

Advancing a Culture of Engagement

Georgia Southern University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

A Tradition of Engagement

Georgia Southern University has a rich academic tradition steeped in cultivating student learning and success in addition to strong historical ties with the local community. Beginning with its origins in 1906 as the First District A&M School, citizens of Bulloch County demonstrated a commitment to education by successfully bidding for an agricultural and mechanical school to be constructed in the Statesboro community. From these humble origins, Georgia Southern rapidly evolved into a post-secondary institution dedicated toward teacher training. In 1959, Georgia Southern was recognized as a comprehensive institution of higher education, broadening its mission well beyond educating teachers but maintaining its commitment to quality teaching. Throughout its history, Georgia Southern has reached out to the local community to provide to members the benefits of higher education. During the latter half of the twentieth century, this focus has been expanded to include the global community, earning the campus university status in 1990.

Building on these dual traditions of quality teaching and regional focus, the Georgia Southern community selected *Advancing a Culture of Engagement* as the topic for its Quality Enhancement Plan.

Georgia Southern fosters a culture of engagement where the campus community actively seeks both knowledge and human connections, creating a community of mutual aspirations and collective support regarding student learning. Our culture of engagement represents the personal investment of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and other stakeholders in the learning enterprise and the close relationships that are born out of such engagement. It bridges theory with practice, extends the learning environment beyond the classroom, and promotes student growth and life success of all learners. Engagement prepares students for leadership and service as world citizens, inspiring in our students the values of integrity, civility, kindness, collaboration, and a commitment to lifelong learning, wellness, and social [1] responsibility.

In our institution, student learning is defined as those changes in students' knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or values that may be attributed to the University experience. At Georgia Southern, learning occurs in diverse contexts. The campus itself is a laboratory for learning. Students acquire general knowledge, critical thinking skills, understanding of the scientific method and specialized knowledge in a major field, and learn to appreciate the connections made to enhance learning, artistic [2] expression, and the value of teamwork, mentoring, service, and leadership.

As evidenced in Georgia Southern's [Mission Statement](#) and [Strategic Plan](#), the concept of "engagement" has long been recognized as central to student learning at this institution. By choosing this topic for our Quality Enhancement Plan, it is our goal to ensure both the continued ubiquitous nature of this culture of engagement at Georgia Southern as well as ensure that this culture of engagement represents an experience of the highest quality for all stakeholders.

Linkage to Mission and Strategic Plan

The strength of the University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), *Advancing a Culture of Engagement*, lies in its deep roots within the University's mission and Strategic Plan. As reflected in the [Mission Statement](#), adopted by the Board of Regents in June 2004, Georgia Southern operates under the teacher-scholar model where faculty have the primary responsibility for "the creation of learning experiences of the highest quality, informed by

[3] scholarly practice, research, and creative activities.” It is a “university devoted to academic distinction in teaching, scholarship, and service,” and its “hallmark is a culture of engagement that bridges theory with practice, [4] extends the learning environment beyond the classroom, and promotes student growth and life success.” At the same time, the *Mission Statement* reaffirms Georgia Southern’s commitment “to advancing the State of Georgia [5] and the region through the benefits of higher education.”

Likewise, Georgia Southern’s [Level I Strategic Plan](#) further reaffirms this culture of engagement. In assessing Georgia Southern’s comparative advantages, the Level I Strategic Plan clearly recognizes the University’s “culture of engagement, where students work side-by-side with faculty and staff, participating in active learning

[6] related to the acquisition and use of knowledge for the benefit of humanity.” The plan further states: “Engagement” permeates explanations of who we are, what we do, and how we differentiate ourselves from other institutions, and is integral to Georgia Southern University’s many advantages. Engagement refers to the psychological and physical energies invested in active participation in the learning process (in-class and out-of-class). At Georgia Southern University, expectations for engagement are set high for students to take the initiative and responsibility for their active engagement in learning activities, and for faculty and staff to invest in supporting student successes. All are partners in the learning process, and the result is a campus culture of participation and personal attention. The benefits of engagement accrue to the university community in direct proportion to the [7] time and energy invested by all members of the community.

The plan identifies the instrumental role faculty play within this culture.

The faculty bring alive the culture of engagement. Faculty are primarily full-time, terminally degreed, experienced in their professions, and committed to a student-centered university. Faculty are willing to forge personal relationships with students and involve students in their scholarship and service activities. Student Affairs provides co-curricular programming to enhance faculty interaction with students beyond teaching, scholarship, and service roles. At few other institutions will students find

[8] this level of engagement.

And, the plan reaffirms the University’s service ethic.

Service and leadership opportunities are promoted on and off campus, and these activities solidify connections with the internal and external communities. Students find opportunities to expand their active learning by taking part in service projects both on campus and across the community. Faculty and staff contribute their time and energies for their mutual benefit and to enhance the town-gown

[9] relationship.

Capitalizing on the comparative advantages outlined in the Strategic Plan, Georgia Southern seeks to become one of the best public comprehensive universities within the next decade. To reach this destination, the Strategic Plan identifies six strategic themes to guide the University’s journey. One of the themes—[Academic Distinction](#)—forms the core of this plan with the other five themes being subordinate to and supportive of [Academic Distinction](#). The themes are as follows:

- Academic Distinction
- Student-Centered University
- Technological Advancement

- Transcultural Opportunities
- Private and Public Partnerships
- Physical Environment

The Quality Enhancement Plan links to the Level I Strategic Plan through the common core theme of Academic Distinction. While the other five themes are not as predominant in the Quality Enhancement Plan, they all contribute to fostering a culture of engagement and are integral to its overall success. It is worthwhile to briefly highlight these connections as summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1
Relationship of Level I Supporting Themes to a Culture of Engagement

Level I Theme	Implementation Plan
Student-Centered University	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. assess role of faculty & staff 2. include “commitment to engagement” in faculty/staff hiring criteria 3. reward faculty & staff who actively engage with students 4. offer training opportunities on participating in the campus culture of engagement 5. revise annual evaluation practices to recognize engagement as a desirable activity
Technological Advancement	use of technology to foster & facilitate interpersonal engagement
Transcultural Opportunities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. strengthen multicultural & international programs on campus 2. enhance the Centers of International Studies, Africana Studies, & Performing Arts
Physical Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. use of space to facilitate human interactions (small groups & large) 2. remodel & refurbish existing structures with creation of spaces conducive to human interaction (e.g., College of Information Technology building & renovation of Henderson Library)
Public & Private Partnerships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. promote private giving through capital campaigns (e.g., University’s Centennial Campaign) 2. encourage engagement with local community through campus outreach centers (e.g., Botanical Center, Planetarium, & Wildlife Education Center) 3. develop alumni university program (long-term goal)

Once the Level I Strategic Plan was articulated, the campus developed eight university-wide, functional, implementation plans that describe the strategies that will be utilized to attain the Level I goals. Ultimately, all units within the University are accountable for the implementation of these Level II plans. These eight plans form the [Level II plans](#) of the strategic planning process, are organized by functional area, and are as follows:

- The Academic Plan
- The Enrollment Management Plan
- The Facilities Plan
- The Financial Plan
- The Human Resources Development Plan
- The Marketing and Communications Plan
- The Organizational Plan
- The Technology and Information Resources Plan

Table 2 (*Appendix I*) shows the relationship between the Level II strategies and the Level I plan. *It is important to note that the University’s Quality Enhancement Plan will become the ninth plan of the Level IIs,*

making it an integral piece of an already extant plan—embedded into the University’s overall planning structure. This placement supports the University’s view that the plan is an intrinsic element of a much larger effort to which the campus community has already invested an enormous amount of time and commitment. This larger effort has also enjoyed widespread support and “ownership” throughout the campus community.

Moreover, four of the eight Level II plans explicitly or implicitly describe strategies that directly relate to a **culture of engagement**, providing cross-linkages between Level II strategies and the University’s Quality Enhancement Plan. **Table 3** references these strategies by Level II plan and Level I theme.

Table 3
Level II Strategic Initiatives & Culture of Engagement

Level II	Academic Plan	Facilities Plan	Human Resources Development Plan	Marketing & Communications Plan
<i>Level I</i>	<i>Academic Distinction</i>	<i>Academic Distinction</i>	<i>Academic Distinction</i>	<i>Academic Distinction</i>
	Build a culture of engagement in the learning process.			Extend the culture of engagement .
	Broaden engagement of citizens in the lifelong learning process, regardless of where they live or work.			
	<i>Student-Centered University</i>	<i>Student-Centered University</i>	<i>Student-Centered University</i>	<i>Student-Centered University</i>
	Communicate to students the meaning and value of scholarship, lifelong learning, and engagement .			
	Integrate student learning and personal and career development into a holistic and seamless educational experience. (engagement implied)			

	<i>Technological Advancement</i>	<i>Technological Advancement</i>	<i>Technological Advancement</i>	<i>Technological Advancement</i>
	Continue to enhance the use of technology for teaching inside and outside the classroom and to encourage engagement .			
	<i>Transcultural Opportunities</i>	<i>Transcultural Opportunities</i>	<i>Transcultural Opportunities</i>	<i>Transcultural Opportunities</i>

		Provide a physical and social campus environment that encourages engagement in the exploration of diversity .		
	<i>Physical Environment</i>	<i>Physical Environment</i>	<i>Physical Environment</i>	<i>Physical Environment</i>
	Provide quality academic facilities and natural environmental areas to support the educational mission of the University and enhance the culture of engagement .			
	<i>Public & Private Partnerships</i>	<i>Public & Private Partnerships</i>	<i>Public & Private Partnerships</i>	<i>Public & Private Partnerships</i>
	Increase and reward engagement in local, state, regional, and national service opportunities .		Share the human resources of the University with external community. (engagement implied)	

Further evidence of Georgia Southern University’s commitment to engagement is found in the University’s [General Education Outcomes](#) (*Appendix 2*). This document articulates ten categories of outcomes for the core curriculum that the University seeks to instill in all of its graduates. The theme of engagement directly underpins two of the ten categories: “responsible citizenship” and “worthy use of leisure.” Responsible citizenship holds the expectation of active participation as a citizen in society, while worthy use of leisure suggests the pursuit of a lifestyle to promote the betterment of self and others. Additionally, students who are truly engaged in the academic community of the University and in their studies will achieve the eight other general education outcomes.

Challenges to Engagement

Despite this common thread of engagement woven throughout the University’s *Mission Statement*, *Strategic Plan*, and core curriculum, and the University’s rich history in this culture, Georgia Southern faces constant challenges to its ability to maintain and advance a culture of engagement within its academic community. In light of these challenges, it becomes imperative for the University to be constantly vigilant for opportunities to focus on ways to strengthen its culture of engagement. Not only does engagement result in better prepared and more well rounded students, but it also impacts the University’s ability to successfully graduate a

[\[10\]](#)

higher percentage of students who enroll. Three conditions in particular demonstrate the challenges Georgia Southern faces.

1. Georgia Southern has experienced tremendous enrollment growth since the 1980s and this growth continues albeit on a more incremental level. Between Fall 1999 and Fall 2004, student enrollment at Georgia Southern University grew almost 11.2% (n=14,476/16,100). Simultaneously, Georgia Southern has experienced reductions in its state appropriation, which has resulted in a loss of faculty lines. With current enrollments exceeding 16,000, and expectations for continued growth, average class size at Georgia Southern has gradually increased, diminishing the ability of faculty to individually interact on a personal level with students and become well acquainted with them. This growth is most apparent at the

undergraduate lower division level, as depicted in the table below, where average class size has risen from 36 in Fall 1999 to 39 in Fall 2004. Student:faculty ratios are now at a six-year high of

[11]

20:1. While these increases appear modest, it is important for the University to be cognizant of them and their potential to impact Georgia Southern's tradition of engagement with its students. Georgia Southern must continuously reaffirm its commitment to a culture of engagement and reinforce this culture within the University community.

Fall Semester	Enrollment	Average Class Size: Lower Division	Average Class Size: Upper Division	Average Class Size: Graduate	Student: Faculty Ratio
Fall 1999	14,476	36	21	8	19:1
Fall 2000	14,184	35	19	8	19:1
Fall 2001	14,371	38	20	9	18:1
Fall 2002	15,075	39	22	10	19:1
Fall 2003	15,704	38	23	11	19:1
Fall 2004	16,100	39	22	11	20:1

2. Another challenge that the University faces is faculty turnover. More than half of the University's faculty have been with the University for less than five years. While Georgia Southern is energized by having so many new faculty with fresh ideas, enthusiasm, and skills, these faculty are not necessarily as familiar with or committed to Georgia Southern's culture of engagement as the longer-term faculty. Georgia Southern must find ways to acculturate new faculty and staff to our longstanding tradition of engagement—highlighting the importance of this engagement not just to our students, but to the larger University community as well.

3. As mentioned above, Georgia has experienced an economic downturn during recent years,

[12]

resulting in reduced state revenues. Consequently, Georgia Southern received less support in state appropriations which impacted its ability to hire high quality faculty and staff, reward meritorious personnel, meet equipment and supply needs, and maintain and enhance its physical environment. Deferred maintenance is repeatedly cited as major consequence of budget reductions. Georgia Southern values and recognizes the importance physical environment plays in campus culture as reflected in its Strategic Plan. Natural and man-made spaces facilitate human interactions by bringing people together in comfortable areas that encourage sharing and dialogue from small groups to large assemblies. Because of the impediments of budget cuts and the concomitant low faculty and staff morale, it becomes even more vital for the University to proactively preserve and advance its most important comparative advantage—its culture of engagement.

