

## Momentum Plan for 2025

### Georgia Southwestern State University

#### Section 1: Reflecting on Our Student Success Work

Georgia Southwestern State University (GSW) continued to experience significant enrollment growth with an increase from fall 2023 to fall 2024 from 3415 to 3704 or 8.5% growth. This positive trend continued for spring 2025 increasing to 3366 over the spring 2024 headcount of 3159 or approximately 6.6% growth. The growth figures for fall term included not only another large first year class but increases in other areas, including dual enrollment students, continuing undergraduate students, and master's students. The 2018 FTFT cohort achieved a six-year graduation rate of 40.6%, the highest in the last twenty years and an 8.7% increase over the 2017 cohort. Our National Student Clearing House rate that includes students who transferred out of GSW and subsequently graduated elsewhere was 51.8%.

Despite all the progress we have made in enrollment, the retention rate for the 2023 cohort was disappointing falling to 55% from the 63.9% for the 2022 cohort. This change is baffling considering that we have continued to apply the same success strategies for the last several years and we were making steady progress back from the COVID low of 53.9% for the 2020 cohort. Anecdotally, we have heard from faculty that students are not attending classes and not turning in many assignments. Nonetheless, we saw an increase in fall to spring retention for the 2024 cohort to 91% compared to the fall 2023 cohort's 88%. The number of continuing students who are registered for fall term 2025 has increased significantly over the same time last year (1126 compared to 1041). This increase suggests that our communication plan for early registration and the outreach by the Office of First-Year Experience and Student Success (FYE) to students in the 2024 cohort who did not register during the early registration period are paying dividends. Perhaps the 2023 cohort was an anomaly.

The interventions intended to improve the percentage of students completing ENGL 1101 and their major appropriate Math course during their first year at GSW have been piloted or fully implemented. All instructors teaching ENGL 1101, MATH 1001, MATH 1111, and MATH 1401 either participated in the GSW Guided Instructional Feedback Technique (GIFT) during fall term 2024 or are participating during spring term 2025. In GIFT, instructors give up 20-30 minutes of class time before midterm to a trained facilitator. The facilitator works with students to find out what things the instructor does that helps and hinders their learning. The facilitator also guides the students to ask the same questions of themselves, i.e., what do I do to help and hinder my own learning. The facilitator then drafts a confidential report for the instructor that can be used to make changes to the course for the rest of the term to improve learning. The use of the Mindset Intervention was piloted in all co-requisite Math courses and selected sections of the college-level courses in Math, as well. All instructors teaching ENGL 1101 were provided with a set of videos on teaching underprepared students to give them additional strategies to improve learning in their classes. The videos have subsequently been shared by the chair of Department of English and Modern Languages with the Department of Mathematics.

Training of new FTFT students in the use of the Student Educational Planner (SEP) in UNIV 1000 the GSW Experience, our first-year experience course, continued in fall 2024. The data is in on the 2023 cohort students with plans. Students in the 2023 cohort with a plan were retained at 69% (104 out of 150). Similarly, the fall to spring retention rate for students in the 2024 cohort with a plan was 97% (72 out of 74) compared to 91% for the cohort as a whole. As encouraging as these results are, we won't know if

using SEP is truly effective until we can get more students to create a plan and ensure that all students are being trained. The percentage of student in the 2023 cohort who had a plan was only 28.7% (150 out of 521) and the percentage fell in fall 2024 to 13.4% (74 out of 549).

GSW's QEP, the High-Impact Approach to Integrative Learning (HAIL), was approved by our SACSCOC Onsite Review Team in March 2024. The program officially launched in fall 2024 and the results so far are extremely encouraging. The faculty are buying in and students who have participated in some HAIL activity have found the experience engaging. All indications are that the curricular part of the plan works well, but the co-curricular aspect remains a work in progress.

Each of GSW's success strategies needs some adjustment. The specifics of these adjustments will be found in Section 2 of this report. In addition, we are fully aligning our momentum success strategies with our ASPIRE top five strategies, four of which apply to undergraduate students; therefore, we will have four success strategies going forward. Two other activities will affect the development of our work at GSW this spring. GSW began the first year of a three-year engagement with the National Institute for Student Success (NISS) in fall 2024 and we anticipate receiving our Campus Playbook by the end of April, 2025. Many of our success initiatives will be affected by our engagement with NISS so that we can develop more targeted approaches to the issues that hold students back. GSW's recently invested President, Dr. Michele Johnston, has started a reassessment of our Strategic Plan that should be complete by fall 2025. Dr. Johnston has invited the campus community to participate in Strategic Planning BrainSTORM sessions beginning the week of April 7.

