

Our Path to Preeminence: **The 2016 – 2021 Georgia College Strategic Plan**

In 2015 and 2016, Georgia College & State University faculty, staff, and students joined together to create a strategic plan designed to move our university to preeminence among other public liberal arts institutions.

Georgia's Public Liberal Arts University

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee believes that Georgia College is uniquely positioned within our state and region to move forward toward preeminence. In 1996, Georgia College became Georgia's only designated public liberal arts institution, and worked intentionally and rapidly to reshape itself in that mode. In addition to this specific designation from the University System of Georgia, Georgia College is a member of COPLAC – the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges. COPLAC institutions emphasize a residential, liberal arts and sciences curriculum.

Twenty years after the public liberal arts designation, the university has achieved prominence within the state, increasing regional recognition, and mentions among national rankings. Georgia College combines the strength of a public liberal arts education with robust professional programs that meet the needs of the state and region.

Institutional Trajectory

Georgia College is rapidly transforming its profile as a selective institution, with a focus on providing an exceptional liberal arts experience. Georgia College is hailed nationally as a "Best College Value" by Kiplinger's and recognized by U.S. News & World Report as a top regional university in the south. The university is one of only three universities in the state categorized as a "College of Distinction." In 2015, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching selected Georgia College to receive its Community Engagement Classification, which assesses the institution's commitment to engagement with local, regional, national, and global communities. In addition to the rankings and accolades received as a university, several of our programs are among the finest in the nation, including our highly-honored nursing, theatre, education, and graduate business offerings. Georgia College is nationally known for its Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing and its unique connection to the writer Flannery O'Connor, an alumna of the institution.

One example of how Georgia College is on the path to preeminence is that it currently has the second highest four-year graduation rate among Georgia's public universities. By focusing on the university's liberal arts mission and prioritizing strategic programs, Georgia College provides an exceptional student experience. The university's strategic goals and initiatives reinforce the transformative effect the institution has on its students and on the communities it serves.

Additional Institutional Progress Awaits Us

Although the university has made momentous progress in implementing the liberal arts mission over the last 20 years, we believe significant additional progress is imminent. Many of the initiatives and accomplishments of the late 1990s and early 2000s, which were innovative at the time, now have become more commonplace, even outside of liberal arts institutions. Other initiatives, such as the residential learning community initiative of the late 2000's, were not maintained long enough to produce significant, measurable benefits.

Previous strategic plans have all established goals to develop distinctive curricular and co-curricular experiences, such as the GC1Y and GC2Y courses. Engaged learning brings significant opportunity for increased curricular and co-curricular distinction. However, we believe additional campus-level innovation is possible, while also meeting transfer and progression expectations of the University System of Georgia. The Steering Committee is fully aware of the challenges presented by the desire to improve the profile of entering students and build a diverse and representative student cohort in the face of existing competition and available scholarship funding. We believe a campuswide desire to push the institution forward will enable us to address these and other challenges, thus creating a financially-sustainable institution.

Executing the goals of a strategic plan may not produce preeminence if the accompanying culture does not fully embrace the opportunities brought about by that plan. The Steering Committee believes that culture can enhance strategy through sharing and celebrating the wide range of diverse expertise available. Preeminence presupposes new resources through channels such as new revenue streams and gifts from individuals and foundations. Preeminence will also require the campus community to continue reviewing existing resource allocations through program prioritization and reallocation. The culture of preeminence will challenge entitlements and business-as-usual processes, producing differentiation, and sustaining the institution.

Charge and Assumptions of Strategic Planning Process

On November 9, 2015, President Dorman charged the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and the chairs of the 13 subcommittees with the task of developing a strategic plan to position Georgia College for preeminence as a public liberal arts institution. Each strategic planning subcommittee was asked to address the question: What would have to happen to make Georgia College the preeminent public liberal arts institution in the future? An overarching projection of the scenario in 10 years (2025) was provided to the subcommittees, and the subcommittees were asked to consider this possible future while preparing a strategic plan to serve the university from 2016-2021.

President Dorman directed that all goals and objectives be actionable and realistic. At the same time, the committees were asked to develop challenging goals to help the university progress toward becoming a preeminent public liberal arts institution. The president directed that all goals and objectives be measurable and measured on an annual basis. A dashboard of data should be created and compared with new data obtained each year and at the end of the five-year plan. The president requested that the Steering Committee remain in place during that period as an ongoing, standing strategic planning committee to ensure that the strategic plan is not static and that success in meeting goals is assessed on an annual basis, with goals modified as needed. The objective, of course, is to not only make our plan measurable, but to have data and people in place so that goal attainment is measured on an on-going basis.

Once developed, the strategic plan and annual benchmarks should be made available to the campus community on the Institutional Research web pages.