Budget reductions also result in loss of staff which has the most visible impact within the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. The University depends upon its staff in this division to facilitate many of the faculty, staff, and student interactions that occur outside of the classroom. These activities are an important feature of engagement and developing habits of lifelong learning.

Academic Distinction through an Enhanced Culture of Engagement

As designed, Georgia Southern's Quality Enhancement Plan advances the University's overarching goal of becoming one of the premier comprehensive public institutions in the nation by utilizing the student-centered focus of the campus community to reach heightened levels of academic excellence. According to a press release on the 2004 [National Survey of Student Engagement](#), the extent to which students are academically successful and graduate from college is directly proportional to their level of engagement in their college experience. Moreover, students who are actively involved in civic activities benefit through the development of a broader sense of ethical and societal responsibility. The National Survey of Student Engagement further identifies "comparative standards for determining how effectively colleges are contributing to learning: (1) level of academic challenge, (2) active and collaborative learning,

(3) student-faculty interaction, (4) enriching educational experiences, and (5) supportive campus environment." [13]

The Quality Enhancement Plan

Using the National Survey of Student Engagement's "comparative standards" as a guide, Georgia Southern University seeks to achieve higher levels of student learning through "advancing a culture of engagement." To accomplish this objective, the Quality Enhancement Plan delineates five broad goals for engaging students. Within this framework, we have identified several focused strategies and initiatives for achieving progress in each area.

1. *engaging freshmen in the campus and community cultures*. To maximize each student's university experience, it is imperative that we reach out to these students early in their academic careers to communicate a shared value system common to the university community. Moreover, students need to be aware of their responsibilities as learners and the expectations for their success as well as knowledgeable about the different facets of learning. Learning at Georgia Southern is more than just what occurs in the classroom. Efforts toward achieving this goal will be specifically directed at enhancing the First Year Experience Program to highlight freshmen opportunities for and the value of student engagement in campus activities and in the surrounding community. Additionally, the importance of participating in campus academic traditions will be communicated to freshmen to reinforce a sense of academic community and shared values.
2. *engaging students in scholarship, research, and/or creative activities*. Georgia Southern faculty embody the teacher-scholar model and recognize the significant role that scholarship plays in optimizing student learning. Learning is reinforced and higher levels of comprehension achieved when students become directly involved in experiential learning opportunities, applying knowledge learned in the classroom. To that end, Georgia Southern will extend opportunities for students to become directly involved in original or meaningful scholarship, research, and/or creative activities; will communicate the value of these learning experiences to students; and will motivate students to participate actively in them.
3. *engaging students through active and service learning opportunities*. This goal extends the efforts undertaken in goal two above by expanding opportunities for student learning and personal growth,

[14]
branching out beyond the scholarship of discovery into the scholarships of application and integration. Georgia Southern strives to make it possible for all undergraduates to have an experiential learning opportunity that is appropriate to their field of study. This learning may take the form of active learning and/or service learning. Our focus will be to heighten campus and student awareness on the importance of participating in these learning initiatives and to promote active learning through study abroad experiences

and service learning through a variety of campus and community initiatives.

4. *engaging students through capstone experiences in all academic programs*. The benefits to learning that accrue to majors who participate in capstone experiences are widely recognized throughout the academy. While some academic programs offer capstone experiences to its students, these are not uniformly available across all disciplines at Georgia Southern University. We believe that focusing our efforts in this area will greatly strengthen student learning and enhance academic engagement. To accomplish this goal, the University will undertake a critical review of the capstone experiences currently in place and develop a model for extending opportunities to include all disciplines. Where applicable, capstone experiences will be designed to include service learning opportunities.
5. *engaging students in a campus and societal social contract*. While the previous four goals primarily frame engagement in terms of enhancing student learning, goal five is designed to impart to students their responsibilities as citizens of this university community as well as citizens of a much larger societal community. Through its participation in the American Democracy Project, Georgia Southern has ready access to the means for accomplishing this goal. It is important for Georgia Southern students to be cognizant of and reflective on their societal responsibilities.

While each of these five areas addresses engagement in terms of student engagement (even more specifically [\[15\]](#)

undergraduate student engagement), it is important to recognize that underpinning that engagement is faculty and staff engagement with students, each other, the campus, and the larger community. Faculty and staff model this behavior for students.

Format of the Quality Enhancement Plan

In discussing each of the five areas noted above, we will present each effort in detail, note progress made to date, describe the current environment and challenges posed by each issue, and develop an action plan for achieving these goals. The action plans will (1) describe the plan; (2) identify the institutional units responsible for implementation; (3) state the resources required; (4) provide a timeline for accomplishing each goal; (5) list assessment measures and benchmark criteria; and (6) note how outcomes will be used to inform ongoing implementation in each area.

Development of the Quality Enhancement Plan

Before launching into a detailed discussion of Georgia Southern's Quality Enhancement Plan, it is appropriate to step back a moment to summarize the development of the plan—an initiative that has directly involved students and all divisions of the campus: academic colleges, student service units, business and finance, and university advancement.

Development of Georgia Southern University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) began in earnest on January 7, 2003, when the President charged the University's Strategic Planning Council (SPC) with facilitating [\[16\]](#)

the selection of the QEP theme. In approaching this task, SPC members considered means for soliciting widespread campus input on the selection of the QEP theme as documented in their [January 22, 2003](#), meeting minutes. Moreover, Council members were asked to identify groups that should be included in these campus discussions and were asked for their "top three to five ideas" for a QEP topic. The meeting minutes further report that "a schedule of meetings will be developed for the QEP topics discussion; the meetings should include

[\[17\]](#)
faculty, staff, and students."

The Strategic Planning Council's discussion continued at its subsequent meeting as shown in the [February 5, 2003](#), minutes. The SPC met to consider the list of proposed topics generated from Council members as well as

[\[18\]](#)

the list of groups identified for involvement in discussion topics. Efforts to solicit campus input began shortly thereafter when the SPC Senate Representative issued a 'call for topics' for the QEP at the Faculty Senate's [February 12, 2003](#), meeting. As reported, "the SPC has been charged with creating a short list of possible topics for the QEP and is seeking input from the stakeholders in the University, including the faculty,...staff, and

[\[19\]](#)

student body."

In the interim, the Strategic Planning Council identified liaisons for the campus groups and made initial contacts as recorded in the [February 19, 2003](#), SPC minutes. Proposed press release language concerning the Quality Enhancement Plan was also shared with SPC members. The minutes further note that members recommended that a discussion of the Quality Enhancement Plan be included on the Fall Convocation agenda. At the [March 5, 2003](#), SPC meeting, members discussed feedback received from campus groups. Planning continued for additional SPC-sponsored campus forums at the [March 26, 2003](#), meeting, where meeting minutes reference a handout that "detailed the 'call for ideas, creating a QEP.'" The handout defined the Quality Enhancement Plan and solicited input from the campus community on potential topics through forums, e-mail, and campus news media.

Progress was reported at the [March 27, 2003](#), Faculty Senate meeting, where the SPC Senate Representative reported: "A campus-wide request for input from faculty, staff, and the student body about possible topics for the SACS Report Quality Enhancement Plan produced robust and very thoughtful input. The SPC narrowed the input to a list of five possible topics for the QEP... These topics are still being refined and will soon be forwarded to the University's SACS [Leadership Team] to decide on a final topic for the QEP..." The actual list of the five potential topics was shared with the Faculty Senate at its subsequent meeting as documented in the [April 24, 2003](#), minutes: "(1) educating our diverse student body; (2) creating an engaged university; (3) creating a community of scholar citizens; (4) improving graduation rates; and (5) fostering a culture of high achievement, high expectations, and personal responsibility."

The Strategic Planning Council presented these five topics to the President's Cabinet at the end of the Spring 2003 semester. After considerable discussion, the theme, "Advancing a Culture of Engagement," was selected in May and presented to the SACS Leadership Team for its approval. In June 2003, four members of the Leadership Team attended the SACS Orientation meeting and presented the theme to SACS liaison, Donna Wilkinson, for her initial feedback.

The theme was formally presented to the campus community in Fall 2003 both at the Fall Convocation (August 11, 2003) and at the Fall General Faculty Meeting (October 23, 2003) [*Appendix 3*]. Coinciding with these campus announcements, the SACS Leadership Team identified and assembled 24 QEP Support Teams (*Appendices 4 and 5*) with representation from every division of the University. These teams were charged on January 5, 2004, as follows:

To ensure that the Leadership Team has specific goals for all of the units on campus, each Support Team will submit a limited number of objectives that relate to the overall theme. These objectives will be used by the Leadership Team in writing the QEP for the institution to submit to SACS. (*Appendix 6*)

By June 2004, 24 plans from the QEP Support Teams had been received and reviewed by the SACS Leadership Team. Using this information, the Leadership Team met for a three-day session (June 25, 29, and

30th) to distill the plans into a manageable set of goals. From these sessions, an initial outline for the Quality Enhancement Plan was compiled, identifying three goals (*Appendix 7*).

This proposed outline was shared with numerous campus constituencies beginning in the Fall 2004 semester: the Strategic Planning Council, the Deans' Council, the Department Chairs and Directors (at the September 24th Department Chairs and Directors Workshop), and the Administrative Team (at its annual workshop on October 5th). The feedback from all of these groups resulted in the refinement of the initial set of goals to a more focused plan by late October. Following this distillation process, the initial draft of the Quality Enhancement Plan was completed by the end of the Fall 2004 semester and shared with several "expert readers," including the Director of Admissions, the Director of International Studies, and the Director for Advisement and Retention. Each of these individuals would become key players in the implementation of the Quality Enhancement Plan, and their input was essential. The final draft of the QEP was completed in January and approved by the Leadership Team and the President's Cabinet in February 2005.

During the development of the Quality Enhancement Plan, the Leadership Team was cognizant of the importance of linking the plan to the university's planning and evaluation mechanisms. As already noted, the Strategic Planning Council played a significant role in facilitating the selection of the theme and has been instrumental in establishing the Quality Enhancement Plan as an integral Level II plan within the Strategic Plan.

Goal 1: Engaging Freshmen in the Campus and Community Cultures

"Students learn by becoming involved...Student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. A highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends a lot of time on campus, participates actively in [\[20\]](#) student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students."

Georgia Southern University encourages freshmen to become engaged and has created many opportunities that begin as early as the recruitment phase. These include recruiting receptions, campus tours, Open House, and orientation. These opportunities are critical activities because they help to acquaint the student with the campus and communicate expectations even before matriculation.

When students arrive on campus, Georgia Southern builds on these early efforts through GSU 1210: University Orientation—a key mechanism for making connections between students and the academic and campus community and for communicating expectations for success. GSU 1210 is a required course for all new [\[21\]](#)

students during their first semester. This course is designed to "help first year students understand the purpose of a college education, learn about college resources and requirements, explore values and interests, learn to make decisions and realistic choices, explore career objectives and programs of study, and establish supportive [\[22\]](#)

relationships with faculty and staff." GSU 1210, originally taught in the 1985-86 academic year, has become the mainstay of the First Year Experience at Georgia Southern University. The course, as currently taught, has evolved from its original form. For example, the original course used a standard syllabus and required the training of all faculty—both veteran and new instructors—on an annual basis. Over time, the variability of content has increased, and the requirement for annual faculty training has relaxed.

Action Plan

To ensure that freshman are engaged in the campus and community cultures, are comfortably

familiar with campus resources and clearly understand their responsibilities as students, we will implement the following five-point plan:

1. develop ‘anticipatory socialization mechanisms’ targeting the time between a student’s acceptance to Georgia Southern and freshman orientation to reach out to newly admitted students and begin to draw them into the campus community;
2. enhance the GSU 1210 orientation course;
3. create systems to identify the interests of students and to measure the quality and amount of student engagement on campus;
4. expand the concept of living/learning communities by using GSU 1210 courses as a vehicle for encouraging greater freshmen engagement on campus—targeting specific student populations; and
5. create a campus culture that values student engagement and a community atmosphere.

1. Strategy: Develop ‘anticipatory socialization mechanisms’ targeting the time between a student’s acceptance to Georgia Southern and freshman orientation to reach out to newly admitted students and begin to draw them into the campus community.

Georgia Southern University admits the majority of the new freshman class by March 1st in any given year; however, the University’s focused two-day orientation sessions—Southern’s Orientation, Advisement, and Registration (SOAR)—are not held until the months of June and July, leaving three to four months when new admits are generally not in contact with the University. We view this period as an opportune time to reach out to new students and introduce them to the Georgia Southern community we want them to know and to impart the campus community’s expectations for the students. It is critical that incoming freshmen begin to comprehend what they are expected to learn during their time at Georgia Southern. The campus will achieve this goal through the implementation of two specific initiatives.

Initiative 1: Contact new admits in a warm, welcoming manner either through sending a letter or an e-mail and provide them with the preliminary academic plan and preparation for [SOAR advisement](#).

Responsibility: Academic Advisement Center.