## Section 2: Student Success Inventory

## Success Strategy #1

<b>Activity/Project Name: Providing students with clear degree pathways</b>
<b>Momentum Area</b> (replace box with "X" for all that apply):
<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pathways <input type="checkbox"/> Mindset <input type="checkbox"/> Change Management <input type="checkbox"/> Data & Communications
<b>Activity/Project Overview or Description</b> (what this is?)
Every incoming freshman is being trained on the use of the Student Educational Planner (SEP) in Degree Works UNIV 1000 the GSW Experience, GSW's first-year experience class. Creating and submitting a registration plan is an assignment in sections of UNIV 1000.
<b>Is this also an ASPIRE Priority</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Activity/Project Activity Status</b> (where is this in process?) (replace box with "X" for all that apply)
<input type="checkbox"/> Studying <input type="checkbox"/> Initiating <input type="checkbox"/> Piloting <input type="checkbox"/> Scaling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Refining/Maintaining <input type="checkbox"/> Retiring
<b>Evaluation/Assessment plan</b>
Retention rates fall to spring and fall to fall for incoming cohorts, comparing the rates of students with a plan to those students without one. Eventually, four- and six-year graduation rates of student in 2023 cohort and succeeding cohorts, comparing the rates of students with a plan to those of students without one.
<b>Progress, Insights &amp; Adjustments</b> (what has been accomplished, what have you learned, and what changes do you feel you need to make)
While we can demonstrate the difference between students with a plan and students without, the numbers of students who complete a plan are disappointing. Not all sections of UNIV 1000 seem to be using the intervention. Therefore, we need to continue to train instructors and peer mentors (Storm Spotters) co-teaching sections of UNIV 1000 in using SEP, and in demonstrating the application to students.
<b>Plan for the year ahead</b> (What steps will you be taking in 2025)
We will be initiating more training and SEP for UNIV 1000 instructors and Storm Spotters. We will also will also pilot SEP training in major classes that initiate student into their majors to increase the number of students with a plan, who will be in most cases second-year students.
<b>What challenges will affect your ability to do this activity?</b>
Instructor buy-in is always a challenge, when an instructor might feel that "one more" thing is being asked of them. However, we hope that the data will convince instructors of the efficacy of SEP plans.
<b>What support do you need from outside your institution</b> (e.g., the System Office or other institutions) to be successful?
None at the moment.
<b>Project Lead/point of contact:</b>
David Jenkins, UNIV 1000 co-director and director of the Office of First-Year Experience and Student Success.

## Success Strategy #2

<b>Activity/Project Name:</b> Increasing students sense of belonging and engagement in curricular and co-curricular activities
<b>Momentum Area</b> (replace box with "X" for all that apply):
<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pathways <input type="checkbox"/> Mindset <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Change Management <input type="checkbox"/> Data & Communications
<b>Activity/Project Overview or Description</b> (what this is?)
GSW's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), High-Impact Approach to Integrative Learning (HAIL) is a broad initiative to facilitate integrative learning and student belonging at GSW. HAIL was as approved by SACSCOC during GSW's Onsite Visit during March, 2024. In AY 2025, we will enter year 2. HAIL is a broad plan to facilitate integrative learning and social belonging into general education classes and elsewhere in the curriculum.
<b>Is this also an ASPIRE Priority</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Activity/Project Activity Status</b> (where is this in process?) (replace box with "X" for all that apply)
<input type="checkbox"/> Studying <input type="checkbox"/> Initiating <input type="checkbox"/> Piloting <input type="checkbox"/> Scaling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Refining/Maintaining <input type="checkbox"/> Retiring
<b>Evaluation/Assessment plan</b>
The HAIL program has three student learning outcomes and three programmatic goals that are assessed on a yearly basis by the QEP committee. SLOs are evaluated primarily with the AACU Value rubric in integrative learning by a group of faculty volunteers. Goals are assessed in various ways. Goals #1 is about faculty development and is measured by the number of faculty who participate in various HAIL sponsored activities including book clubs, teaching circles, and summer workshops. Goal #2 is about facilitating collaborative teaching and learning opportunities and is measured by the number HAIL classes that are taught on a semester-semester basis. Goal #3 is about develop a student sense of belonging and is measured by a survey used at HAIL related events. In addition, raw data on social belonging items on the Mindset Survey and NSSE will be disaggregated to be able to compare results for students who participated in a HAIL activity and students who did not.
<b>Progress, Insights &amp; Adjustments</b> (what has been accomplished, what have you learned, and what changes do you feel you need to make)
--Very successful pilot and launch of the program. Faculty engagement surpassed our expectations. We've also expanded the program in a number of ways because of this engagement (we are recognizing HAIL programs for integrative excellence and have developed HAIL sequences, integrative courses that connect across semesters). --Spring blocks come with a set of logistical challenges (i.e. communicating with advisors) --co-curricular integration into academic programs is more challenging than we anticipated and we'll need to develop ways of encouraging more of this work --
<b>Plan for the year ahead</b> (What steps will you be taking in 2025)
--work with academic programs to develop spring HAIL blocks that will support their student needs and which students will enroll in. --work more directly with academic programs to encourage HAIL programs and GE blocks that meet their needs --Develop blocks for fully online students --Work on a more robust and sustainable form of co-curricular integration --Work with various stakeholders to generally improve program (i.e. focus groups, and other opportunities for feedback)

