2015 Status Report
**Georgia State University**

Complete College Georgia

Overview

When it comes to higher education, the vision of the United States as a land of equal opportunity is far from a reality. Today, it is *eight times* more likely that an individual in the top quartile of Americans by annual household income will hold a college degree than an individual in the lowest quartile.[1] Nationally, white students graduate from college at rates more than 10 points higher than Hispanic students, and are more than twice as likely to graduate with a 4-year college degree compared to black students.[2] The United States Department of Education cites a six-year graduation-rate of 39% among Pell-eligible students,[3] a rate that is 20 points lower than the national average.[4]

GSU Undergraduate Graduation Rates by Year
2010 to Present

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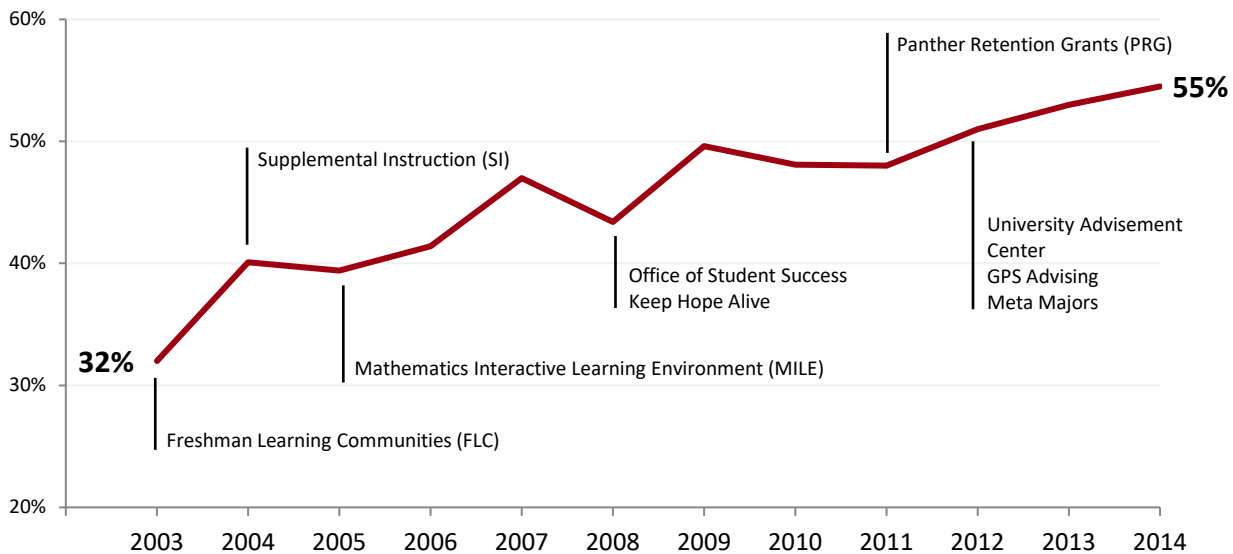
[1] The Pell Institute (2015) Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States : 45 Year Trend Report (2015 Revised Edition). Retrieved from http://www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Indicators_of_Higher_Education_Equity_in_the_US_45_Year_Trend_Report.pdf

[2] U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2014) Table 326.10: Graduation rate from first institution attended for first-time, full-time bachelor's degree- seeking students at 4-year postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity, time to completion, sex, control of institution, and acceptance rate: Selected cohort entry years, 1996 through 2007. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_326.10.asp.

[3] Horwich, Lloyd (25 November 2015) Report on the Federal Pell Grant Program. Retrieved from http://www.nasfaa.org/uploads/documents/Pell0212.pdf.

[4] U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2014) Table 326.10.

In 2003, Georgia State's institutional graduation rate stood at 32% and underserved populations were foundering. Graduation rates were 22% for Latinos, 29% for African Americans, and 18% for African American males. Pell students were graduating at rates far below those of non-Pell students.

Today, thanks to a campus-wide commitment to student success and more than a dozen strategic programs implemented over the past several years, Georgia State's achievement gap is gone. The institutional graduation rate has improved 22 points—among the highest increases in the nation over this period. Rates are up 32 points for Latinos (to 54%), and 28 points for African Americans (to 57%). Pell-eligible students currently represent 59% of Georgia State University's undergraduate student population, and over the past three years have graduated at rates, on average, equal to those of non-Pell students. Georgia State now graduates more Hispanic, Asian, first generation, and Pell students with bachelor degrees than any other university in Georgia. For four consecutive years, we have conferred more bachelor degrees to African Americans than any other non-profit college or university in the United States.

Georgia State University Undergraduate Degree Conferrals
Since Launch of Strategic Plan

	Academic Year					4 Year Change
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	
Pell-eligible Students	2,015	2,321	2,607	2,711	2,742	36%
Black or African American	1,300	1,440	1,552	1,682	1,777	37%
Hispanic	288	313	360	394	415	44%

Georgia State University Degree Conferrals by Year
Since Launch of Strategic Plan
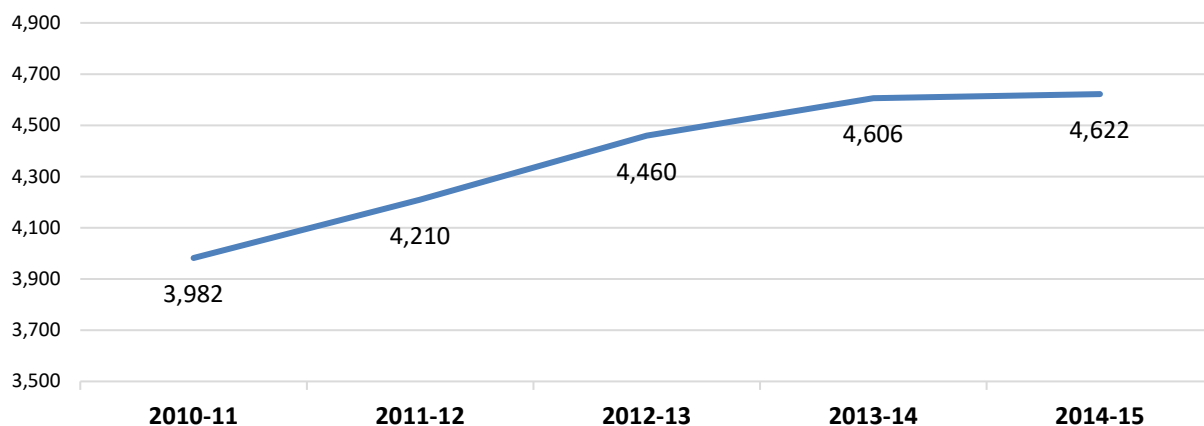
Since the launch of its current Strategic Plan in 2011, Georgia State University has seen a 16% increase in its number of undergraduate degree conferrals, with even stronger gains made with at-risk student populations. Over the past five years, bachelor degree conferrals are up 37% for African Americans, 36% for Pell students, and 44% for Hispanics.