Resources: Between 2001 and 2003, the University’s freshmen acceptance numbers averaged approximately [\[23\]](#) 4,555. Using this figure to estimate the approximate cost of this mailing, we project that this initiative will require approximately \$1,700 in postage, \$550 in materials (letterhead and envelopes), plus the associated cost of staff time.

Timeline: Mailings begin in the Spring 2006 semester.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: The success of this initiative will be judged by the new students’ perceptions of both the campus and the value of engagement. Using the [National Survey on Student Engagement](#), the University will compare Fall 2005 first-year student perceptions to Fall 2006 first-year student perceptions with the expectation of seeing improvement. In addition, SOAR advisors will be asked for feedback concerning their assessments on how well this initiative successfully communicated to new admits the University’s culture and expectations (e.g., did students exhibit a higher degree of clarity about academic expectations?)

Feedback Loop: We will use the assessment data to evaluate the degree to which this initiative achieved its

objectives. Based upon the results, the initiative may be altered before the Spring 2007 round of implementation. This assessment/implementation cycle will be repeated each succeeding year at least through 2015.

Initiative 2: Prior to their arrival on campus for classes, freshmen will receive a second letter or e-mail from their GSU 1210 instructor which will enthusiastically welcome them to campus, inform them of the common reading requirement, and invite them to participate in freshman convocation.

Responsibility: GSU 1210 instructors and the First Year Experience Center.

Resources: Between 2001 and 2003, the University's number of freshmen enrolled averaged approximately [24]

2,610. Using this figure to estimate the approximate cost of the mailing, we project that this initiative will require approximately \$1,000 in postage, \$380 in materials (letterhead and envelopes), plus the associated cost of staff time.

Timeline: Mailings occur in Summer 2006.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Since the primary objective of this initiative is to promote freshmen participation in freshman convocation, this number will be used as the primary determinant of the initiative's success in meeting its stated outcome. The number of Fall 2005 freshmen attending freshman convocation will be compared to the Fall 2006 freshmen attendance number with the expectation of seeing higher levels of participation. The initiative also impacts a new student's perception of the Georgia Southern campus community, so again, the National Survey on Student Engagement will be used to help measure the success of this initiative. It is recognized, however, that since several of the initiatives discussed in this section have the potential to impact student perceptions that it will be difficult to determine the individual impacts of each initiative. Nonetheless, this Survey is a valuable tool for assessing the overall impact of the University's plan to engage freshmen in the campus community and instill in them a sense of academic community.

Feedback Loop: Initiative 2 will be evaluated based upon the results of the assessment; recommendations for improvements will be incorporated into the plan before the initiative is implemented a second time during the Summer of 2007. This assessment/implementation cycle will be repeated each succeeding year at least through 2015.

2. **Strategy:** Enhance the GSU 1210 orientation course.

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, the University's orientation course has undergone many evolutions since first being offered in 1985-86. The trend has been a movement away from a common standard syllabus with required instructor training to greater variability in course content with less focus on instructor training. These changes have resulted in greater inconsistency in course outcomes. Strategy #2 is designed to ensure that GSU 1210 courses consistently meet their stated course outcomes, regardless of the section.

Currently, there are seven course outcomes for the GSU 1210 courses. These are as follows: (1) to provide students with an instructor committed to easing their transition to productive citizenship in a university community; (2) to develop a sense of community among new students at Georgia Southern University; (3) to enhance academic skills and study strategies conducive to student success in college-level courses; (4) to connect students with the many different resources and services offered at Georgia Southern University; (5) to encourage intellectual, moral and aesthetic growth by broadening student awareness of human variety, cultures, art, values and beliefs; (6) to provide an early forum for discussion of personal and social issues such as self-discipline, time and stress management, civil discourse, and taking charge of one's own education; and (7) to provide students

with a working knowledge of the University's academic requirements, the academic advising system, various degree programs, and policies and procedures of the institution.

Initiative 1: Establish a uniform curriculum for GSU 1210 that will encourage and facilitate the engagement of students, both inside and outside the classroom.

Responsibility: Task Force of GSU 1210 instructors and the First Year Experience Council.

Resources: GSU 1210 instructors' and staff time stipend involved in planning the curriculum modification.

Timeline: This initiative is already in progress, having begun during the Fall 2004 semester. Implementation is scheduled for Fall 2005.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Design and development of a new standard curriculum that clearly articulates stated learning and course outcomes, assessment measures, and benchmark criteria will be ready for implementation in Fall 2005. The revised curriculum is expected to produce greater student engagement on campus and in the community. Therefore, the level of student engagement is one measure of the curriculum's success in meeting its stated objectives. Furthermore, we expect students to understand the value of engagement to their learning, so once again, the National Survey on Student Engagement will be utilized to help assess this initiative. We will also survey our students to ensure that intended outcomes are being met.

Feedback Loop: The results of the assessment will guide future modifications to the curriculum to ensure that it achieves the student learning and course outcomes articulated. This assessment/implementation cycle will be repeated each succeeding year at least through 2015.

Initiative 2: Require faculty training that encourages GSU 1210 instructors to value and promote student engagement and to help students make connections between that engagement and life/career plans.

The Interim Director of Advisement, Retention, and First Year Experience has recommended adding an eighth objective to the current seven GSU 1210 course outcomes. This objective is related to students' selection of a major and the career implications of that choice. For instance, requiring GSU 1210 students to research and write a paper about their possible future careers accomplishes several learning outcomes: (1) students learn how to access the resources in the Career Services Center, the Henderson Library, and on career-related web sites such as Monster.com early in their freshman year; (2) students learn what they can do with the major they have selected or thought about selecting; (3) students learn about the importance of developing their résumé—the need for a balanced résumé that includes academic work, service, and work and international experience related to their major; and (4) students learn how to compile a research paper using correct format, including citation of printed, web-based, and personal-interview materials.

Responsibility: Center for Excellence in Teaching and Office of Career Services.

Resources: Staff time and professional development time and funds for GSU 1210 instructors.

Timeline: The faculty training curriculum will be developed during Summer and Fall 2005 with implementation of the first training sessions scheduled for Spring and Summer 2006.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: The benchmark criterion is 100% GSU 1210 instructor training achieved. The expectation is that this training results in heightened levels of student engagement and student awareness of the importance of engagement in life/career decisions. Again, the National Survey of

Student Engagement will be used as one measure for determining the success of this initiative as well as the student rate of participation in activities on and off campus (as measured through the student involvement transcript discussed later).

Feedback Loop: Once the data from assessment is gathered, the results will be used to determine the degree to which the faculty training curriculum is meeting its objectives. Improvements will be recommended and incorporated into the curriculum before the next round of training begins. This assessment/implementation cycle will be repeated each succeeding year at least through 2015.

3. Strategy: Create systems to identify the interests of students and to measure the quality and amount of student engagement on campus.

Initiative 1: Implement an electronic “student interests checklist” that students complete during their SOAR session, Welcome Week, or GSU 1210 class. All academic departments will have access to the electronic “student interests checklist” so programming can be directed toward students with specific interests and target advertising of events to particular groups (e.g., *Eagle Grams* sent to students who have expressed an interest in Ireland and Irish heritage), thereby facilitating student engagement in on-campus activities.

Responsibility: Office of Admissions.

Resources: No additional resources beyond staff time to develop the electronic list.

Timeline: Develop the list during 2005-06 with implementation scheduled for Summer 2006.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: The success of this initiative is dependent upon the degree to which departments utilize this resource in their programming efforts; therefore, the number of hits on the web site of the electronic “student interests checklist” will be tracked as a measure of its utility. Furthermore, it is anticipated that if the initiative is achieving its outcomes, the number of students who participate in campus-related activities will rise. This number will likewise be tracked (through the student involvement transcript discussed later) and compared to data prior to the implementation of the electronic “student interests checklist.”

Feedback Loop: The results of the assessment will be used to find ways to improve both the functionality of the electronic “student interests checklist” and communicate its value to departments. This assessment/implementation cycle will be repeated each succeeding year at least through 2015.

Initiative 2: Promote greater utilization of the student involvement transcript (administered through the Office of Student Leadership Development and Outreach Programs). Educate students about the availability, purpose, and relevance of this transcript during SOAR and Welcome Week, and promote its use by making it a required element of GSU 1210.

Responsibility: Office of Admissions and GSU 1210 instructors who will discuss the transcript with students. Office of Student Leadership Development and Outreach Programs who will be responsible for administering the transcripts and updating them annually.

Resources: No additional resources beyond staff time.

Timeline: Since GSU 1210 instructors will need to be familiar with the student involvement transcripts, this initiative must be implemented in conjunction with the faculty training discussed in *Initiative 2* of Strategy #2. Therefore, implementation will be scheduled to coincide with the implementation of the faculty training initiative

—Spring and Summer 2006.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Since the main objective of this initiative is greater utilization of the student involvement transcript, we will track the rate of use of the student involvement transcript. Our initial objective is to increase the rate of utilization by 20% within the next five-year period (2010). Other measures of tracking the rate of student engagement in campus and communities activities will also be used (e.g., feedback from the National Survey of Student Engagement).

Feedback Loop: The degree to which students are making greater use of the student involvement transcript will be used to determine future improvements that can be made to this initiative to ensure that it meets identified benchmarks and outcomes. This assessment/implementation cycle will be repeated each succeeding year at least through 2015.

Initiative 3: Identify a random sample of students who utilize the student involvement transcript and hold focus groups with these students to review the quality of their experiences.

Responsibility: Office of Student Leadership Development and Outreach.

Resources: No additional resources beyond staff time.

Timeline: This initiative builds on the prior initiative. It assumes that if the previous initiative achieves its outcomes, we should see greater utilization of the student involvement transcripts during the 2006-07 academic year. Therefore, efforts to assess the *quality* of the students' experiences will be made during the following academic year—2007-08.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Focus groups will be used to assess the quality of the students' experiences. Once a random sample of students has been identified, the challenge will be to motivate these students to participate in the focus groups. The students' feedback will be compared against pre-determined student learning outcomes related to their particular service learning experience to assess whether the students' experiences are meeting the intended objectives.

Feedback Loop: The information obtained from the focus groups will be used to guide future "placements" of students in service learning projects and ensure that students' experiences continue to be worthwhile and productive. This assessment/implementation cycle will be repeated each succeeding year at least through 2015.

4. Strategy: Expand the concept of living/learning communities by using GSU 1210 courses as a vehicle for encouraging greater freshmen engagement on campus—targeting specific student populations.

Initiative 1: GSU 1210 courses will be linked to other academic courses. These linkages bring together the same group of freshmen for more than one course and facilitate the development of a sense of community. Furthermore, linking GSU 1210 with academic courses enhances the academic focus of GSU 1210 and promotes greater student engagement in the course and on campus.

Currently, less than one-half of all GSU 1210 courses are linked to other academic courses. Those GSU 1210 courses that are linked are primarily directed to on-campus students who are already significantly more likely to become engaged in the Georgia Southern community by virtue of on-campus residency. This initiative will be directed toward attracting off-campus students to these courses to more broadly integrate off-campus students with the on-campus student population.

Responsibility: GSU 1210 instructors and the First Year Experience Council.

Resources: Professional development time and funds for GSU 1210 instructors and staff time.

Timeline: Course linkages will be developed during the 2005-06 academic year with initial implementation scheduled for Fall 2006. If assessment results prove favorable, an additional five courses will be offered in each of the following years beginning in Fall 2007 (continuing out to 2010 and representing an overall growth of 25 new linked courses—addressing roughly 25% of GSU 1210 course offerings).

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Initially offer five GSU 1210 linked courses. One expected outcome of this initiative is a heightened sense of community among the students enrolled regardless of campus residency status. We also expect to find that the academic focus of the GSU 1210 linked courses results in higher levels of freshmen engagement in campus-related activities. Given these expectations, the National Survey on Student Engagement will be used as one means of assessment to determine the impact of this initiative on first-year students' perceptions of the campus community. Additionally, the rate of freshmen engagement in campus-related activities will likewise be tracked (via student involvement transcripts).

Feedback Loop: Based upon feedback gathered during assessment, the GSU 1210 linked courses will be evaluated for possible improvements which will be folded into the curriculum. This assessment/implementation cycle will be repeated each succeeding year through 2010.

Initiative 2: Utilizing the electronic “student interests checklist” (discussed under *Initiative 1*, Strategy #3), design and develop specialty GSU 1210 clusters thematically focused on the interests of undeclared students. Under this initiative, faculty propose topics based on the interest areas of undeclared students which also incorporate other issues such as civic engagement, service leadership, or American Democracy Project topics. Undeclared students taking these courses simultaneously receive exposure to these larger engagement issues. It is our expectation that this exposure will increase the degree to which undeclared students feel connected with Georgia Southern and result in higher levels of second-year retention for these students.

According to the *2003-2004 Fact Book*, almost half of the University's freshmen class enrolled as undeclared majors in the Fall 2003 semester (n=1,248/2,708 — see pp. 20 & 34). Furthermore, experience has shown that undeclared majors are the most difficult student group to retain into the second year. Engaging this student population and imparting a sense of campus community is critical to the University's ability to successfully address retention issues.

Responsibility: GSU 1210 instructors and the First Year Experience Council.

Resources: Staff time and professional development time and funds for GSU 1210 instructors.