The president also requested that the Steering Committee devote time to reviewing and discussing the mission and vision statements, and determining if revisions are needed.

Basic tenets of the strategic planning process were inclusivity and openness. The Steering Committee was asked to:

- Ensure that diversity and inclusion were infused throughout the plan,
- Involve faculty, staff, and student representation from all sectors of the campus, and
- Facilitate an open, transparent process through regular communication with the campus community.

The Current Operating Environment

In developing the strategic plan, the Steering Committee recognized the rapid changes occurring in higher education, including calls for accountability, improved access to college for state residents, more efficient progression of enrolled students, the need to diversify revenue streams beyond tuition, and repeated calls for practical relevance in program offerings. The state's economy is healthy, especially when compared to the economies of states that are dependent on natural resource production. The state's high school graduation population is fairly stable in comparison to states where that population is declining. GC itself has seen enrollment stability or growth, particularly in undergraduate programs, while other University System of Georgia institutions have experienced declines. The Steering Committee recognizes that conditions can change very rapidly, but for the immediate term the outlook is stable, which argues for continued reallocation of existing resources as guided by ongoing prioritization initiatives.

Vision, Values, Mission, and Strategic Goals and Initiatives

Our vision is simple: national preeminence. Our mission is highly focused: public liberal arts. Accomplishing our vision and mission will positively transform Georgia College students. The following strategic goals encompass student quality (Goal 1), student experiences (Goals 2 and 3), the resources to support student experiences (Goals 4 and 5), and external impact (Goal 6).

The strategic plan is designed to move GC toward preeminence; the goals and initiatives strongly suggest institutional priorities for the coming five-year period as we move toward preeminence. This plan is a capstone of a number of other plans underway on campus, including those for: diversity, quality enhancement, technology, enrollment management, retention, branding of the institution, advancement, capital projects, and new program development.

The plan represents months of discussion, input from various constituencies and planning subcommittees, and reviews through the campus governance process. Nearly 150 faculty, staff, and students participated in the subcommittee process, and their reports greatly informed the development of the overall plan. The Steering Committee focused most closely on the subcommittee recommendations that were strategic in nature and most clearly moved the institution along the path toward preeminence. A number of other excellent suggestions from those subcommittees should be examined as potential, short-to-immediate term projects that could have a positive impact on the operations of the university.

When pulling together the various contributions, the Steering Committee—which was broadly representative—consulted prior strategic plans and previous statements of GC values to develop the following vision, value, and mission statements, and the strategic goals and initiatives. To assist in framing its discussions and decisions, the Steering Committee regularly reviewed articles and research studies relevant to current issues and the future direction of higher education. During this lengthy planning process, the Steering Committee regularly communicated with the campus community through a dedicated website, email messages, and articles in the university’s daily newsfeed. The Steering Committee trusts that these regular communications improved the transparency of the process.

Georgia College has an opportunity to achieve preeminence as a public liberal arts university by differentiating itself. The Steering Committee believes that the following strategic goals and initiatives will be instrumental in raising the stature of the university and moving it closer to fulfilling its vision of preeminence.

Georgia College Vision, Values, and Mission

VISION

Georgia College will be a nationally preeminent public liberal arts university.

VALUES

The Georgia College experience, which is rooted in the liberal arts and provides the foundation for a lifetime of learning, growth, and academic excellence, is based on these shared values:

- The pursuit of knowledge and truth for the public good;
- The transformative effect of service, leadership, and collaborative engaged learning experiences both in and beyond the classroom;
- Ethical principles including integrity, altruism, reason, respect, and responsibility in discourse and actions;
- Diversity and inclusion in all forms.

MISSION

Georgia College is the state's only designated public liberal arts university.

We fulfill this mission through a commitment to:

An Expansive Educational Experience. We challenge our students through exemplary teaching. The Georgia College student will think clearly and critically in creatively addressing social issues.

Undergraduate study encompasses multi-disciplinary intellectual encounters with both enduring and contemporary questions, intensive study in the major, exposure to artistic endeavors, opportunities for scholarly research, and capstone experiences that integrate and apply learning.

Post-baccalaureate programs bridge the gap between theory and practice with a focus on regional needs, preparing graduates for professional advancement, life-long intellectual pursuits, and informed participation in today's complex society.

Highly Intentional Engagement. We collaborate with community partners to address mutually identified needs while advancing students' academic and civic learning, in crafting informed, global citizens ready to serve the public good. Engagement opportunities include undergraduate research, study abroad, internships, community service, and leadership experiences, both in and outside the classroom.

Diversity and Inclusive Excellence. We foster a sense of belonging within a campus community that values diversity of intellectual thought, experiences, and identifications. Georgia College faculty, staff, and students intentionally embrace inclusivity to advance excellence through diversity.