Top Ten National African American Baccalaureate Producers [*]

Rank	Institution	State	2012 - 2013		% Change Compared to AY2012
			Total	% Grad	
1	Georgia State University	GA	1525	33%	10%
2	Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	FL	1398	94%	1%
3	University of Central Florida	FL	1171	10%	19%
4	Howard University	DC	1139	93%	-9%
5	North Carolina A & T State University	NC	1130	86%	-1%
6	Saint Leo University	FL	936	33%	8%
7	University of Memphis	TN	934	32%	5%
8	Florida Atlantic University	FL	920	18%	-4%
9	Jackson State University	MS	893	94%	-11%
10	University of South Florida-Main Campus	FL	884	12%	3%

Source: Diverse Issues in Higher Education[5]

* Not including online universities (i.e. University of Phoenix – Online Campus, Ashford University, University of Maryland-University College)

These gains are by many measures unprecedented, and they have been the subject of growing levels of national attention:

- In 2013, Georgia State received the first-ever MVP award from the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU). The award recognized Georgia State University as the public university that has made the greatest impact on improving student success outcomes in the nation.
- In December 2014, President Barack Obama lauded the exemplary work being done at Georgia State University to assist low-income students through its Panther Retention Grant program in his address at White House Opportunity Day.[6]
- In January 2015, Georgia State received the Institutional Transformation Award from the American Council on Education (ACE), the largest organization for post-secondary education in the nation. Citing Georgia State's exceptional progress in the area of student success and its elimination of all

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[5] Top 100 Bachelor's Degree Producers. (n.d.). Retrieved from
http://diverseeducation.com/top100/BachelorsDegreeProducers2014.php.

[6] President Barack Obama (4 December 2014) Remarks by the President at College Opportunity Summit. Retrieved from
https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/04/remarks-president-college-opportunity-summit.

achievement gaps, ACE granted the award for only the second time in its history. (The first award went to Arizona State.)

- In August 2015, Georgia State was invited to provide expert testimony on innovations in increasing student success before the United State Senate.

Motivated by a desire to make an impact, not only in the lives of its own students, but also in the lives of students nation-wide, Georgia State University has made a conscious and significant commitment of time and resources to sharing the lessons that we have learned. Each of the past two years, we have hosted representatives from approximately eighty colleges and universities, with visiting groups typically spending full days on campus learning firsthand from key members of Georgia State's student success team. Visiting institutions include almost all of the University System of Georgia. Similarly, we have been proud to travel both nationally and internationally to share our success strategies with other colleges and universities who are facing the challenge of ensuring that their students graduate with degrees regardless of socioeconomic background. President Becker and Tim Renick continue to accept numerous speaking engagements each year. Over the past twelve months, Dr. Renick has logged more than 100,000 miles of travel, delivered forty off-campus lectures and workshops on student success, served as a lead content expert for Complete College America, has spoken at White House College Opportunity Day and testified on students success before the U.S. Senate, and delivered keynotes at national meetings of Achieving the Dream, the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AASCU), the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU), the Alliance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), WICHE, UB-Tech, the American Council on Education (ACE) and other organizations.

With a view to contributing further to the transformation of higher education nationwide, Georgia State University partnered this past year with 10 other public research institutions—including Ohio State, Texas, Purdue, Arizona State and Michigan State, among others—to form the University Innovation Alliance. Over the next five years, the University Innovation Alliance is committed to identifying new solutions, scaling proven innovations, and sharing knowledge about best practices in strong support of the goal of Governor Deal and the nation that, by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.[7] The first project of the University Innovation Alliance, an initiative to scale the use of predictive analytics in academic advising, is being led by Georgia State.

Georgia State's story testifies to the fact that students from all backgrounds can succeed at high rates. Because the challenges we face at Georgia State—finding innovative ways to succeed with our growing numbers of at-risk students and doing so amid a context of limited resources—are precisely the same challenges faced by literally hundreds of public universities nationwide, the story resonates. Through our outreach, colleagues within the USG and nationally not only learn what is happening at Georgia State but also see what is possible at their home institutions and for their own students.

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[7] The White House (n.d.) Higher Education. Retrieved July 30, 2015, from https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/higher-education.

# I. Institutional Mission and Student Body Profile

Georgia State University now enrolls more African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, first-generation students, and Pell students than any other four-year university Georgia. In fact, the University set new records for the number of students enrolled in *every one* of these categories during the fall semester of 2014. Our undergraduate population is now 63% non-white and 59% Pell. According to *U.S. News and World Report*, Georgia State University is now one of only two universities to rank in the Top 15 in the nation for both its racial/ethnic diversity[8] and for the number of low-income students enrolled.[9]