Timeline: Since GSU 1210 instructors will need to be familiar with the electronic “student interests checklist,” this initiative will also be a component of the faculty training discussed in *Initiative 2*, Strategy #2. Therefore, implementation will be scheduled to coincide with the implementation of the faculty training initiative as well as the electronic “student interests checklist”—Spring and Summer 2006. If assessment results prove favorable, an additional five courses will be offered in each of the following years beginning in Fall 2007 (continuing out to 2015 and representing an overall growth of 50 new thematically-focused courses—addressing roughly 50% of GSU 1210 course offerings).

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Initially, we will design and develop five specialty GSU 1210 clusters for Fall 2006 implementation. A primary determinant of this initiative's success in achieving its stated

outcomes will be the second-year retention of the undeclared student population who enroll in these specialty sections. A pre-determined benchmark will be established and compared against the second-year retention levels of undeclared students who have not taken these specialty sections. Recognizing that retention levels can be affected by other variables, we will also utilize peer-guided exit interviews of a random sample of students who have completed one of these five sections and compare this information against the student learning outcomes defined for the course.

Feedback Loop: The information obtained from assessment will be used to ensure that the specialty GSU 1210 sections meet pre-determined student learning outcomes. Course modifications will be made as needed before the next offering. This assessment/implementation cycle will be repeated each succeeding year through 2015 or until [\[25\]](#) we can accommodate all undeclared students through these specialty GSU 1210 sections.

Initiative 3: Create additional GSU 1210 courses that are linked to the student's intended major, thereby providing the GSU 1210 courses with a more academic focus and facilitating greater student involvement.

Responsibility: GSU 1210 instructors and the First Year Experience Council.

Resources: Staff time and professional development time and funds for GSU 1210 instructors.

Timeline: Additional major-specific GSU 1210 courses will be developed during the 2005-06 academic year with implementation scheduled for Fall 2006. If assessment results prove favorable, an additional five courses will be offered in each of the following years beginning in Fall 2007 (continuing out to 2010 and representing an overall growth of 25 new major-specific courses—addressing roughly 25% of GSU 1210 course offerings).

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Initially, we will design and develop five major-specific GSU 1210 sections. These classes will accommodate approximately 125 students. It is the expectation that students who take these sections will demonstrate greater inclination for engagement in campus and community activities; therefore, the number of students participating in campus-related events will be the main measure used to assess this initiative. A pre-determined benchmark percentage will be established for increased levels of student engagement and compared against this groups' percentage of student engagement.

Feedback Loop: The assessment data will be used to inform future roll-outs of this initiative. If assessment measures determine that these focused sections meet the intended outcomes, the number of sections offered will be expanded to include more students. Otherwise, the data will be use to guide improvement in course design to ensure that outcomes are being met before expanding to a larger audience.

5. Strategy: Create a campus culture that values student involvement and a community atmosphere.

Initiative 1: Promote the active involvement of 'key administrators' to model the attitudes and behavior that Georgia Southern seeks to instill in its students.

Responsibility: President's Cabinet.

Resources: No additional resources beyond administrators' time.

Timeline: This initiative will be communicated during the 2005-06 academic year with visible results expected during 2006-07.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: The key measure for assessing the success of this initiative in meeting its stated outcome will be the degree of heightened visibility of key University administrators both on campus and in the community, but especially at activities that attract first-year students and provide opportunities for modeling the attitudes and behavior that Georgia Southern seeks to instill in their students (e.g., “Move-In” Day; Open House; Scholars’ Day; Homecoming; and civic and community groups). We will define exactly who are the “key University administrators” and assess administrators’ progress toward achieving greater involvement through their annual self-reported activities.

Feedback Loop: The initiative will be promoted during the 2005-06 academic year with results expected during the 2006-07 academic year. Feedback will be provided to administrators regarding their personal levels of success in meeting this outcome. Ultimately, this initiative should also lead to higher levels of student engagement since they should be favorably influenced by the administrators’ examples.

Goal 2: Engaging Students in Scholarship, Research, and/or Creative Activities

Georgia Southern University emphasizes the development of its faculty as teacher-scholars as articulated in Ernest L. Boyer’s *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. Our *Mission Statement* clearly references the teacher-scholar responsibilities and these are further outlined in the [2004-2005 Faculty Handbook, § 203.01](#) (p. 27). In particular, the University stresses the **dynamic** nature of scholarship as “the scholarship of [\[26\]](#) discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching.” Implicit in the successful implementation of this dynamic paradigm is the element of engagement—not just active faculty engagement with scholarship, but, perhaps even more importantly, faculty educating students about and engaging students in the various facets of scholarship. It is through experiential learning opportunities that students reach the higher levels of comprehension and learning that Georgia Southern expects of its graduates.

While many of Georgia Southern’s academic programs require research papers and/or projects from their students, traditionally, this research focuses on gathering data and coalescing ideas related to course content. Students typically are not encouraged to develop original research projects which have long been relegated to the realm of graduate students. More recently, Georgia Southern has witnessed a growing interest in the value of undergraduate research as original scholarship, and there are opportunities available to students. While these opportunities are not new, they are also not promoted as effectively as they might be. Again, it is the opportunity for undergraduates to conduct original scholarship, research, and/or creative activities and share the results of these efforts that is most beneficial to the student’s learning. Examples of current activities that inspire original work include the National English Honor Society, Sigma Tau Delta, which sponsors an annual conference at which undergraduates have the opportunity to present papers and panels; and the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi which through its Promotion of Excellence Grants program promotes research- or development-focused projects. According to the program’s criteria, research-focused projects must achieve greater clarity and further scientific understanding about some aspect of the promotion of academic excellence. Georgia Southern also publishes a semi-annual magazine of the arts—*Miscellany*—that features student work, sponsors gallery exhibits of student art work, and hosts concerts featuring student musicians. All of these efforts are open to the public as well.

In addition, the University participates in the Wildgame Supper—an annual spring event which showcases student research to state legislators and other dignitaries. In particular, the Poster Session focuses on undergraduate research and is a competitive event featuring projects done by undergraduate students in collaboration with a faculty member. Each student prepares a 3’ x 4’ poster describing the project with a two to four minute talk that guides listeners through the poster. The student then accompanies the faculty member to

Atlanta to present the research at the Supper. Currently, in its fifth year, the poster competition typically attracts as many 30 to 40 submissions. The organizing committee reviews and evaluates all submissions and selects a maximum of 10 for presentation at the Supper. A variety of disciplines have been represented at this event, including, but not limited to, biology, chemistry, physics, computer science, art, business, geology, geography, health, kinesiology, anthropology, public administration, political science, and psychology.

Beyond these formal venues that inspire original undergraduate scholarship, research, and/or creative activity, several academic programs at the University actively promote and/or require undergraduate research experiences. The University Honors Program strives to include a meaningful research experience each semester [\[27\]](#) in the schedules of the honor scholars. This program also requires capstone experiences for its *1906 Scholars*, which will be discussed in greater detail under goal four of the Quality Enhancement Plan. While the research undertaken by *1906 Scholars* may not be original, they are required to do a significant amount of research, going far beyond what would normally be required for freshmen at Georgia Southern. This year, first semester *1906 Scholars* prepared extensive annotated bibliographies on a topic of their choosing. During the second semester, the scholars are expected to write multi-genre research papers of 10-12 pages in length that utilize 7-10 sources and incorporate a variety of disciplines and genres. In both cases, the students are being challenged to select a topic, prepare a thesis statement, and do the research. The questions being asked or the problems posed begin with the students, and the end product is entirely the work of their own labors.

At least two faculty members in the Physics department actively engage undergraduate students in their own research programs. In one case, three students are currently working on computational models relating to Bose-Einstein condensation and are supported by the faculty member's National Science Foundation grant. All three students are working on original research and present their research at professional conferences. One of the students will be presenting a ten-minute talk at the upcoming March meeting of the American Physical Society.

The University's Biology department offers a course, BIOL 4890—Undergraduate Research, which might serve as a model for encouraging more disciplines to provide original undergraduate research opportunities. In BIOL 4890, biology majors tackle a research problem under the close supervision of a faculty member. A written abstract and an oral presentation of the results of the student's work must be presented at an end-of-semester symposium, although the course may be taken over multiple semesters. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this course is of considerable benefit to students applying to graduate and medical schools. Traditionally, the course attracts the most dedicated biology majors; the challenge is to extend interest in the course to other students who may not be as motivated initially, but will have their interest awakened through the experience. Other programs, in chemistry, physics, anthropology as well as programs in the College of Health and Human Sciences, also have formal structures in place for undergraduate research experiences, and the Department of Mathematical Sciences is currently developing an undergraduate seminar that promotes research. Again, the challenge is to reach more students and inspire them to participate in these activities.

As illustrated above, undergraduate research is a critical component of both the University's emphasis upon student-centered learning and the empowerment of the teacher-scholar model. The [U.S. News and World Report](#) has identified the presence of student research programs as a key indicator of academic programs that lead to student success. A number of the University's peer and aspirational institutions have implemented programs in which "independently or in small teams, and mentored by a faculty member, students do intensive and self-directed research or creative work that results in an original scholarly paper or other product that can be formally [\[28\]](#) presented on or off campus." In 2004, the Georgia Southern University Research Enhancement Task Force Report cited undergraduate research as a priority in enhancing the University's research climate, and empowering the teacher-scholar model.

Action Plan

To expand the number of opportunities for original and/or meaningful scholarship, research, and/or creative activities available to undergraduates to ensure that all disciplines offer these important learning experiences for students; to communicate the value of student participation in original scholarship, research, and/or creative activities; and to motivate more students and faculty to participate in these learning experiences, we put forward the following four–point action plan:

1. complete a comprehensive assessment by academic program of opportunities for undergraduate scholarship, research, and/or creative activities currently in existence on campus, noting the degree of utilization, best practices, and the primary focus (i.e., original work);
2. develop a pilot program (possibly modeled on BIOL 4890) for extending opportunities for undergraduate scholarship, research and/or creative activities into all program curricula;
3. implement the pilot program; and
4. increase faculty awareness of external funding opportunities that support undergraduate research and encourage faculty to submit proposals for funding.

The undergraduate research experiences implemented through this plan address the [general education student learning outcomes](#). Students will learn problem-solving skills through articulating a research question, formulating an hypothesis, and designing and conducting the research. Effective analysis of information is learned through interpretation of the research results. Basic knowledge is demonstrated through the student's understanding of the research problem within the context of both the discipline and the broader societal context. Familiarity with and some understanding of major issues is achieved when results are placed in discipline context (e.g., literature reviews, historical significance). Undergraduate experiences involving creative activities will hone aesthetic appreciation skills. All types of research/creative activities promote effective communication skills as students learn discipline-appropriate means for disseminating the results of their scholarship or creative activity (e.g., written reports, presentations at professional meetings, publications, poster presentations). Similarly, these experiences encourage students to make intelligent decisions by considering the ethical dimensions of their work and to demonstrate tolerance and understanding when discussing their scholarship/creative activity in relation to others' work.

1. **Strategy:** Complete a comprehensive assessment by academic program of opportunities for undergraduate scholarship, research and/or creative activities currently in existence on campus, noting the degree of utilization, best practices, and the primary focus (i.e., original work).

While Georgia Southern is cognizant of many opportunities currently available for undergraduate scholarship, research, and/or creative activities offered through its academic programs, it is necessary to obtain a more detailed accounting of the various experiences in place, the degree to which students take advantage of them, and the focus of these experiences. Inventorying Georgia Southern's current offerings will also bring to light experiences which have been particularly successful both for faculty and students, suggesting a possible model—best practices—for broader implementation across disciplines.

Responsibility: University-level Task Force appointed by the Provost.

Resources: No additional resources beyond Task Force time.

Timeline: Survey instrument designed Summer 2005; data collected during Fall 2005 semester.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Data collected for each academic program.

- Scholarship, research, and/or creative activity identified where offered.
- Noted whether research/creative activity is a required element of the academic curriculum or an elective.
- Student enrollment reported for the past five years along with corresponding total program enrollment (majors).
- Focus of course determined—whether original work.
- Student learning outcomes identified and degree to which achieved.
- Qualitative assessment of overall experience—best practices.

Feedback Loop: The data compiled in the survey will inform the design phase of the pilot program. In particular, the data will be examined for evidence of courses that successfully achieved student learning outcomes and were viewed favorably by participants. These best practices will be put forth as possible models for other programs to emulate. The data will also determine those disciplines lacking current opportunities which might be targeted during the pilot phase of the plan.

2. Strategy: Develop a pilot program for extending opportunities for undergraduate scholarship, research, and/or creative activities into other disciplines currently not represented by such experiences. Working with the colleges, identify one academic program in each college for piloting the plan.

The pilot program will offer alternative models for designing an undergraduate scholarship, research, or creative activity experience, allowing faculty in each program to determine the actual course construct. After considering the models, faculty may opt to design their own course. Faculty will also be responsible for determining prerequisites to enrollment in the course, such as a minimum GPA and/or permission of the instructor; student learning outcomes; assessment measures; and benchmark criteria.

The challenge to piloting a program such as the one described here is recompensing faculty who agree to undertake such time-intensive research programs. Currently, there is no formal recognition in the Biology department for faculty who facilitate BIOL 4890 in terms of reduced teaching hours or extra compensation. For such a proposed pilot program to be successful, it is critical to find means for rewarding faculty.

Responsibility: College-level Task Forces.