Preparation for Leadership. We encourage all students to develop a breadth of leadership competencies, including self-awareness, empathy for cultural differences, and effective interpersonal communication. Georgia College students become leaders through engagement with purposeful curricular and co-curricular leadership experiences.

The 2016-2021 Georgia College Strategic Plan: Goals and Initiatives

Goal 1: Recruit, admit, enroll, retain and graduate highly qualified and diverse undergraduate students.

- Initiative: Determine and implement undergraduate admissions criteria and processes that are most predictive of student success from first year enrollment to timely completion of their undergraduate degree.
- Initiative: Execute the Complete College Georgia Plan to meet established university goals.
- Initiative: Execute the Diversity Action Plan to meet associated benchmarks.
- Initiative: Explore sustainable options for increasing international student enrollment.
- Initiative: Enhance academic and career advising and other university services to fully support student success and satisfaction.

Goal 2: Develop and implement distinctive and transformative undergraduate curricular and co-curricular experiences. Transformative experiences include but are not limited to: undergraduate research; creative projects; study abroad; service learning; community-based learning; leadership development; diversity and global learning; and field and clinical-based practica, apprenticeships, preceptorships, and internships.

- Initiative: Establish an institutional level requirement for student participation in transformative experiences that broadly support student development and individual growth.
 - Departments and colleges will establish expectations for student participation in transformative experiences that support student learning, course curricula, and academic unit missions.
- Initiative: Design, implement, measure, and communicate student, faculty, and staff participation in transformative experiences.
 - Develop a portfolio system and models of implementation for universitywide adoption, including accessibility, cost, and functionality.
 - Track the level of utilization of course-embedded transformative experiences.
 - Assess learning outcomes from co-curricular experiences.
- Initiative: Redesign the liberal arts curricula to best reflect the distinction of a public liberal arts institution.
 - Support integration of Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) outcomes into the general education and degree program curricula.

Goal 3: Offer a limited number of exceptional quality graduate programs that are highly relevant to workforce demand and supportive of the university mission.

- Initiative: Increase enrollment in each program to viable levels.
- Initiative: Develop and implement program-specific marketing strategies.

Goal 4: Align resources through generation, redirection, prioritization, cost containment, and stewardship to address strategic priorities.

- Initiative: Maximize revenue by properly managing an appropriate enrollment mix.
- Initiative: Monitor program costs and pursue redirection opportunities.
- Initiative: Expand grant and sponsored project funding.
- Initiative: Deepen the culture of philanthropy by expanding outreach and engagement efforts with alumni, parents, faculty and staff, friends, and current students.
- Initiative: Enhance sustainability of the physical environment and university programs and services.
- Initiative: Improve facility utilization.
- Initiative: Ensure exemplary, effective, and efficient processes, services, and operations to maximize available resources.

Goal 5: Enhance a professional environment that encourages the recruitment, retention, and success of an exemplary and diverse faculty and staff.

- Initiative: Foster a respectful, inclusive, and equitable campus climate.
- Initiative: Cultivate outstanding faculty and staff and increase their satisfaction by implementing evidence-based retention strategies and offering targeted training and professional development.
- Initiative: Determine the desired proportion of full-time tenure track faculty.

Goal 6: Strengthen community and regional ties through service, research, programs, and partnerships that enhance economic, educational, and cultural opportunities to improve the quality of life for citizens of Milledgeville/Baldwin County and the middle Georgia region.

- Initiative: Leverage creative expertise, leadership, and other institutional resources to help alleviate educational, environmental, economic, and health disparities.
- Initiative: Explore additional direct partnerships to address targeted community needs.
- Initiative: Increase faculty and staff engagement in external activities, while ensuring these contributions are valued and recognized by the institutional reward system.

Strategic Planning Timeline

Subcommittees established	August/October, 2015
Kickoff meeting with charge by President Dorman	Nov. 9, 2015
Subcommittee work	Nov., 2015-March, 2016
Subcommittee reports due	March 7, 2016
Review of vision, values, and mission	Jan.-April, 2016
Campus review of draft vision, values, mission statements	April 22-Sept. 1, 2016
Development of strategic goals and initiatives	March-July, 2016
Draft goals/initiatives reviewed by planning subcommittees	July 12-22, 2016
Draft goals/initiatives reviewed by President and Cabinet	July 25, 2016
Draft goals and initiatives presented to Senate and campus	Aug. 9-10, 2016
Campus review of goals and initiatives	Aug. 9-Sept. 2, 2016
Campus feedback to Steering Committee	Sept. 1, 2016
Final revisions to plan by Steering Committee	Early Sept., 2016
Final version of plan to President, Provost, and Cabinet	Mid-Sept., 2016
Presentation of plan to Foundation Board, Alumni Association	Early Fall, 2016
Presentation to Board of Regents by President	Fall, 2016