At Risk Undergraduate Student Populations at GSU by Year

Fall 2008 - Fall 2014
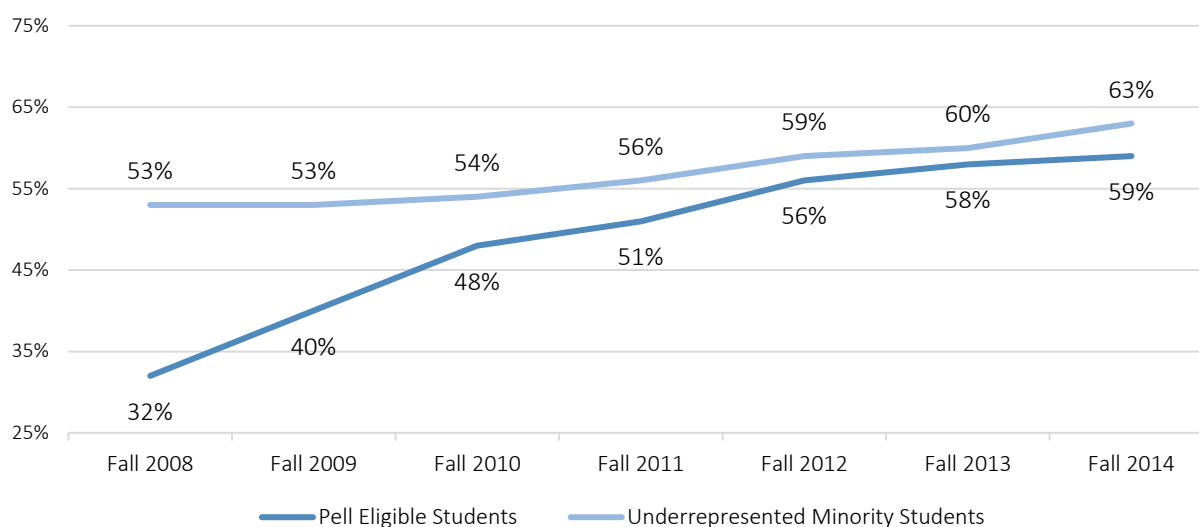
The most distinctive **principle** guiding our efforts has been a pledge to improve student outcomes through *inclusion* rather *exclusion*. We committed ourselves not improve our graduation rates by turning our backs on the low-income, underrepresented and first-generation students that we have traditionally served. To the contrary: we pledged to increase the number of underrepresented, first-generation and Pell students enrolled and to serve them better. We committed to achieving improved outcomes for our students not merely at Georgia State but in their lives and careers after graduation.

[8] U.S. News & World Report (n.d.) Campus Ethnic Diversity: National Universities. Retrieved from http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/campus-ethnic-diversity.
[9] U.S. News & World Report (n.d.) Economic Diversity: National Universities. Retrieved http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/economic-diversity.

In line with our commitment to serving Georgia students through a policy of inclusion rather than exclusion, we have consistently increased the proportion of underrepresented minority students (students reporting their race to be something other than White, or who identify as ethnically Hispanic) being served, with the number up ten points over the past five years.[10]

We have also continued to attract an increasing number of low-income students to our campus. Since 2010, we have seen a steady increase in the number of Pell-eligible students attending Georgia State University, from 49% up to 59% in 2014.

The central **goal** that we have set for our undergraduate success efforts is highly ambitious, but the words were carefully chosen: Georgia State would

> *"become a national model for undergraduate education by demonstrating that students from all backgrounds can achieve academic and career success at high rates"[11]*

Our goals include a commitment to raise overall institutional graduation rates and degree conferrals by significant margins—graduation rates would climb 13 points and completions would increase by 2,500 by 2021—and to closing all achievement gaps between our student populations.

The Strategic Plan also outlined key **strategies** to achieve these goals. We made a commitment to overhaul our advising system, to track every student daily with the use of predictive analytics and to intervene with students who are at risk in a proactive fashion, to expand existing high-impact programs such as freshman learning communities and Keep Hope Alive, to raise more scholarship dollars, and to pilot and scale innovative new types of financial interventions.

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[10] In contrast to the common practice of excluding, Asian students from underrepresented minority numbers, Georgia State University includes them on account of the fact that a large proportion of Asian students enrolled at Georgia State University are also low income, first in their family to go to college, and/or first in their family to live in the U.S.
[11] Georgia State University (2012). Strategic Plan 2011-2016/21. Retrieved from http://strategic.gsu.edu/files/2012/09/GSU_Strategic_Plan_2016-2.pdf

II. Institutional Completion Goals, High-Impact Strategies and Activities

Institutional Completion Goals and Results

In 2011, Georgia State University committed to reach a graduation rate of 52% by 2016 and 60% by 2021.[12] We also committed to conferring 2,500 more degrees annually than we did in 2010 and to eliminating all significant achievement gaps between student populations.

On the surface, attaining these goals seems implausible. Georgia State's demographic trends—characterized by huge increases in the enrollments of at-risk students in recent years—typically would project a steep *decline* in student outcomes. Georgia State University, though, has been able to make dramatic gains towards its success targets even as the student body has become more financially distressed. In the relatively short period since the adoption of the Strategic Plan in 2011, the overall number of Bachelor degrees conferred by Georgia State has increased by 16%. The gains have been even greater for a number of at-risk student populations.

In the 2014-2015 academic year, Georgia State University conferred record numbers of bachelor degrees to Pell-eligible, first generation, Black or African American, and Hispanic students. Since the 2010-2011 academic year, the number of Bachelor's degrees conferred to first-generation students has increased by 32%, and to Pell students by 36%. Meanwhile, underrepresented students have also made striking gains over the period, with conferrals increasing by 44% for Hispanic students and 37% for African Americans.[13]

 It is interesting to note that in the 2014-2015 academic year, Georgia State University saw a decline in the number of degrees conferred to Adult Learners. This is not due to a decline in the enrollment of Adult Learners at Georgia State or in their success rates. To the contrary, because Adult Learners are defined as students aged 25 and older *at the time of graduation*, the decline in undergraduate degree conferrals to the group is a direct consequence of the average decrease in time to degree that we have been able to achieve through our numerous student success initiatives. Our undergraduate transfer students, for instance, are taking less time to earn their degrees and far fewer are reaching the age of 25 by the point of graduation.

Similarly, since the launch of Georgia State University's current strategic plan, and the start of our participation in Complete College Georgia, our institutional graduation rate has increased by 6 percentage points to a record 54%, with further gains being tracked for 2015.

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[12] Georgia State University (2012) College Completion Plan 2012: A University-wide Plan for Student Success (The Implementation of Goal 1 of the GSU Strategic Plan). Retrieved from http://enrollment.gsu.edu/wp-content/blogs.dir/57/files/2013/09/GSU_College_Completion_Plan_09-06-12.pdf

[13] Actual percent increases were much higher in these two categories, but we have controlled for the effects of the University implementing more rigorous processes encouraging students to self-report their race and ethnicity.