Resources: No additional resources beyond Task Forces' time.

Timeline: Data analyzed, models developed, and units identified for piloting the program—Spring 2006 semester.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Design and development of a pilot program with appropriate student learning outcomes, assessment measures, and benchmark criteria identified. Identical student learning outcomes could be established for all six courses targeted during the first phase of implementation, but assessment of these outcomes will vary from discipline to discipline. Potential student learning outcomes might include discipline specific knowledge, problem-solving skills, and communication skills.

Feedback Loop: The model developed will be used to pilot the program—incrementally increasing the number of enriching undergraduate research experiences available to students.

3. Strategy: Implement the pilot program.

The pilot program will be implemented on a roll-out basis, initially targeting one program in each of the

University's six academic colleges which have undergraduate programs. The units identified for piloting the program will develop their courses during the 2005-06 academic year and be prepared to offer the courses commencing with Fall 2007.

Responsibility: Six academic units identified for piloting.

Resources: Faculty compensation amount to be recommended by the college-level Task Forces.

Timeline: Six new research- or creative activity-related courses will be developed during the 2005-06 academic year and ready to be offered beginning Fall 2007.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Six new undergraduate research courses listed in the *Catalog* and enrolling at least one student each. Each course will identify student learning outcomes, assessment measures, and benchmark criteria.

Feedback Loop: The degree to which student learning outcomes were achieved, the Student Ratings of [\[29\]](#)

Instruction form, and the faculty member's assessment will be used to evaluate how successfully the course was designed and suggest ways for improvement. The results will also inform the second roll-out of the program to extend opportunities for undergraduate scholarship, research, and/or creative activities into all disciplines. Successful experiences will be communicated broadly among the University community to encourage more students to participate in these experiences. We anticipate the second roll-out to occur in the Fall 2008 with six additional courses. This assessment/implementation cycle will continue until all academic programs have a research/creative activity experience.

4. Strategy: Heighten faculty awareness of external funding opportunities that support undergraduate research and increase the number of submittals to these types of programs by 50% by FY 2008 (*phase* [\[30\]](#) *one*).

Georgia Southern University will develop a two phase initiative to heighten faculty awareness of external funding opportunities that support undergraduate research and to increase the number of externally-funded undergraduate research projects at Georgia Southern. Additionally, the University will seek active [membership](#) and participation in the [Council on Undergraduate Research](#) (CUR)—a national organization, serving faculty and administrators at over 870 primarily undergraduate institutions. The focus of CUR is to provide quality undergraduate research opportunities for faculty and students. Not only will membership gain the University access to additional external funding opportunities and resources, it will also provide a venue for showcasing Georgia Southern student and faculty research, bringing campus visibility to these forms of scholarship.

In *phase one*, the University will focus on enhancing the acquisition of federally funded undergraduate research stipends, through mechanisms such as the [National Science Foundation](#) (NSF) [Research Experiences for Undergraduates](#) (REU) program which provides for additional targeted support for student research. Currently, the University has nine NSF awards—two of which have REU supplements; the goal will be to increase REU awards by 50% over the next two years, and to ensure that all NSF-funded projects have REU support. In addition, the University will pursue at least one [REU Site](#) for summer research experiences for a larger number of undergraduate students than is possible under a single award. Due to NSF funding restrictions, students in the sciences and social sciences will be the primary recipients of these awards.

Through a partnership with the Department of Defense, NSF also offers special opportunities through [Awards to Stimulate and Support Undergraduate Research Experiences](#) (ASSURE). This program is particularly interested in proposals that involve underrepresented minorities and women and/or proposals from institutions where access to research opportunities is limited. In FY 2005, the Department of Defense is targeting funding toward proposals that originate from predominantly undergraduate four-year institutions. As part of *phase one*, Georgia Southern will explore the feasibility of these awards as a possible source of undergraduate research funding.

To build the research program, all indirect costs generated from NSF REU's allocated to the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs (ORSSP) in the first two years of the initiative will be retained in a centralized budget and redirected towards student stipends in non-NSF areas. The indirect cost generated will be matched by the Georgia Southern University Research and Service Foundation.

In *phase two*, both Foundation and state support will be sought to significantly expand the program to a campus-wide effort. The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire has developed a state-supported [center for student/faculty research](#); other peer institutions have developed institutional lines to support these efforts. Models of the Wisconsin, Pomona, and Truman State programs will be analyzed and modified to match the Georgia Southern University student profile. The resulting undergraduate research initiative will be administered by the ORSSP which will serve as the coordinating unit, advised by a faculty board. ORSSP will also assume the lead in exploring alternative sources of external funding to supplement the program. Furthermore, Georgia Southern University will expand the undergraduate research program to include an annual poster session, presentations at CUR, and an annual published report featuring student research projects. It is anticipated that at least three presentations will be made at national meetings, the report published, and a campus-wide poster session presented by the conclusion of *phase two*.

Responsibility: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs.

Resources: \$700 for annual institutional membership in the Council on Undergraduate Research plus monies for matching funds on NSF proposals. This strategy will also be helped significantly by the University's recent hire of the new chair of the Department of Chemistry (beginning July 1, 2005), who also serves as the Chair of the National Science Foundation's REU Chemistry Leadership Group. One of the chair's near-term goals is to secure a regional REU site for Georgia Southern University.

Timeline: Secure membership in the Council on Undergraduate Research beginning FY 2006. Demonstrate 50% growth in REU awards by FY 2008; ensure all NSF awards have REU supplements, where appropriate, by FY 2008.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: The following assessment measures and benchmark criteria will be used to evaluate the success of this initiative.

- Membership in the Council on Undergraduate Research.
- Receipt of four REU supplement awards (NSF awards) by FY 2008.
- Investigation and submission, if appropriate, of a REU Sites award proposal by FY 2008.
- 100% of NSF awards, where appropriate, having REU supplements by FY 2008.

(a.)

(b.)

(c.)

(d.)

(e.)

(f.)

(g.)

(h.)

FY 2005 # REU Awards	FY 2006 Benchmark [(a.)]	FY 2007 Benchmark [(b.)]	FY 2008 Benchmark [(c.)]	FY 2005 % NSF Awards w/REU Suppl	FY 2006 Benchmark [(e.)]	FY 2007 Benchmark [(f.)]	FY 2008 Benchmark [(g.)]
2	2	3	4	22%	48%	74%	100%

Note: the benchmarks established are targeted toward the undergraduate student population.

Feedback Loop: In conjunction with increasing the number of REU supplement awards, ORSSP will also be exploring additional funding opportunities available through ASSURE and other programs that support undergraduate research. Membership in CUR will be used to facilitate promotion of these opportunities to faculty and students on campus as well as provide a resource for investigating alternative external funding sources. The information gained will be used to inform the second phase of this initiative.

Goal 3: Engaging Students through Active and Service Learning Opportunities

Active Learning

One of the most valuable active learning experiences in which students can partake is a study abroad experience. Institutions of higher education are increasingly recognizing the importance of formal international study abroad experiences and actively seeking ways to promote greater undergraduate participation. Georgia Southern University has long shared this view and commitment. In 1981, Georgia Southern established the International Studies Program, which featured three core courses in international studies; a minor program; and two course concentrations. The International Studies Program also facilitated the addition of global and cross-cultural issues into numerous undergraduate courses thereby broadening the dimensions of the curricula. Additionally, the program offered workshops for faculty development in international studies and organized extracurricular activities to heighten awareness of transcultural issues both on campus and in the local community.

In 1991, the University created the Center for International Studies, providing a formal structure for these activities. The Center was tasked with continuing enhancement of the international dimension in relevant courses; conceptualization, development, and implementation of new courses and degree programs in international studies; organization of additional faculty workshops; expansion and strengthening of foreign language instruction; establishment of linkages with foreign universities; and promotion of extracurricular programs aimed at increasing international awareness in the local and regional area. Today, the Center for International Studies is the centralized location for all major international initiatives at Georgia Southern, and for the first time in the University's history, degree programs in International Studies and International Trade, classes in the English Language Program, programs and services for international students, and oversight of study abroad and exchange programs are all housed under the same umbrella.

While the Center successfully facilitates many international initiatives, the challenge is to continue to grow these programs and educate more students about the value of an international experience to their overall academic preparation and learning. Perhaps even more challenging is growing the enrollment of international students at Georgia Southern University—a significant step in enhancing the transcultural dimension of the campus. For the majority of Georgia Southern students who do not study abroad, foreign national classmates may be their only exposure to international issues. American institutions are finding it increasingly difficult in light of the events on September 11, 2001, to bring foreign nationals to their campuses. Indeed, for the first time in a decade, 2003-04 international student enrollment at U.S. institutions of higher education dropped over the

previous year's enrollment, reflecting an annual change of -2.4% (n=572,509/586,323). ^[31] Of even greater concern, is that the decline is largely reflected in undergraduate international enrollment which dropped by 5%. ^[32]

Enrollments from the Top 5 sending countries fell as well: China by 20%; Japan by 14%; India by 9%; ^[33] Canada by 3%; and Korea by 1%. Master's institutions experienced the second largest decline in ^[34] undergraduate enrollments at 9% overall.

The reasons articulated for this decline include the following:

- real and perceived problems related to visa approvals;
- growing U.S. tuition and fees for international students;
- expanding home country capacity of public and private higher education institutions (e.g., China, India, Korea, and Latin America);
- competition from other host countries (e.g., United Kingdom, Australia, German, France, Japan, China, Mexico, South Africa, and Thailand); and
- alternative access to U.S. degrees (i.e., distance learning, joint degrees).

In light of these challenges, it is incumbent upon the University to be both cognizant of the problems and proactive in developing solutions to facilitate growth. In response, Georgia Southern University has taken the following steps to recruit and enroll greater numbers of international students and will continue to pursue these initiatives actively:

- increasing outreach to potential students through more in-country recruitment by alumni and campus representatives;
- reviewing materials and web site information aimed at international applicants to ensure that the message is welcoming and contains a suggested timeline for application steps;
- expediting the admissions process and sending early notification with frequent e-mail contact;
- developing linkage programs with international universities to facilitate exchanges of students and scholars, stimulating future applications from abroad for degree study;
- creating joint degree/distance learning mechanisms through which to engage with international students and scholars who remain outside the U.S.; and
- sharing techniques and strategies with higher education associations such as ACE, AAU, ^[35] CGS, and NASULGC, which can disseminate "best practices" among member institutions.

Furthermore, the Center currently coordinates several exchange programs with the following universities: Keimyung University (South Korea); Nagoya University (Japan); Central Normal University (China); Roskilde University (Denmark); University of Applied Sciences (Germany); and Universidad Veracruzana (Mexico); and is actively pursuing additional programs. These programs benefit Georgia Southern students as well, along with summer study abroad opportunities which currently exist in the following countries/regions: Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Ireland, South Africa, Spain, West Africa, and through the University System of Georgia: Spain, Germany, Greece, Russia, France, England, Italy, and in Asia. Again, the challenge concerning Georgia Southern students is to increase the opportunities available to students, find ways to incorporate these experiences into curricula, and motivate students to participate in them.

Action Plan

To heighten campus and student awareness of the value of participating in international study initiatives and to promote active learning through study abroad, we put forth the following four-point plan:

1. integrate formal study abroad experiences into more undergraduate curricula;
2. join the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP);
3. raise undergraduate student participation in international study abroad or exchange experiences from the current 1.57% (FY 2005) to 3% annually by 2007;
4. publish an online International Studies newsletter; and
5. expand the Center for International Studies web site.

1. Strategy: Integrate formal study abroad experiences into more undergraduate curricula.

This strategy, by necessity, must be a multi-year initiative due to institutional procedures governing course curricular revisions. Prior to vetting a *formal* course curricular change, faculty within an academic program typically will offer the revised course curriculum three or four times to ensure that it meets enrollment expectations. Upon deciding to advance formally the proposed course change, the faculty present the proposal to the department's undergraduate curriculum committee. Assuming the department committee views the change favorably, the committee forwards the proposal with its recommendation to the college's undergraduate curriculum committee for further action. The college committee will consider the proposal in respect to its consistency with the mission of the college; availability of resources; impact on the academic integrity of the program; and identification of course related student learning outcomes, assessment measures, benchmark criteria, and feedback loops associated with the proposed change. Once the college committee approves the change, it is placed before the college faculty for a vote.

If passed, the proposal is forwarded to the university-level Undergraduate Committee for their consideration. Assuming the proposal is approved at this level, it is advanced to the Faculty Senate. Once the Faculty Senate approves the change, the Senate Moderator forwards a recommendation to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Provost, if amendable to the change, forwards a recommendation to the President for his approval. Upon the President's approval, the change is then forwarded to the University System of Georgia Board of Regents for their action. The complete process from the first course offering to final approval by the Board of Regents may take as long as three to five years. Given this situation, it is difficult to project timelines associated with benchmarks for integrating international study abroad experiences into course curricula.

With this in mind, however, Georgia Southern views the two degree programs currently offered through the Center for International Studies as potential models for integrating study abroad learning experiences into curricula. For example, students majoring in the B.A. in International Studies program are expected to become highly proficient in understanding global affairs through (1) the study of the culture, history, and political economy of regions outside the United States; (2) the acquisition of a high degree of proficiency in a second language; and (3) direct experience of another culture by studying or working abroad. Similarly, the B.S. in International Trade requires an overseas internship or an internship with a business or institution having an

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international component in the United States. Certainly, one sees direct applicability of this model to academic programs in the foreign languages as well as particular emphases in history, political science, sociology, business, and many other disciplines.

