact.

PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT

Deborah South Richardson, Director of Faculty Development, derichardson@augusta.edu

II.C. HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY: JAGUAR JUMPSTART SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM

Augusta University’s Jaguar Jumpstart is a five-week summer bridge program designed to foster success for provisionally accepted students. The goal of the program is to make the transition from high school to college as seamless as possible through promoting academic success and building community among program participants. Academics are supported through tutoring and academic coaching while community is developed through a unique program of speakers, workshops, and service learning.

COMPLETION GOAL 3

Decrease excess credits earned on the path to getting a degree.

DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY OR IMPACT

Service learning is often used as a strategy that encourages retention and progression. First year students, in particular, are required to adapt and adjust to numerous changes in their academic and social settings. By participating in structured, volunteer activities and then reflecting on these activities within their core courses, the Jaguar Jumpstart students found “community”. Engagement with peers, staff and faculty while participating in these activities seemed to increase student awareness of self and others.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Students begin their freshman year with an intensive five-week summer program designed to assist in transitioning from high school to college and build a strong academic foundation. The program includes two (2) three-credit hour core courses (MATH 1001 and ENGL 1101), peer tutoring in each subject, academic coaching workshops, mandatory visits to campus resource centers, and collaborative service-learning activities with community partners.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

BASELINE MEASURES

The first year of the program established our baseline measures.

Admissions:	Sixty (60) students were eligible to attend the program. Nineteen (19) contracted to participate in the program for a 32% yield rate.
Success Rate:	Of the 19 students, 18 successfully met the requirements to matriculate to the fall semester, a 95% success rate. Students had an average 2.82 GPA at the end of the program, and a 2.35 GPA at the end of their fall term, compared to an overall 2.81 GPA for first-time, full-time students admitted regularly. One hundred (100%) of the Jaguar JumpStart students who were eligible for continued enrollment earned 30 or more credit hours before the end of their first year.
Retention:	Students in the program had a 94.4% fall to spring retention rate. The rate for students fall to fall will be available in fall 2017.

LESSONS LEARNED

The program courses were designed originally to meet the needs of the lowest common denominator with students and their declared majors. This meant some students would also need to take the next level mathematics course, potentially leading to extra credits for the degree. For future program offers, MATH 1111: College Algebra, will be offered for all students as it would satisfy the Core A2 requirements for their degree. Additional support will be directed to those students who would not need this level of mathematics for their degree. We also cohorted these students in two core courses in their fall semester. This approach allowed for the continuation of a support system. We are looking at extending to another cohorted course in their spring term to help with the transition. The JSP academic coach continues to informally reach out and encourage one-on-one meetings. Mandatory tutoring/coaching for certain classes might encourage additional academic success. With our new Academic Success Center this is not only possible, but usually an enjoyable experience.

PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT

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II.D. HIGH IMPACT STRATEGY: PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT

To keep students on track to graduation, we enhanced our Academic Advisement Center in the summer of 2013. The center now provides dedicated professional advising support to all freshmen and sophomore students, students who wish to pursue a limited or restricted admission program, and to upper classmen who are returning from academic difficulty.

COMPLETION GOAL 4

Provide intrusive advising to keep students on track to graduate.

DEMONSTRATION OF PRIORITY OR IMPACT

Increasing retention, progression and graduation rates were identified as very high priority for our undergraduate population. By requiring students advised within the center to see their advisors at least once per semester we can provide early intervention and support.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Students advised in the center must see an advisor to register for classes, change a schedule, change a major or withdraw from class. The advisors work closely with the faculty in the departments for whom they advise to ensure provide sound advice for each major. This creates continuity of program expectations as student’s transition from the center to their faculty advisors. By having all professional advisors located within the Center, we are able to provide seamless transition as students change majors during the first two years. Advisors in the center use two-year program maps provided by the departments to advise their students, providing students a visual representation of what “off track” can look like if courses are not taken in the recommended sequencing.

The Academic Advisement Center uses EAB SSC Campus to receive early alerts from faculty for at risk students in the two most current freshmen cohorts and works with the Academic Success Center to provide appropriate supports and follow up for these students. Areas of risk include time management issues, test performance, assignment issues, numbers of absences, and general comments such as sleeping in class.

Advisors within the center use the planner portion of Degree Works to enter approved courses for an upcoming term for their students. A third party software, College Scheduler, is then used by the students to register for courses, allowing them to select whatever time or professor they want for the courses that have been entered in the planner but prohibiting them from selecting any course that has not been entered in the planner.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

Success of the advisement center comes from indirect metrics such as retention and progression.