GSU Undergraduate Degrees Conferred by Academic Year
2010 to Present

		Academic Year				
		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Status	Adult Learners	1,528	1,553	1,689	1,755	1,679
	Pell-eligible Students	2,015	2,321	2,607	2,711	2,742
	First Generation Students	848	1,016	1,083	1,100	1,117
Race	White	1,808	1,888	1,922	1,916	1,816
	Black or African American	1,300	1,440	1,552	1,682	1,777
	Asian	463	485	558	532	512
	More Than One Race	168	146	152	179	161
	American Indian or Alaska Native	18	9	17	10	15
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	20	15	8	6	11
	Not Reported	205	227	251	281	330
Ethnicity	Non-Hispanic	3,459	3,686	3,854	3,964	3,965
	Hispanic	288	313	360	394	415
	Not Reported	235	211	246	248	242
Total Students Receiving Undergraduate Degrees		**3,982**	**4,210**	**4,460**	**4,606**	**4,622**

*Academic Year defined as Summer -Fall-Spring (e.g. AY 2014 - 2015 is Summer 2014, Fall 2014, and Spring 2015).

### GSU Undergraduate Graduation Rates by Population
2010 to Present

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
6-Year Graduation Rate	48%	48%	51%	53%	54%
6-Year: African American	51%	52%	54%	57%	55%
6-Year: White	46%	45%	49%	52%	53%
6-Year: Hispanic	58%	48%	53%	54%	56%
6-Year: Pell	51%	49%	51%	53%	51%
5-Year Graduation Rate	40%	43%	44%	46%	46%

It is important to note that low-income and first-generation students' families move frequently due to changes in jobs and economic circumstances when compared to middle- and upper-class college students. This phenomenon significantly impacts Georgia State's institutional graduation rates. Using National Student Clearinghouse data to track Georgia State's most recent 6-year cohort across all universities nationally, the success rates are even more encouraging. For the current year, a record 76% of the students who started at Georgia State six years ago have either graduated from

Georgia State or some other institution or are still actively enrolled in college. The numbers for African American (77.5%) and Latino (76.7%) students are even higher.

6 Year Graduation Rates Among First Time First Year Freshman who Started at Georgia State University
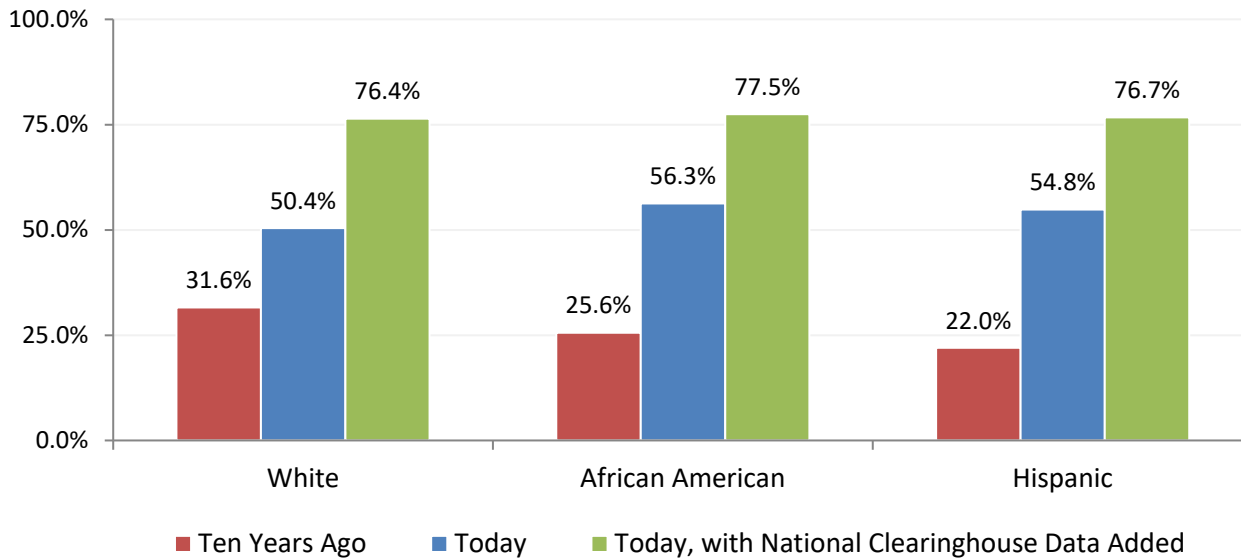
This combination of large increases in Pell enrollments and significantly rising graduation rates confounds the conventional pattern. Nationally, one can track a strong correlation between increases in Pell rates and *decreases* in graduation rates. Georgia State's completion efforts have made us a clear outlier nationally. In fact, among all of our peer institutions as defined by the BOR, Georgia State now has both the highest Pell rates *and* the highest graduation rates.

How has Georgia State University made the gains outlined above? How do we propose to reach our ambitious future targets? In one sense, the answer is simple. We employ a consistent, evidenced-based strategy. Our general approach can be summarized as follows:

- Use data aggressively in order to identify and to understand the most pervasive obstacles to our students' progressions and completion.

- Be willing to address the problems by becoming an early adopter. This means piloting new strategies and experimenting with new technologies. After all, we will not solve decades-old problems by the same old means.

- Track the impacts of the new interventions via data and make adjustments as necessary to improve results.

- Scale the initiatives that prove effective to have maximal impact. In fact, many of the programs that we offer are currently touching 10,000 students or more annually.