Responsibility: Director for Center for International Studies.

Resources: Approximately \$25,000 per annum required for travel, publicity, and programming to support

development of new programs specifically targeted at undergraduate degree curricula.

Timeline: One new program will be established every three years (beginning in 2008), which allows time for location of a potential site, development of the academic components of the program, recruitment of faculty and students, and implementation of the program.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Currently, every study abroad program is evaluated annually to assess whether it will be continued. Evaluation is based upon the number of students enrolled, outcomes associated with the student ratings of instruction (student survey evaluations of the faculty and course), and faculty feedback about the academic value of the program.

Feedback Loop: In 2005, CIS will assess the new Czech Republic program which was developed in 2004 and will be offered for the first time in Summer 2005. The results of this evaluation will be used to inform the development of future study abroad programs. We anticipate offering another new program in a different part of the world in two years, which, if successful, will become a regular offering in the third year (2008). This assessment/implementation cycle will continue at least through 2015.

2. **Strategy:** Join the [International Student Exchange Program](#) (ISEP).

The International Student Exchange Program (ISEP) is a network of 245 institutions of higher education located throughout the United States and 35 other countries. The program is designed to provide a cost-effective approach to international exchanges by allowing students from participating institutions to pay all fees (including room and board) to their home institution while residing at the host institution. Student exchanges are possible in any discipline and can range in length from one academic term to two years. In most cases, ISEP participants matriculate directly into the host institution and pursue courses with native students. Since 1979, this organization has facilitated over 21,000 exchanges.

Membership in ISEP will enable Georgia Southern University to increase the number of international students it is able to bring to campus as well as expand international study opportunities for Georgia Southern students. ISEP provides training to new coordinators, information and resources about programs available at member institutions, and publications that enable coordinators to recruit and inform students of various international opportunities. Furthermore, the program provides support in the placement process, implements a J-1 program, offers health insurance, provides assistance to participants when emergency situations arise, and distributes transcripts along with assistance in interpreting and resolving discrepancies in transcripts as needed.

Responsibility: Director for Center for International Studies.

Resources: \$2,800 annual membership fee plus \$7,200 for participant placement fees.

Timeline: Purchase membership in ISEP commencing FY 2006.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Georgia Southern University will measure the success of its membership in the International Student Exchange Program by assessing the degree to which benefits are realized by Georgia Southern students. Through its membership, the University expects to achieve the following benefits:

- increase the number of student exchanges through access to an extensive network of participating institutions;
- increase the number of student exchanges through access to a broader representation of academic disciplines;
- increase the number of exchanges through access to the cost-effective model employed by

participating institutions;

- increase the number of student exchanges through access to additional administrative support services available through ISEP; and
- increase the number of international students who come to Georgia Southern University through access to an extensive network of participating institutions.

The [University System of Georgia Board of Regents](#) “calls for the continuous improvement in the quality of all international opportunities, and specifically to raise study abroad participation.” The Board’s rationale is based on evidence “that students who have studied abroad are better able to function and navigate in complex environments.” Furthermore, the Board is finding that students who study abroad are much more likely to graduate upon returning to the home institution than those students who do not have this international exposure, leading them to conclude that international study abroad experiences “mean that [students] will truly become

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better educated, and better equipped with academic credentials, to become productive leaders and citizens.” In response to these data, the Board of Regents established a System-wide goal of increasing the combined annual undergraduate participation rate in study abroad to 4% by 2007. Georgia Southern’s target to enable the System to reach this goal is set at 3% by 2007. Membership in ISEP is one means for partially achieving this Board mandated benchmark. ISEP membership will facilitate growth in student exchange programs, but not other types of study abroad initiatives. Nonetheless, it will be an important component in meeting the benchmarks set below.

(a.)	(b.)	(c.)	(d.)	(e.)	(f.)	(g.)	(h.)
FY 2005 # GSU Students Abroad	FY 2006 Benchmark [(a.)]	FY 2007 Benchmark [(b.)]	FY 2008 Benchmark [(c.)]	Fall 2004 # Intl Students at GSU	Fall 05 Benchmark [(e.)]	Fall 06 Benchmark [(f.)]	Fall 07 Benchmark [(g.)]
22*	27	32	37	190	195	200	205

Note: the benchmarks established are targeted toward the undergraduate student population.

** The largest enrollments of Georgia Southern students studying abroad typically occur during the summer terms when certain highly popular courses are offered; however, many of these courses are only offered once every three years, so the enrollment numbers cycle from year to year. FY 2005 is a year when the Music program offers study abroad; therefore, the number of Georgia Southern students studying abroad for FY 2005 is much higher than enrollments in off-years. It is expected that the enrollment for FY 2006 and FY 2007 would decrease since this program is not offered in those years. To counter this effect, only the number of students studying abroad for Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 are reflected in column (a).*

Feedback Loop: Membership will be re-evaluated annually by the Center for International Studies to ascertain whether the above benchmarks are achieved. The decision to renew membership will be based upon this evaluation.

3. Strategy: Raise undergraduate student participation in international study abroad or exchange experiences (ISEP) from the current 1.57% (FY 2005) to 3% annually by 2007.

Responsibility: Director for Center for International Studies.

Resources: The Center for International Studies currently offers the following scholarships:

- two International Studies Scholarships at \$500 each;
- two Richters Honors Scholarships at \$500 each;
- three Farkas Foreign Language Scholarships at \$500 each;
- one Spain Study Abroad Scholarship for \$750; and

- several STARS (STudents Abroad with Regents' Support) work stipends and travel grants in the amount of \$7,000, which is matched by Georgia Southern Foundation monies.

The Center has identified the following scholarship needs:

- minimum of \$25,000 per annum to award \$1,000 scholarships to students going abroad for a semester or longer and \$500 scholarships for students participating in short summer programs.

The Center for International Studies also funds some travel for the Coordinator of Study Abroad and Exchange Programs to enable him to participate in study abroad fairs around the state of Georgia, to assist with the set-up of new programs abroad, and to learn about the on-site facilities and resources for existing programs abroad. The amount currently expended is approximately \$3,000 per year. This amount needs to be increased to about \$10,000 per year.

Additionally, the Center for International Studies currently expends between \$2,000 and \$5,000 each year to run study abroad fairs on campus, place advertisements in the *GeorgeAnne*, and create flyers, brochures, and other printed materials. These costs will be recurring.

Timeline: 2007

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: This benchmark will be assessed by calculating the University's annual participation rate for study abroad. (See table under Strategy #2.)

Feedback Loop: The annual assessment of the University's progress toward reaching the 3% target will provide important information that will direct future efforts toward meeting this goal.

4. Strategy: Publish an online International Studies newsletter.

Responsibility: Director for Center for International Studies.

Resources: No additional resources are required beyond current staff support.

Timeline: Design, develop, and produce first newsletter on web by Spring 2006.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: The production of an online International Studies newsletter.

Feedback Loop: The degree to which the online newsletter is electronically accessed (number of hits on the web site) will be monitored to ensure that faculty, staff, and students are utilizing this resource. The Center for International Studies will use these data to guide further content development of the newsletter.

5. Strategy: Expand the Center for International Studies web site.

Responsibility: Director for Center for International Studies.

Resources: No additional resources required beyond current staff support.

Timeline: Expanded web site in place beginning Fall 2006.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Through heightened visibility, expansion of the Center's web site is expected to result in greater numbers of Georgia Southern students participating in exchanges and study

abroad experiences as well as increase the number of international students studying at Georgia Southern. Therefore, the success of this expanded web site will be assessed both by the number of hits on the web site as well as overall progress toward meeting the Center's benchmark enrollment goals. (See related benchmark table under Strategy #2.)

Feedback Loop: The data gained during assessment will be used to inform the further development and enhancement of the Center for International Studies' web site.

Service Learning

Georgia Southern University has a long and excellent tradition of student volunteerism coordinated through the [Center for Student Leadership Development and Outreach Programs](#). Through this office, students can build a **student involvement transcript**—a document like an academic transcript that records a student's involvement in co-curricular activities, such as: Student Government; Southern's Orientation, Advisement, and Registration (SOAR); Eagle Entertainment; and community service. Students are encouraged to begin working toward developing a full student involvement transcript beginning in the freshman year. In addition, through the [Volunteer Services Office](#), students are provided with excellent opportunities for career exploration through hands-on professional level experiences while simultaneously addressing existing social issues and community needs. Students register with the Volunteer Services Office and, upon completion of a minimum of 200 hours of community service, receive credit on their service transcript. The Volunteer Services Office actively promotes the concept of service learning, networking, and résumé building through student involvement.

Programs coordinated by the Volunteer Services Office include the following:

- [Adopt-A-Grandparent](#)—matches Georgia Southern University students with elderly community members to enhance socialization and safety. Training and placement is provided by the Senior Companion Program with assistance from faculty and staff from sociology, psychology, public safety, public health.
- [Community Plunge](#)—invites community non-profit agencies to campus to showcase service opportunities. Students “take the plunge” by pledging 10 hours of service to an agency of their choice.
- [GS TOP STEP](#)—provides academic tutorial and mentoring service to school children in grades two through twelve with Georgia Southern University students providing the service. An excellent program for students considering professions in education, this program was named the *303rd Daily Point of Light* by President George H.W. Bush on November 17, 1990.
- [Homelessness and Hunger Week](#)—explores the issues surrounding homelessness and hunger in a week-long event, featuring a Hunger Banquet, a Tent Event (a student sleep-out), and many other activities.
- [Sculpt for the Hungry](#)—sponsored during Homecoming Week, participating organizations sculpt a structure from collected non-perishable foods and clothing and then donates the items to community groups.
- [President's Award](#)—awarded by the President of the United States for community service. Georgia Southern University is an official sponsor of this award, and students register with the Volunteer Services Office to be eligible for consideration.
- [Red Cross Blood Drives](#)—hosted monthly, students donate time and blood to this worthwhile

cause. Georgia Southern University students consistently rank in the top percentage of giving in the Bulloch County area.

- [Step-into-Statesboro](#)—held the day before classes begin in the fall semester, new and returning students are given the chance to discover community service opportunities.
- [Student Volunteer Action Board](#)—meets bi-monthly and plans service activities such as Have a Heart Day and Make a Difference Day.

Most recently, the emphasis has shifted toward service learning, the concept that student participation in volunteer activities can extend in-class learning outside of the classroom, providing experiential learning opportunities and instilling habits of lifelong learning and civic responsibility. Georgia Southern University defines service learning as follows:

A method of learning where students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized community service. The service experience is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the student. Service-Learning courses provide structured time for the students to reflect on the service experience as it relates to their coursework, personal development, and civic

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involvement.

Evidence of this shift toward service learning is seen in the development of the [Project for Civic Engagement and Social Transformation](#) on campus. This organization brings together university faculty, staff, and students with members of the community (e.g., local organizations, activists, and religious groups) to develop mutually beneficial, long-term relationships and projects. As stated in the group’s web site, “This collaboration can thus effectively combine locally-focused research and needs assessment with current scholarship to develop both community-informed university curricula and public programs of benefit to the community.”

While student volunteer opportunities at Georgia Southern already benefit both the community and students, service learning further integrates students’ external experiences with traditional classroom instructional methods (i.e., readings and lectures). Service learning already exists in some courses at the University, but we envision its growth across a breadth of disciplines so that a wider representation of courses include a service learning component and others more thoroughly integrate it into the classroom experience. We agree that by increasing service learning opportunities, we will “improve the quality of life in the entire community, create mutual understanding, make learning come alive, and prepare students for lifelong community service and civic

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engagement.”

Action Plan

To enhance engagement through active learning and service learning opportunities, the following steps are being explored:

1. strengthen coordination of service learning activities and assessment;
2. create extended partnerships, including joining National Campus Compact;
3. conduct an inventory of academic courses with a service learning requirement;
4. strengthen service-learning opportunities as a teaching tool to impact student development;
5. enhance the service recognition of students and faculty; and
6. develop online resources to support faculty interested in designing service learning courses and to identify service sites and projects.

1. Strategy: Strengthen coordination of service learning activities and assessment.

Responsibility: Center for Student Leadership, Office of the Provost, and Enrollment Management Council.

Resources: No additional resources beyond staff time.

Timeline: Initial discussions to begin once the directorship for the Center for Student Leadership is filled and final recommendations made in March 2006.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Improved coordination will be measured by the increase in students, faculty, and community partners participating in service learning initiatives.

Feedback Loop: Annual participation rates will be used to further refine coordination, promotion, and communication of service-based learning.

2. Strategy: Create extended partnerships, including joining National Campus Compact.

A network of more than 950 public and private two- and four-year college and university presidents, the National Campus Compact focuses exclusively on fulfilling the civic responsibilities of higher education. This organization highlights the role of personal and social responsibility within the overall educational mission by advocating (1) higher education participation in public and community service; (2) higher education's responsibility in raising issues of public concern and voicing ideas that contribute to the common good of society; (3) public/private partnerships with local communities; (4) higher education involvement in citizenship-building service activities; and (5) alignment of in-class studies with service experiences through responsible and reflective interactions with local communities.