BASELINE MEASURES

Fall 2012:	20.9% of undergraduate students enrolled in 15 or more hours
Fall 2012 cohort:	66.3% were retained from first to second year 48.3% were retained from second to third year 40.8% were retained from third to fourth year
Fall 2012:	93.1% of new freshmen were full time

INTERIM MEASURES

Fall 2013:	39.4% of undergraduate students enrolled in 15 or more hours
Fall 2013 cohort:	69.8% were retained from first to second year 52.9% were retained from second to third year 46.8% were retained from third to fourth year
Fall 2013:	97.6% of new freshmen were full time
Fall 2014:	46.5% of undergraduate students enrolled in 15 or more hours
Fall 2014 cohort:	75% were retained from first to second year 58.2 % were retained from second to third year Preliminary data show that 47.2% were retained from third to fourth year
Fall 2014:	97.9% of new freshmen were full time
Fall 2015:	49.0% of undergraduate students enrolled in 15 or more hours.
Fall 2015 cohort:	75.1% were retained from first to second year Preliminary data show that 61.2% were retained from second to third year
Fall 2015:	98.7% of new freshmen were full time
Fall 2016:	47.7% of undergraduate students enrolled in 15 or more hours.
Fall 2016 cohort:	Preliminary data show that 75.9% were retained from first to second year
Fall 2016:	98.2% of new freshmen were full time.

FINAL MEASURES

The metrics used for academic advisement are the same as those used in the “I Chose 4 Years” campaign with the Academic Advisement Center being responsible for students earning up to 60 hours.

LESSONS LEARNED

We found that the transition from the very rigid structure of the Academic Advisement Center to academic departments with varying faculty advising protocols was sometimes difficult for students. We are working now with the Office of Faculty Development and Teaching Excellence to identify mentoring and other learning opportunities for faculty advisors to streamline and make seamless the transition of students from the Advisement Center to their major departments at 60 hours. A Student Retention Manager was hired in January 2017. She works with department chairs and faculty advisors to monitor student progress and develop programming that will help students further engage in their major once they transition to the departments. She also provides training on the use of EAB SSC Campus as an advising tool.

We continue to learn how to use most effectively the EAB SSC Campus platform to leverage early intervention to ensure students are retained and progress appropriately. In addition to the platform, analyses will be done to examine if students who are “treated” more than once per semester by an academic advisor and/or have interactions with the Academic Success Center have higher progression and retention rates. These analyses include regular contact for advisement and specialized contact for tracking early warnings and the type of intervention used with the early warning. The Academic Success Center will be central to this work.

PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT

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REFLECTIONS, OBSERVATIONS, & PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

Our activities over the past five years have focused on a triad of student engagement, faculty engagement, and administrative support to achieve higher rates of retention, progression, and graduation. The high impact strategies listed above have proven to be successful for Augusta University and our students. We have already begun and continue to see major improvements in our retention, progression, and graduation rates. This success is a result of implementing multiple programs that address the structures necessary for a student to complete a degree and providing opportunities for students to engage more with the university. Both the structural and engagement components were possible due to the Board of Regents generous funding of \$3.1 million to support these initiatives.

At the structural level, we have created a professional Academic Advisement Center to serve students as they transition to college and through the declaration of a major as they begin to pursue upper division courses. The Academic Success Center now provides a centralized location for students to receive any additional support necessary to be successful in their core courses and to receive training on how to succeed academically and personally. The Office of First and Second Year Experiences creates opportunities for students to engage with Augusta University and the community in which they will live and continue to work after college. Additional personnel in Career Services allows us to provide support for some of our most highly sought after majors.

At the engagement level, Augusta University now provides more opportunities than ever for students to engage in high impact practices. Our INQR 1000 program is a major success with our students and faculty. The INQR 1000 program provides an

initial research-based experience for all first year students. Iterations of this program now include study away, study abroad, and honors options. Augusta University has increased also the number of study away and study abroad programs available to our undergraduate students. The Honors Program has doubled in five years as more academically qualified students attend Augusta University. The Center for Undergraduate Research and Scholarship has hosted three Summer Scholars Programs with many of those students having their research accepted at national conferences.

While Complete College Georgia (CCG) has been the launching pad for many of these initiatives, the next goals need to be sector specific as we look to serve the state and our area's economic needs. Augusta University's next set of goals will focus on developing academic programs and engagement opportunities that meet our state mandate of health sciences and cyber sciences. The goals will include

1. the establishment of a School of Computer and Cyber Sciences,
2. a marked increase in high impact engagement activities such as undergraduate research, study away/abroad, honors programming, internships/practicums, and capstone experiences, and
3. growth of experiential learning and leadership activities that align with our institution's Quality Enhancement Plan, *Learning by Doing*.

Through these actions, Augusta University continues to maintain its place at the forefront of creating what comes next in undergraduate student success for the state, nation, and higher education.