High Impact Strategies

1. GPS Advising

High-impact strategy	*Use predictive analytics and a system of more than 800 alerts to track all undergraduates daily, to identify at-risk behaviors, and to have advisors respond to alerts by intervening in a timely fashion to get students back on track.*
Related Goal	*Goal #1: Increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG institutions.* *Goal #2: Increase the number of degrees that are earned 'on time.'* *Goal #3: Decrease excess credits earned on the path to getting a degree.* *Goal #4: Provide intrusive advising to keep students on track to graduate.*
Summary of Activities	*System went fully live in August 2012. This past academic year, there were more than 43,000 individual meetings between students and advisors that were prompted by alerts from GPS Advising.*
Baseline Status	• *Current Six Year Graduation Rate:* **54%** • *Total Students receiving undergraduate degrees in the 2013-2014 Academic Year:* **4,622**
Interim Measures of Progress	*The numbers we are achieving via the programs are exceptionally strong. We have been tracking the use of the system and gathering interim metrics such as* • *Credit hours at the time of graduation (which have declined by an average of 3)* • *Percent of students in majors that fit their academic abilities (up by 13 points)* • *Percent of students with lower academic risk factors (up by 16 points)*
Measures of Success	• *Undergraduate Six-Year Graduation rates* • *Number of Undergraduate Degree conferrals*
Lessons Learned	• *The true potential of predictive analytics comes, not from its ability to identify students at risk, but in its ability to support intensive advising practices. In order for predictive analytics to make a significant impact in higher education, technology solutions must be accompanied by investment in advising personnel and practices that can most effectively translate data into action.* • *Academic choices have a significant impact on career aspirations and vice versa. With the introduction of a new career matcher feature into our existing GPA advising platform (powered by data from Burning Glass), students are shown lists of common careers commonly associated with their chosen or prospective majors, as well as information about what skills are sought after by employers in those fields. Advising students with a view to life beyond graduation provides them with a broader perspective about what academic success means, as well as stronger sense of direction and motivation to pursue their degree, not as an end in itself, but as a springboard to future success in life and career.*

What if students who enroll at large, public universities received the same kind of personalized attention that is afforded to students at small, elite colleges? How would such personalized attention transform student success rates? At Georgia State, we are pursuing the answer to these questions in part by leveraging new technologies. Our cutting-edge GPS Advising, a partnership with the Education Advisory of Board (EAB), uses more than ten years of GSU student data—over 2.5 million grades—to create predictive analytics for how each individual student will fare in any major and in most courses that we offer. The system tracks students' decisions and academic performances, and it is updated with data from our student information systems on a daily basis—with alerts going off when a student is off path. Last academic year, the system generated more than 43,000 individual meetings between advisors and students to discuss specific alerts—all aimed at getting the student back on path to graduation. Since Georgia State went live with GPS Advising three years ago, freshmen fall-to-spring retention rates have increased by 5 percentage points and graduating seniors are taking fewer excess courses in completing their degrees.

In 2016, Georgia State University will consolidate with Georgia Perimeter College (GPC). EDUCAUSE, with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust (the Helmsley Trust) and in partnership with Achieving the Dream (ATD), has awarded Georgia State University a grant to facilitate our efforts to deploy our technology solution and adapt our advising strategy in order to increase graduation rates for the 22,000 students seeking associate degrees at GPC. In addition to providing much needed support to students seeking associate degrees, the extension of our GPS to encompass the entirety of the new consolidated university provides us with the opportunity to better understand and support transfer pathways between two- and four- year institutions.

2. Summer Success Academy

High-impact strategy	*Use predictive analytics to identify admitted students for the fall freshman class who are academically at-risk and require that these students attend a seven-week summer session before fall classes.*
Related Goal	*Goal #7: Increase the likelihood of degree by transforming the way that remediation is accomplished*
Summary of Activities	*Program was initiated in 2012 as an alternate to deferring weaker freshmen admits to the Spring semester. Students earn 7 hours of credit toward their Bachelor's degree while receiving intensive academic and personal support including supplemental instruction, advisement, learning communities, team building, financial literacy training.*
Baseline Status	• *Last year, the one-year retention rate of 87% for Success Academy graduates marked a significant increase over the 50% retention rate that would be expected by this population as recently as 2011.*
Interim Measures of Progress	• *Retention rates for the students for the at-risk students enrolled in the Success Academy (87%) exceed those of the rest of the freshman class (83%).*

	• *In summer 2015, the program enrolled 370 students, up 50 from summer of 2014.*
Measures of Success	• *Retention rates* • *Graduation rates* • *Degree completions*
Lessons Learned	• *While the Summer Success Academy is a program that would most certainly be of benefit to all students, it is important to ensure that the size of the program does not outstrip resources. The amount of personalized attention that students receive in the program is a significant reason for the program's success, not only because of the level of academic coaching required for our most at-risk students, but also because mentoring by peers and professionals also provides academy students with a sense of self-efficacy and the 'soft' skills necessary to 'do college.'* • *Georgia State currently has a proposal before the Kresge Foundation to expand our current program, while at the same time collecting validation data that would allow the Foundation to help promote the Success Academy as a national best practice for closing the achievement gap for at-risk populations*

Georgia State takes students admitted to the fall freshmen class who are most academically at risk and requires that they attend a 7-week summer semester before the start of fall courses. Students enroll in 7 credits of college-level (non-remedial) courses and are given the support of all of GSU's tutoring, advising, financial literacy, and academic skills programs at their disposal. All students are in freshmen learning committees. Last year's cohort was retained at a rate of 87%. This compares to an 83% retention rate for reminder of the freshmen class who were, on paper, better academically prepared for college. It is important to note that these same students, when Georgia State was deferring their enrollment until the spring semester (as is the common practice nationally), were being retained at only a 50% clip. This equates to more than 100 additional freshmen being retained via the Summer Success Academy this past year alone than would have been the case under the old model.