Member institutions benefit in the following ways:

1. ready access to best practice solutions through a variety of publications;
2. dissemination of successful service-learning models;
3. availability of over \$7 million in grant funding;
4. visibility for college and university presidents;
5. hands-on faculty training;
6. recognition of faculty through the competitive Thomas Ehrlich Faculty Service Award;
7. recognition of students through the competitive Swearer Student Humanitarian Award;
8. numerous national student activities;
9. training for community service and service-learning directors; and
10. access to effective advocacy.

Responsibility: Director for Student Leadership.

Resources: \$2,000 annual membership fee

Timeline: Completed by July 2006

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Georgia Southern University will measure the success of its membership in the National Campus Compact by assessing the degree to which benefits are realized by Georgia Southern students. Through its membership, the University expects to achieve the following benefits:

- development of an inventory of best practice service-learning models for possible implementation on this campus;

- hands-on training for faculty interested in adding service-learning components to their courses;
- opportunities for external funding in this area; and
- participation in national recognition awards for faculty and students.

Feedback Loop: Membership will be re-evaluated annually to ascertain whether the above intended benefits to Georgia Southern University have been achieved. If so, then membership will be renewed.

3. Strategy: Conduct an inventory of academic courses with a service learning requirement.

Responsibility: Undergraduate Committee and the Center for Student Leadership.

Resources: No additional resources beyond staff time.

Timeline: Begin inventory Fall 2006.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: The inventory will provide benchmark data on the number of courses integrating a service learning component as a requirement or an elective and will provide an opportunity to showcase service learning course syllabi.

Feedback Loop: Results of the inventory will be utilized to raise faculty awareness of the benefits of service outcomes and make recommendations on enhancing course offerings by combining service and learning.

4. Strategy: Strengthen service-learning opportunities as a teaching tool to impact student development.

Responsibility: Center for Student Leadership, Office of the Provost, and Center for Excellence in Teaching.

Resources: Staff and faculty time; \$10,000 for faculty mini-grants to support development of courses that incorporate service learning.

Timeline: To begin once inventory in Strategy #3 is completed.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: It is anticipated that these recommendations should yield an increase in the number of courses where a service experience is integrated with classroom instruction and improve faculty-student connections as measured by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

Feedback Loop: Using a subset of NSSE survey items [questions 1 (n), (o), (p), (q), (s) and 7 (a), (b), (d)] with approval from the NSSE staff, we can survey a sample of students/faculty in service learning courses to examine pre- and post-assessment of faculty-student interactions.

5. Strategy: Enhance service recognition of students and faculty.

Responsibility: Center for Student Leadership and Office of the Provost.

Resources: No additional resources beyond staff time and funds for a recognition banquet (\$2500).

Timeline: 2008

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: By enhancing recognition, we anticipate increasing the number of faculty developing service learning courses and serving as mentors to facilitate course redesign, having more students seeking out service-integrated academic courses as indicated by the number of registration hits, and strengthening university-community relations.

Feedback Loop: Annual data will be collected to improve recognition and award incentives.

6. Strategy: Develop online resources to support faculty interested in designing service learning courses and to identify service sites and projects.

Responsibility: Center for Student Leadership, Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (SAEM) Technical Support, Office of the Provost, and the Center for Excellence in Teaching.

Resources: No additional resources beyond staff time to develop website and a community connection database.

Timeline: 2006

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: An accessible website available to faculty, students, and community partners will be measured by the number of hits and the number of students and faculty who complete the awareness training module on service learning, its role in academic experiences, and its benefits. Additionally, we will measure the number of faculty accessing course syllabi samples.

Feedback Loop: The data will be utilized to expand web-based service learning resources and to deliver service learning services.

Goal 4: Engaging Students through Capstone Experiences in All Academic Programs

Capstone courses provide students with an enriching learning experience through the production of a final project, thesis, or creative activity, synthesizing all a student has learned in his or her academic program and providing the student with an opportunity to apply classroom knowledge. Some academic programs at Georgia Southern have long included capstone experiences as a required element of their curricula. Two highly visible examples are student teaching within the education curricula and junior/senior recitals for voice, instrumental, composition, and performance majors in the Music department. In the past decade, many departments within the University sought to create senior seminar courses. As the name suggests, these courses were designed to be taken by students in their last year of study and were intended to furnish an opportunity for students to think in broad terms about the work they had done in their major. A quick perusal of the *2004-2005 Catalog* reveals over [\[40\]](#) 30 seminar courses currently being offered—not including “research” courses and “senior project” courses. This count does not, of course, reflect the degree to which students register for these courses, although many of them are required.

Today, opportunities for capstone experiences exist in majors across the breadth of academic programs which the University offers. Leading the way are the College of Education, which, quite naturally, continues to require student teaching, and the College of Health and Human Sciences, which requires some combination of senior seminar, internship, and practicum in each of its departments. The College of Business Administration requires all of its business majors to successfully complete BUSA 4131—Strategic Management. In addition to developing an understanding of the strategic management process, this course provides students with a

foundation in which to integrate the functional areas of business and serves as the capstone for all business majors. Other capstone experiences include exhibitions produced by art majors, senior projects in the disciplines offered through the School of Technology, and senior/directed research (e.g., psychology and geology and geography). Additionally, *1906 Scholars* (a subset of the University Honors Program) are required to complete capstone experiences. This requirement, in place since Spring 2003, includes a public presentation of the research results on campus or at a professional conference. Many of these projects take the form of original research.

Although many of our programs have capstone courses in place, others do not, and the extent to which students take advantage of these opportunities varies. Because of the benefits in learning that accrue to students who participate in these programs (e.g., senior seminars, internships, teaching practica, research seminars, recitals, exhibitions, senior projects, service learning courses, or other activities as discipline appropriate), it is worthwhile to undertake a critical review of the capstone experiences currently in place and to extend opportunities to include all disciplines.

Action Plan

To assess capstone courses at Georgia Southern University, to improve those currently being offered, and to extend these enriching learning experiences into disciplines that do not currently have them, we will implement the following three-point plan:

1. conduct a comprehensive assessment of all capstone experiences currently in place by undergraduate academic program;
2. evaluate currently offered capstone courses to ensure that student learning outcomes are being met and revise as necessary; and
3. develop a pilot program for extending capstone opportunities into disciplines where none currently exist.

1. **Strategy:** Conduct a comprehensive assessment of all capstone experiences currently in place.

Before initiating any plan, it is very important for us to be able accurately measure what progress has been achieved to date—assess where we currently stand and identify best practices that may already exist.

Responsibility: University-level Task Force appointed by the Provost.

Resources: No additional resources required beyond Task Force's time.

Timeline: Survey designed Summer 2005 and conducted during Fall 2005 semester.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: The following data will be collected for each academic program.

- Capstone experience identified where offered.
- Noted whether capstone course is a required element of the academic curriculum or an elective.
- Student enrollment reported for the past five years along with corresponding total program enrollment (majors).
- Student learning outcomes identified and degree achieved noted.
- Qualitative assessments of overall experience gathered for use in determining best practices.

Feedback Loop: The data compiled in the survey will be analyzed and used to evaluate current capstone experiences with a focus toward improvements that can be made to ensure student learning outcomes are

achieved (goal two). The data will also inform the development of a pilot program for extending capstone experiences into disciplines that do not currently offer any (goal three). This pilot program will be based on best practice models. Simultaneously, the data will be used to identify potential academic programs that can pilot the program once developed.

2. Strategy: Evaluate currently offered capstone courses to ensure that student learning outcomes are being met and revise as necessary.

Using the data gathered in step one, units will be asked to evaluate their current capstone experiences to: (1) reaffirm the program as it currently exists if student learning outcomes are being met; (2) redesign the program if student learning outcomes are not being met; and/or (3) expand the program to include additional options such as service learning opportunities, if appropriate.

Responsibility: Academic programs that currently offer capstone experiences.

Resources: No additional resources are required for this evaluation.

Timeline: The data collection will be completed during Fall 2005 semester as part of the overall comprehensive assessment. The evaluation based on the data and the reaffirmation, redesign, and/or expansion of curricular capstone experiences will be initiated beginning Spring 2006. Revised capstone offerings will be in place beginning in Fall 2007. Expansions to current curricular capstone offerings will be implemented by Fall 2008.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Academic programs currently offering capstone experiences identified, and each program in this group completes an assessment of their capstone course (100% participation of those who currently have capstone courses) based upon the data collected in step one.

- Student learning outcomes identified and degree achieved noted.
- Qualitative assessments of overall experience gathered for use in determining best practices.

Feedback Loop: Based upon the outcome of the programs' evaluations, capstone courses identified as needing improvement will be redesigned with clear student learning outcomes, assessment measures, and benchmark criteria identified. Programs seeking to expand capstone opportunities will develop new courses built on clear student learning outcomes, assessment measures, and benchmark criteria. Both redesigned and new capstone experiences will continue to be re-evaluated annually based upon the success of the course in meeting student learning outcomes.

3. Strategy: Develop a pilot program for extending capstone opportunities into disciplines where none currently exist.

The data gained through the comprehensive assessment will be used to guide the development of a pilot program for extending capstone opportunities into disciplines which currently have none. Best practices will be sought from models already in place, and units identified to pilot the program. Initially, six academic programs will be targeted to develop capstone experiences (one per academic college that houses an undergraduate program). Results will be assessed after implementation and these data used to guide the second roll-out.

Recognizing that in some disciplines it may be useful to develop capstone experiences that involve service learning components, where feasible, alumni and discipline-specific professionals (e.g., in business, in the arts, in health professions, as well as others) will be utilized to develop meaningful capstone experiences.

This strategy, by necessity, must be a multi-year initiative due to institutional procedures governing course

curricular revisions. Prior to vetting a *formal* course curricular change, faculty within an academic program typically will offer the revised course curriculum three or four times to ensure that it will meet enrollment expectations. Upon deciding to advance formally the proposed course change, the faculty present the proposal to the department's undergraduate curriculum committee. Assuming the department committee views the change favorably, the committee forwards the proposal with its recommendation to the college's undergraduate curriculum committee for further action. The college committee will consider the proposal in respect to its consistency with the mission of the college; availability of resources; impact on the academic integrity of the program; and identification of course related student learning outcomes, assessment measures, benchmark criteria, and feedback loops associated with the proposed change. Once the college committee approves the change, it is placed before the college faculty for a vote.

If passed, the proposal is forwarded to the university-level Undergraduate Committee for their consideration. Assuming the proposal is approved at this level, it is advanced to the Faculty Senate. Once the Faculty Senate approves the change, the Senate Moderator forwards a recommendation to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Provost, if amendable to the change, forwards a recommendation to the President for his approval. Upon the President's approval, the change is then forwarded to the University System of Georgia Board of Regents for their action.

Responsibility: Six academic programs (to be identified during the data collection phase) which currently do not have capstone experiences.

Resources: Faculty development time and funds for compensating faculty who teach these courses.

Timeline: The six academic units targeted for the initial pilot roll-out will design their capstone experiences during the 2005-06 academic year and have them in place by the Fall 2007 semester.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Six new capstone courses in place in disciplines which had not previously offered them and enrolling students by Fall 2007. All new courses will be based upon clear student learning outcomes, assessment measures, and benchmark criteria. Courses will be evaluated each year based on their success in meeting student learning outcomes.

Feedback Loop: Courses will be continuously evaluated based on their success in meeting student learning outcomes, and the data collected will be used to guide course redesigns to ensure that students continue to receive enriching learning experiences. Data gathered during assessment will also inform the second roll-out of this program—creating six additional capstone courses for offering in Fall 2008. This assessment/implementation cycle will continue through 2015 or until all programs have capstone experiences.

Goal 5: Engaging Students in a Campus and Societal Social Contract

Georgia Southern University is honored to be chosen as one of a select number of institutions invited to participate in the American Democracy Project—a prime venue for achieving goal five, engaging students in a campus and societal social contract. The American Democracy Project (ADP) is a national initiative that partners 188 member institutions of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities with *The New York Times*. Targeting undergraduate students, the project seeks to infuse a conceptual understanding of the responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society. Its goals are twofold: (1) “to increase the number of undergraduate students who understand and are committed to engaging in meaningful civic actions by asking participating institutions to review and restructure academic programs and processes, extracurricular programs and activities, and the institutional culture; and (2) to focus the attention of policy makers and opinion leaders on

[41]

the civic values of the college experience.”

At Georgia Southern University, the [American Democracy Project](#) is coordinated by a committee composed of 13 faculty, staff, and students. This group has actively promoted the themes of the ADP and heightened campus visibility through several initiatives, focusing both on new and continuing students. Project members successfully:

[42]

- surveyed GSU 1210 courses to identify instructors willing to teach special sections of GSU 1210 thematically linked to the American Democracy Project;

[43]

- worked with the Eagle Incentive Program to communicate American Democracy Project themes to prospective freshmen students;
- promoted American Democracy Project themes to incoming freshmen and transfer students through Southern’s Orientation, Advisement, and Registration (SOAR) program; posted banners in the Henderson Library; and distributed bookmarks in orientation packets;
- offered GSU 1210 sections in the Fall 2004 semester specially designated as American Democracy Project sections;
- conducted a campus-wide assessment of current civic engagement activities;
- launched an American Democracy Project campus web page on the University’s web site;
- sponsored public information forums to provide information about the candidates, issues, and procedures leading up to the 2004 national elections;
- worked with student groups to sponsor voter registration events and provided rides to students to polling places on election day;
- sponsored an “Election Night Gala,” featuring in-studio, live broadcast of the November 2nd election returns with commentary from campus leaders and faculty;

Action Plan

To expand awareness of and interest in student engagement in a campus and societal social contract, the following four-point action plan will be implemented:

1. create a student recognition to be awarded at Honors Day to the student who embodies what we mean by the “civically engaged” student;
2. invite a nationally renowned speaker to campus for Volunteer Week;
3. plan Summer 2005 Eagle Incentive Program around the American Democracy Project themes; and
4. train faculty interested in providing civic opportunities in their GSU 1210 classes.