3. Panther Retention Grants

High-impact strategy	*Provide micro grants to students at the fee drop each semester to help cover modest financial shortfalls impacting the students' ability to pay tuition and fees to prevent students from stopping/dropping out.*
Related Goal	*Goal #1: Increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG institutions* *Goal #10: Mitigate the detrimental effects of financial need on student recruitment, retention, and graduation*
Summary of Activities	*Staff examine the drop lists for students with genuine unmet need, who are on track for graduation using our academic analytics, and who have modest balances for tuition and fees. Students are offered micro grants on the condition that they agree to certain*

	activities, including meeting with a financial counselor to map out plans to finance the rest of their education. Last academic year, nearly 2,000 grants were offered.
Baseline Status	• *Last academic year, 61% of the seniors receiving PRG funding graduated within two semesters of receiving the grants.*
Interim Measures of Progress	• *Of freshmen who were offered Panther Retention grants in fall 2013, 93% enrolled the following spring, a rate higher than that of the student body as a whole. 83% of freshman PRG recipients returned to class in fall 2014. The retention rate for freshmen who were offered the grants in fall 2014 was 88%.* • *We are also tracking the rate of "returnees" to the program, which we have been able to keep under 25%.*
Measures of Success	• *The ultimate measure of success is college completion. The largest group of recipients last year were seniors, who often are running out of Hope funding or exhausting other aid.*
Lessons Learned	• *A data-driven approach to award dispersion ensures that support is given to students who are both in need and who are likely to succeed when their need is met. This represents a shift in perspective, away from distributing funds as a response to financial need alone, and toward an approach that is first and foremost motivated by an interest in eliminating non-academic barriers to student success.* • *Many students lack the financial literacy necessary to ensure that an otherwise sustainable amount of financial support is managed effectively through to the end of their degrees. The Panther Retention Grants are an excellent way to respond to the financial needs of student who are on track to degree, but who encounter financial shortfalls as they near graduation. In an effort to be more proactive, GSU has added a set of financial indicators to its predictive analytics and has also committed to establishing a dedicated financial counseling center by the end of Spring 2016. Through proactive interventions like these, GSU expects to see fewer of its students run into financial problems later in their degree, while at the same time providing tis students with the tools necessary for financial security in career upon graduation.*

This past fall, over 18,000 of Georgia State's 25,149 undergraduates (72%) had some level of unmet need, meaning that even after grants, loans, scholarships, family contributions and the income generated from the student working 20 hours a week, the students lack sufficient funds to attend college. Each semester, hundreds of fully qualified students are dropped from their classes for lack of payment. For as little as $300, Panther Retention Grants provide the emergency funding to allow students who want to get their degrees the opportunity to stay enrolled. Last year, nearly 2,000 Georgia State students were brought back to the classroom—and kept on the path to attaining a college degree—through the program. 61% of the seniors who received PRG support last academic year graduated within two semesters of receiving the grant and 82% either had graduated or were still enrolled one year after receiving the grant. With 6,300 grants awarded over the past four years, he program has prevented literally thousands of students from dropping out of Georgia State.
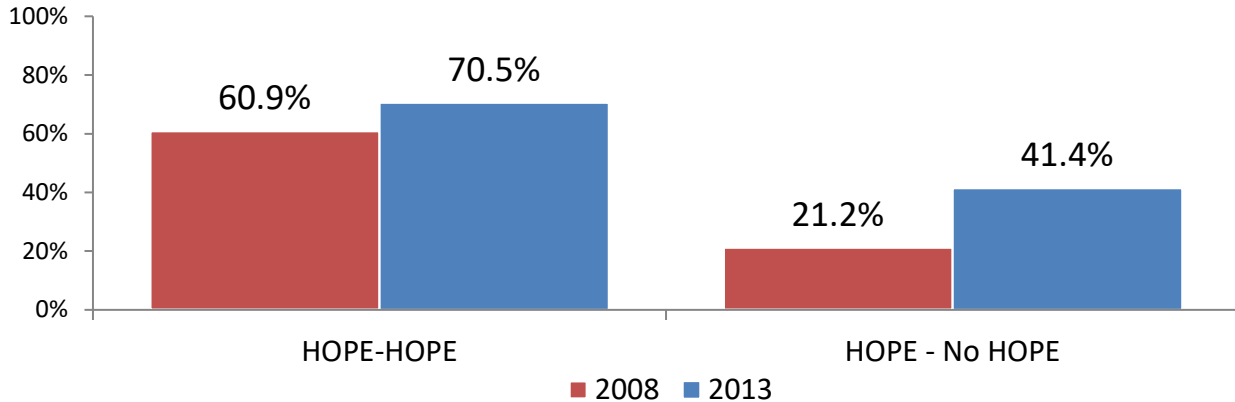
4. Keep Hope Alive (KHA)

High-impact strategy	*In 2008, the graduation rates for students who lose the Hope scholarship were only 20%, 40-points lower than the rates for those who hold on to it. Gaining the Hope Scholarship back after losing it is a statistical longshot: only about 9% of Georgia State students pull this off. Using a $500 incentive for two semesters after the scholarship is lost, the Program requires students to sign a contract agreeing to meet with their advisors, attend academic skills workshops and participate in financial literacy training.*
Related Goal	*Goal #1: Increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded by USG institutions* *Goal #10: Mitigate the detrimental effects of financial need on student recruitment, retention, and graduation*
Summary of Activities	*By signing a contract to receive $500 for each of the first two semesters after losing Hope, students agree to participate in a series of programs and interventions designed to get them back on track academically and to make wise financial choices in the aftermath of losing the scholarship.* *Scholarship Criteria:* • *Program is open to freshman and sophomore students with a 2.75 – 2.99 HOPE grade point average.* • *Student must pursue a minimum of 30 credit hours within the next academic year (fall, spring, and summer semesters).* • *Students must attend Student Success workshops facilitated by the Office of Undergraduate Studies.* • *Students must meet with their academic coach on a regular basis.* • *Students are required to attend mandatory advisement sessions facilitated by the University Advisement Center.*
Baseline Status	• *Since 2008, institutional HOPE retention rates have increased by 50%, from 49% to 75% in 2013.* • *Compared to 2008, the six-year graduation rate for students who lost their HOPE scholarship at some point in their academic carrier has doubled, from 21% in 2008 to 41% in 2013.*
Interim Measures of Progress	• *For students in KHA in the period from 2011 to 2014, better than 55% gained the scholarship back at the next marker* • *Leveraging our $1,000 scholarship investment by gaining between $6,000 and $12,000 of Hope dollars back again.*
Measures of Success	• *Retention rates for students receiving the HOPE scholarship* • *Six-year graduation rates for students who lost their HOPE scholarship at some point in their academic career.*
Lessons Learned	• *Losing the HOPE scholarship puts students far more at risk than losing a 3.0 GPA.*

6 Year Graduation Rates Among Students Receiving the HOPE Scholarship

With 59% of Georgia State students coming from Pell-eligible households (where the annual household income last year was less than $30,000), the Hope scholarship can be a mixed blessing. The $6,000+ scholarship provides access to college for thousands of Georgia State students, but for the student who does not maintain a 3.0 college GPA, the loss of Hope often means the student has to drop out for financial reasons. KHA provides a $500 stipend for two semester to students who have lost Hope as an incentive for them to follow a rigorous academic restoration plan that includes meeting with advisors, attending workshops, and participating in financial literacy training—all designed to help students improve their GPAs and to regain the scholarship. Since 2008, the program has helped to _double_ the graduation rates of Georgia State students who lose the Hope scholarship.

5. Meta-Majors

High-impact strategy	_Requiring all students to choose a meta-major puts students on a path to degree that allows for flexibility in future specialization in a particular program of study, while also ensuring the applicability of early course credits to their final majors. Implemented in conjunction with major maps, block scheduling, and freshman learning communities, meta-majors provide clarity and direction in what would otherwise be a confusing and unstructured registration process._
Related Goal	_Goal #2: Increase the number of degrees that are earned 'on time.'_ _Goal #3: Decrease excess credits earned on the path to getting a degree_
Summary of Activities	_Upon registration, all students are required to enroll in one of seven **meta-majors**: STEM, Arts & Humanities, Health, Education, Policy & Social Science, and Exploratory. Once students have selected their meta-major, they are given a choice of several **block schedules**, which are pre-populated course timetables including courses relevant to their_

	first year of study. On the basis of their timetable selection, students are assigned to **Freshman Learning Communities** *consisting of 25 students who are in the same meta-major and take classes according to the same block schedules of 5 – 6 courses in addition to GSU1010, a 1 credit hour course providing students with essential information and survival skills to help them navigate the logistical, academic, and social demands of the University.*
Baseline Status	• *In the 2013-2014 academic year, enrollment in a Freshman Learning Community according to meta-major resulted in an average increase in GPA of 8%.* • *In the 2013-2014 academic year, enrollment in a Freshman Learning Community by meta-major was found to increase a student's likelihood of being retained through to the following year by 5%.*
Interim Measures of Progress	• *Adopting an opt-out model has mean that 95% of non-honors freshmen are in freshman learning communities with common block schedules. This is up 15% from the 80% rate that was seen when the program was first implemented in its current form in Fall 2013.*
Measures of Success	• *Average GPA* • *Freshman retention rates*
Lessons Learned	• *Time is money, and students who switch between majors, especially after the freshman year, accumulate wasted credits. With large numbers of low-income students who have strictly limited resources, mistakes in choosing majors can equate to college attrition.* • *Meta-majors, block scheduling, and freshman learning communities have all been shown to significantly improve the chances of student success. GSU has introduced each of these approaches at different times in its history. Bringing each of these best practices together as part of an integrated admissions strategy has produced a synergy, with power greater than the sum of that of its parts.*

Impact of Meta Majors and Learning Communities
2013 – 2014 Academic Year
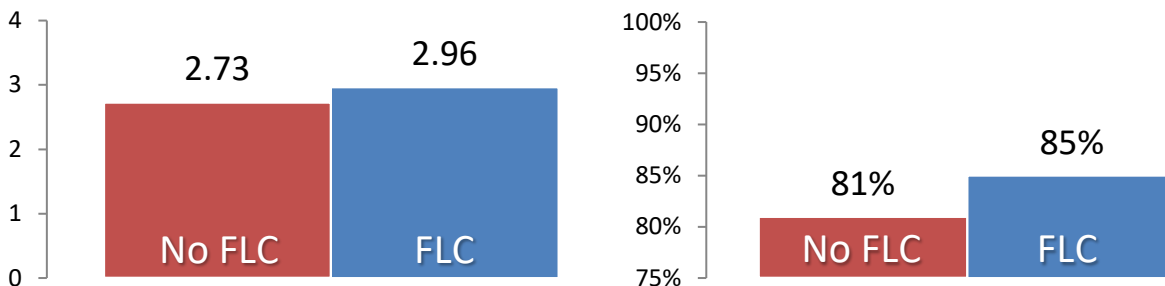
At a large public university with 32,000 students, freshmen can feel overwhelmed by the size and scope of the campus and can have trouble building friendships and support systems. FLCs organize the freshmen class into cohorts of 25 students arranged by common academic interests, otherwise known as "meta majors" (STEM, business, arts and humanities, policy, health, education and social

sciences). Students travel through their classes together, building friendships, study partners and support along the way. Block schedules—FLCs in which all courses might be between, for example, 8:30 AM and 1:30 PM three days a week— accommodate students' work schedules and help to improve class attendance. FLC students not only are retained but graduate at rates 4 points above those of non-FLC students. Almost 80% of this fall's freshmen class are in FLCs.

III. Observations

Georgia State University is testimony to the fact that students from all backgrounds can succeed at high rates. Moreover, our efforts over the past few years show that dramatic gains are indeed possible—not through changing the nature of the students served but through changing the nature of the institution that serves them.

Timeline of Student Success Initiatives at Georgia State University

Initiative	Year Started	Summary	Scale
Freshman Learning Communities	1999	First-year students sorted into cohorts of 25 based on meta-major; take all courses together in block schedule.	95% of first-year students in 2013-14
Supplemental Instruction	2005	Students who are most successful in courses hired as peer tutors for other students in the course; many tutors eligible for work-study.	9,700 students in 2013-14
Mathematics Interactive Learning Environment	2006	Redesign of introductory math courses (algebra, statistics, and pre-calculus) using a hybrid, emporium model of face-to-face and machine-guided instruction.	7,500 students in 2013-14
Keep HOPE Alive Scholarship	2008	Small grants to students who lose eligibility for Georgia's HOPE merit scholarship, combined with academic and financial counseling.	377 students since 2009
Panther Retention Grants	2011	Small grants (combined with academic and financial counseling) to juniors and seniors who are on-track academically, but are required by a state of Georgia rule to be dropped from classes because they have small outstanding balances on tuition or fees.	4,200 students since 2011
Graduation and Progression System	2012	Sophisticated dashboard for advisers that displays real-time analyses of student academic progress and raises alerts calling for intervention; coupled with consolidating undergraduate advising and more than doubling the number of advisers.	Prompted 43,000 student-adviser meetings in 2013-14
Summer Success Academy	2012	Opportunity for the most academically at-risk 10 percent of incoming freshmen to take 7 credit hours and receive intensive academic advisement and financial literacy training during the summer before their first year.	320 students in Summer 2014

Source: Building A Pathway to Student Success at Georgia State University[14]

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[14] Ithaka S+R (2015) Building a Pathway to Student Success at Georgia State University. Retrieved from http://sr.ithaka.org/sites/default/files/reports/SR_Case_Study_Building_Pathway_Student_Success_042315_0.pdf.