1. **Strategy:** Create a student recognition to be awarded at Honors Day to the student who embodies what we mean by the “civically engaged” student.

Establishing an award for the “civically engaged” student and publicly recognizing the student models this behavior for other students and communicates the value that the University places on campus and societal engagement. Ideally, the award will receive maximum publicity on campus, in the community, and perhaps even at the state level.

Responsibility: Members of the campus American Democracy Project committee in cooperation with the Director of Student Leadership Development and Outreach Programs and the Honors Committee.

Resources: Publicity expenses, cost of award.

Timeline: Make the first award at the Spring 2006 Honors Day Ceremony.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Design the award, develop the selection criteria and process, and implement for Spring 2006. This strategy will be measured by the selection of the first recipient based on stated criteria. Since visibility of the award is also important to the success of this strategy, publicity venues will be identified and monitored for effectiveness in reaching intended audiences.

Feedback Loop: The assessment data will be used to guide the process during the following year's selection of the "civically engaged" student.

2. Strategy: Invite a nationally renowned speaker to campus for Volunteer Week.

This initiative will bring greater visibility to the themes underlying the American Democracy Project by inviting a speaker of the caliber of former President Jimmy Carter on to campus to speak during Volunteer Week. The speaker would be invited to address the civic responsibilities of citizens of the global community.

Responsibility: Campus members of the American Democracy Project.

Resources: Speaker fees and travel expenses.

Timeline: Target Volunteer Week during the 2005-06 academic year.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: Since this strategy is aimed at the student population, we will measure student attendance at this event and compare it to a pre-determined benchmark.

Feedback Loop: The assessment data gathered will be used to develop the following year's program.

3. Strategy: Plan Summer 2005 Eagle Incentive Program around the American Democracy Project themes.

Building on the success of the Summer 2004 Eagle Incentive Program, plans will be developed and implemented to incorporate the themes of civic and societal responsibilities into the Summer 2005 Eagle Incentive classes.

Responsibility: Campus members of the American Democracy Project in cooperation with the faculty teaching in the Summer 2005 Eagle Incentive Program.

Resources: Faculty resources have been identified for this program.

Timeline: Summer 2005.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: We expect that this strategy will result in heightened student awareness of American Democracy Project themes exhibited by those students participating in the Eagle Incentive Program. One measure of its success might be the following: for those students who successfully complete the Eagle Incentive Program and are accepted into Georgia Southern for the fall, track their rates of student engagement in civic and community activities and compare against a pre-determined benchmark.

Feedback Loop: The results of the assessment will be considered when developing the Summer 2006 Eagle

Incentive Program.

4. Strategy: Train faculty interested in providing civic opportunities in their GSU 1210 classes.

Under this initiative, a training session will be developed and implemented for faculty interested in offering civic engagement opportunities in their GSU 1210 orientation classes.

Responsibility: Campus members of the American Democracy Project.

Resources: No additional resources beyond staff time.

Timeline: The training curriculum will be developed during 2005-06 with implementation scheduled for Spring and Summer 2006.

Assessment Measures and Benchmark Criteria: The assessment measure for this strategy will be the percentage of trained faculty-led GSU 1210 courses which incorporate civic opportunities into their classes compared against the percentage of non-trained faculty-led GSU 1210 courses which incorporate these types of learning experiences in their curriculum.

Feedback Loop: The results of this assessment will be used to enhance the 2007 training sessions to ensure that these sessions are meeting expected outcomes.

Conclusion

Georgia Southern University proudly puts forth this Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) as its focused effort to enhance student learning through *Advancing a Culture of Engagement*. This plan is grounded in the University's historical traditions as well as Georgia Southern's current mission and strategic plan. Conceptually, the plan represents the University's initial steps (2005-09) down a seven to ten-year road and will evolve as the University progresses on its journey. By necessity, the QEP must be assessed as it is implemented to ensure that specific strategies and initiatives are meeting the intended outcomes and advancing the University toward a culture of engagement. Ongoing assessment will guide the evolution of the plan—especially as the University approaches 2010 and beyond.

[1] "Culture of Engagement" as defined by the SACS Leadership Team, June 22, 2004.

[2] "Student Learning" as defined by the SACS Leadership Team, June 22, 2004.

[3] Georgia Southern University *Mission Statement*, adopted in June 2004.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Georgia Southern University Level I Strategic Plan.

[7]

Ibid.

[8]

Ibid.

[9]

Ibid.

[10]

See discussion in Kevin Carey’s “One Step from the Finish Line: Higher College Graduation Rates are Within Our Reach,” A Report by the Education Trust, January 2005, and “Final Report of the University System of Georgia Task Force on Graduation Rates, July 15, 2004.

[11]

Data provided by the Office of Strategic Research & Analysis.

[12]

Georgia Southern University
Chronology of Budget Cuts

Date	Explanation	Amount	Cumulative
11/16/01	5% total budget	\$ 3,598,289	\$ 3,598,289
2/26/02	.86% total budget	\$ 618,465	\$ 4,216,754
5/13/02	1% holdback excluding instruction	\$ 313,963	\$ 4,530,717
8/8/02	2% holdback excluding instruction	\$ 627,926	\$ 5,158,643
11/13/02	2% holdback total budget	\$ 1,456,172	\$ 6,614,815
1/16/03	3% reduction of instruction	\$ 1,242,369	\$ 7,857,184
8/4/03	2.5% reduction	\$ 1,760,906	\$ 9,618,090
FY 2004	2.5% reduction	\$ 1,731,831	\$11,349,921
FY 2005	4.2% reduction	\$ 2,913,343	\$14,263,264
	Total September 9, 2004	\$14,263,264	
			% Budget Cut
	Present Budget 9/9/04	\$70,839,735	20.1%
	Total Budget Cuts	\$14,263,264	
	Budget without Cuts	\$85,102,999	

Source: Vice President for Business & Finance, January 24, 2005

[13]

“[College Students Benefit from Civic Engagement; Campuses More Student Friendly.](#)” National Survey of Student Engagement press release.

[14]

For a full discussion of the different forms of scholarship see Boyer, Ernest L. *Scholarship Reconsidered Priorities of the Professoriate*. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990.

[15]

Georgia Southern University proudly acknowledges the contributions and achievements of its Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies, which offers master’s programs in 42 fields, the Master of Fine Arts degree, the Education Specialist, and the Doctor of Education as well as several certificate programs. More than 2,000 graduate students are currently enrolled in this growing college, served by over 400 graduate faculty. The Graduate College plays a vital role in moving the University towards the goal of becoming a national model for post-baccalaureate education and in advancing the University in its mission and Strategic Plan. Nonetheless, given the nature of the QEP, the campus acknowledges it is important to focus our efforts in the five specific areas identified above. Therefore, graduate education is not an element of the larger discussion as its relates to the Quality Enhancement Plan.

[16]

[February 12, 2003](#), Faculty Senate meeting minutes.

[17]

Strategic Planning Council, [January 22, 2003](#), meeting minutes.

[18]

Groups identified (see Strategic Planning Council’s [February 5, 2003](#), meeting minutes) for involvement in discussion

of QEP topics included the following:

1. Staff/Administrators
 - a. President's Advisory Committee
 - b. Student Affairs Professional Development Council
 - c. Deans Council
 - d. Business and Finance Directors
 - e. Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (SAEM) Directors
 - f. Advancement Directors
2. Students
 - a. SAEM Student Advisory Board
 - b. Student Government Association
 - c. Greek Council
 - d. Graduate Student Organization
 - e. SOAR Leaders
 - f. University Honors Program
 - g. Open Forums
3. Faculty
 - a. Faculty Senate
 - b. General Faculty Meeting
4. Press Release to:
 - a. *This Week*
 - b. *George-Anne*
 - c. *Georgia Southern News*
 - d. SPC web page

[19]

[February 12, 2003](#), Faculty Senate meeting minutes.

[20]

Astin, Alexander W. *Four Critical Years*. Jossey-Bass Higher Education, 1985, pp. 133-134.

[21]

GSU 1210 is also required of all new transfer students with fewer than 30 semester hours.

[22]

Georgia Southern University 2004-2005 Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog, p. 355.

[23]

2003-2004 Fact Book, p. 20.

[24]

Ibid.

[25]

The *2003-2004 Fact Book* identifies 1,248 undeclared students in the Fall 2003. Since Georgia Southern strives for enrollments of no more than 20-25 students in each of the GSU 1210 sections, we would need approximately 50 sections of these specialty clusters.

[26]

Boyer, Ernest L. *Scholarship Reconsidered Priorities of the Professoriate*. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990.

[27]

The *1906 Scholars* are a select group of University honors students who are encouraged to take more demanding honors core courses. Their course of study also includes a weekly seminar to emphasize discussion and independent endeavor and to nurture curiosity and the sharing of ideas among students and faculty. Students also participate in a lecture series emphasizing leadership, social events involving key campus leaders and administrators, and are considered for national and international scholarship recognition (*2004-2005 Catalog*, p. 60).

[28]

"America's Best Colleges 2005," [U.S. News and World Report](#).

[29]

Discussions are currently underway on campus to revamp both the Student Ratings of Instruction form and how it is used. As this assessment mechanism is refined, the revised instrument will be employed to ensure that we are obtaining course-related assessment data versus instructor-specific assessment data.

[30]

We recognize that the University’s ability to grow its undergraduate research experiences is dependent upon available campus facilities—especially in the sciences where lab space is critical. The University’s multiyear master plan addresses the campus’ infrastructure needs, and this plan continues to be implemented. In the interim, we will target areas where we can successfully accommodate larger numbers of undergraduates in research experiences.

[31]

Blumenthal, Peggy and Obst, Daniel. “[Trends in International Student Enrollment in the United States.](#)” Presentation given at the Washington International Education Conference on January 25, 2005, George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

[32]

Ibid.

[33]

Ibid.

[34]

Ibid.

[35]

This list is borrowed from a presentation on International Student enrollment trends given at the Washington International Education Conference on January 25, 2005, George Washington University in Washington, D.C. Blumenthal, Peggy and Obst, Daniel. “[Trends in International Student Enrollment in the United States.](#)”

[36]

2004-2005 Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog.

[37]

University System of Georgia “[Study Abroad Participation: Progress Report: 2007 Targets,](#)” Board of Regents Meeting, August 6, 2003.

[38]

This definition is borrowed from one developed by the [Corporation for National Service](#) and adapted by [James Madison University](#).

[39]

[Center for Community Service-Learning](#) at James Madison University.

[40]

Senior Seminar Courses in the 2004-2005 Catalog

Course Number	Course Title
AAST 4630	Seminar in Africana Studies
AMST 4033	Seminar in American Studies
ART 4631	Art History Seminar
BIOL 4620	Undergraduate Seminar (narrower focus)
CHEM 4611	Senior Seminar (narrower focus)
ECED 4633	P-5 Senior Seminar
FACS 4610	Senior Seminar (narrower focus)
GEOG 5620/5620G	Research Seminar in Geography
GEOL 4610	Senior Seminar
HIST 4635	Senior Seminar
HLTH 4618	Senior Seminar in Community Health
HLTH 4619	Senior Seminar in Health Behavior
INDS 4616	Interior Design Seminar
INTS/POLS 4634	Seminar in Comparative Politics
INTS 4630	Seminar in International Studies

INTS/POLS 5633/5633G	Seminar in International Politics
KINS 4617	Senior Seminar in Health & Physical Education
KINS 4618	Senior Seminar in Sports Medicine
KINS 4619	Senior Seminar in Exercise Science
LAST 4890	Seminar in Latin American Studies
LOGT 4263	Seminar in Intermodal Distribution
MATH 4910	Undergraduate Seminar
POLS 5630/5630G	Seminar in American Politics
POLS 5631/5631G	Seminar in Political Theory
POLS 5632/5632G	Seminar in Urban Politics
POLS/INST 5635/5635G	Seminar in International Organizations
PRCA 4335	Seminar in Public Relations
PSYC 4630	Senior Seminar
SOCI 4630	Senior Seminar

[41]

For a fuller description of the [American Democracy Project](http://aascu.org/programs/adp/about), please refer to their web site (<http://aascu.org/programs/adp/about>).

[42]

GSU 1210 is the University Orientation course required of all incoming students with fewer than 30 credit hours.

[43]

The Eagle Incentive Program is a five-week summer program specifically targeted toward high school graduates with SAT scores between 920 and 970 (just below the minimum threshold required for admission to Georgia Southern University). The program invites approximately 300 students on to campus to take seven hours of classes during the summer sessions. Students who perform well are invited to stay in the fall.