The work we have been doing to promote student success at Georgia State University since the launch of Freshman Learning Communities in 1999 has steadily increased graduation rates among our traditionally high risk student populations, but it has also served to foster a culture of student success among faculty, staff, and administration. In addition to the well-established and high impact strategies described above, Georgia State University continues to employ data analysis to identify and understand the obstacles that our students are facing, and to test innovative new solutions to facilitate efficient pathways to the attainment of high quality degrees.

With the help of a Transformational Planning Grant generously awarded to Georgia State University in July 2014 by the Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities (APLU) in partnership with Urban Serving Universities (USU) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), we have initiated a series of major projects meant to address three major issues that continue to confront our students: (1) limited availability of courses necessary for the most timely academic progression, (2) insufficient financial literacy among our student and the devastating implications of many of the poor decisions that result), and (3) failures to deliver the alerts that identify that a student if off path is the most systematic and timely manner possible.

I. Optimizing Course Scheduling using Predictive Analytics
Until now, course scheduling has been too often based on faculty preference, which meant that a disproportionate number of courses were being taught during the middle of the day frequently on topics that did not fully address the students progression needs. Additionally, there was not always sufficient campus classroom space to offer the number of courses requested during peak times, and we had insufficient capacity in required courses to meet student demand. Finally, scheduling of prerequisite and sequential courses was often interrupted by faculty leaves and availability, which delayed student progression in many cases. As a result of an analysis conducted by our Office of Institutional Research, we have shifted our course scheduling policy so as to balance faculty preference with other important factors like room availability, student demand, and academic program requirements. We now will employ the aggregate data that we are collecting on the major maps and progression of each individual student to predict what courses are needed and in what numbers each semester. As a result of our new policy framework, we expect to see immediate and marked improvements in our rates of student progression, along with a resulting decrease in average cost per degree and an increase in student satisfaction. With help from Ad Astra, we are implementing a predictive analytics solution that will allow us to consistently execute our new, more student friendly scheduling model, while at the same time allowing us to be constantly adaptive to changes in student course demand as they occur..

II. Establishing a Financial Counseling Center
In an effort to mitigate the financial risks to student retention that are created by non-academic collegiate expenditures, GSU has used ten years of student financial data and more than 140,000 Georgia state student records to develop predictive analytics identifying when students make financial decisions that put them at risk of attrition. These enhanced predictive analytics include information about student housing choices and past due histories

to target students for financial counseling. GSU currently has a proposal submitted to SunTrust Bank to fund a dedicated financial counseling center with an extensive outreach function using these cutting-edge analytics—the first of its kind in the USG and one of the first in the nation. President Becker has made a commitment to the opening of such a center, expected by the end of the 2016 academic year.

III. Empowering Students through Mobile Application Development

In collaboration with the Education Advisory Board, GSU helped to develop a student-facing tool for smart devices that incorporates data analytics to provide students with major and career guidance, best-fit courses and schedules, time management tools, and smart resource recommendations about student support that is relevant to their specific needs. The current version of the app provides students with time management coaching in the form of syllabus- and analytics- driven alerts or "nudges"—real-time notifications that pop up on the students's smart phones and tablets the second an issue is identified. This mobile application was piloted in two phases during the spring and summer of 2015, and is currently deployed for use by a large cohort of students participating in the GSU Summer Success Academy. Based on research and lessons learned from the pilot, the application is undergoing a redesign which will continue to be tested during the 2015-16 academic year.

As the story of Georgia State University demonstrates, institutional transformation in the service of student success does not come about as a result of a single program, but grows from a series of small changes that undergo continue reevaluation and refinement. What it also shows is how a series of seemingly small but successful initiatives can significantly transform an institution's culture. As we have seen improvements in the success of our students, the campus community has come to be driven by a shared vision.

Building on our success in the use of adaptive learning technology in introductory mathematics courses, for example, we are in the process of rolling out adaptive and hybrid versions of introductory courses in Psychology and Political Science. In 2008, DFW rates in College Algebra, Pre-Calculus, and Introduction to Statistics stood at an an average of 43% and were, and represented a leading reason motivating students to drop out of Georgia State University after their first year. By replacing the traditional model with one that would see students spend only one hour in lecture per week, and three hours a week in a dedicated computer lab working through personalized, adaptive exercises, we have seen a marked improvement in the success of students in these challenging but foundational courses. Since reconfiguring these first year math courses, and the inauguration of MILE (our Mathematics Interactive Learning Environment), we have served more than 7,500 students each year using this strategy and have seen a decrease in the DFW rate by more than 50% (down to 19% in Fall 2014). Through this change in approach, we now see approximately 1,800 more students pass their introductory mathematics courses per year, and in a way that does not sacrifice academic rigor or the quality of learning. As such, the courses have proven truly preparatory for success in higher level courses. By implementing similar strategies in psychology and political science, we expect to see significant gains for students in these departments as well.

With a strong institutional vision, well defined goals, and nationally recognized accomplishments, Georgia State University has developed a culture of student success oriented toward constant improvement upon existing programs, while at the same time disseminating insights about our experiences for the sake of fostering the success of students across Georgia and the nation as a whole.

The year ahead will be an exciting and challenging one, as Georgia State University consolidates with Georgia Perimeter College (GPC) to form the largest institution of higher learning in Georgia, and one of the largest in the nation. If the lessons we have learned, the initiatives we have implemented, the technologies we have developed, and the results we have achieved can be be transferred to the context of GPC, the ultimate winners will be the students of the state of Georgia.

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