<b>What challenges will affect your ability to do this activity?</b>
--There will likely be new cabinet level leadership next year (i.e. a new Provost) whose support will be critical --Some resistance/ apathy in various academic programs is to be expected --Spring administrative logistics are always tricky
<b>What support do you need from outside your institution</b> (e.g., the System Office or other institutions) <b>to be successful?</b>
--We are developing a group of scholars who are interested in SoTL/ integrative learning and we'd love suggestions on people to reach out to in order to support this group and their work. --We are tentatively considering cross-institutional collaborative learning opportunities and other ways of expanding HAIL. Suggestions about related programs/ institutions are welcome. --Suggestions for grant opportunities and other forms of external funding we should investigate would be welcome.
<b>Project Lead/point of contact:</b>
Paul Dahlgren, Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences/ HAIL Director

## Success Strategy #3

<b>Activity/Project Name: Increasing pass rates in English 1101 and the first MATH course required for a major</b>	
<b>Momentum Area</b> (replace box with "X" for all that apply):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pathways <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mindset <input type="checkbox"/> Change Management <input type="checkbox"/> Data & Communications	
<b>Activity/Project Overview or Description</b> (what this is?)	
<p><b>Increasing pass rates in English 1101 and the major appropriate MATH courses is the goal of this strategy. Both the department of English and Mathematics have submitted improvement plans and are implementing them. Among the strategies being employed are:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common weekly schedules for ENGL 1101, MATH 1001, MATH 1111, and MATH 1401, respectively</li> <li>• Using the Mindset Intervention</li> <li>• Attendance Policies that reward positive behavior</li> </ul>	
<b>Is this also an ASPIRE Priority</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<b>Activity/Project Activity Status</b> (where is this in process?) (replace box with "X" for all that apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Studying <input type="checkbox"/> Initiating <input type="checkbox"/> Piloting <input type="checkbox"/> Scaling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Refining/Maintaining <input type="checkbox"/> Retiring	
<b>Evaluation/Assessment plan</b>	
<p>GSW routinely monitors the percentage of student in each incoming cohort who pass English 1101 and their major appropriate Math course during their first two semesters at GSW. The baselines for the 2023 cohort were 47% for ENGL 1101 and 48% for the major appropriate Math courses; it should be noted that these figures do not include the student in the cohorts who entered with AP credit, CLEP credit or dual enrollment credit from an institution other than GSW. We also disaggregate these data by major to see where more targeted support would be effective.</p> <p>These completion percentages are also affected by number of hours attempted and completed during the first year. While the percentage of FTFT students attempting 15 or more credit hours during the first year</p>	

has increased over the last five years, the percentages are still lower than we would like. In addition, the percentage of hours completed remains below 75% which is our target for this measure (see strategy #4).
<b>Progress, Insights &amp; Adjustments</b> (what has been accomplished, what have you learned, and what changes do you feel you need to make)
One factor that affects the number of FTFT students from completing their major appropriate Math courses is the high number of students with corequisite learning support requirements, especially among our University College (UC) students. Under the previous administration, the instructors in the UC were not considered part of the Departments of English and Modern Languages or Mathematics. Since all UC students take both ENGL 1101 and a corequisite Math course, the sections of UC students were larger than is optimal and their success rates were quite low. This situation has been remedied allowing us to spread out the UC students needing corequisite among a larger number of sections making the class sizes more manageable. The downside of this change is that we need greater coordination between the instructors teaching college-level and those teaching corequisite courses.
<b>Plan for the year ahead</b> (What steps will you be taking in 2025)
There are two primary plans for this next academic year.  After having piloted the use of the Mindset Intervention in Math corequisite course and some college level Math section, we will begin scaling the intervention to all Math course and to ENGL 0999.  We will also begin to make sure that there is week to week coordination between our corequisite courses and the college level course they support, since we will have a larger number of sections of corequisites and will not be able to ensure that students have the same instructor for both courses. We will also emphasize the effectiveness of previewing in corequisites to the instructors which will be made more practical by coordinated course schedules.
<b>What challenges will affect your ability to do this activity?</b>
We will need to overcome the assumption of some faculty members that imposing a schedule on them violates their academic freedom. Hopefully emphasizing our duty to students taking classes taught by multiple instructors that they all have as similar an experience as we can provide will help overcome this assumption. Of course, deans and department chairs will also continue to collect and examine syllabi for all course taught in their units.
<b>What support do you need from outside your institution</b> (e.g., the System Office or other institutions) to be successful?
Continued support of the Mindset Intervention and the Mindset Survey.
<b>Project Lead/point of contact:</b>
Michael Moir, chair of English and Modern Languages, and Chadwick Gugg, Chair of Mathematics

## Success Strategy #4

<b>Activity/Project Name: Freshman taking 15 hours</b>	
<b>Momentum Area</b> (replace box with "X" for all that apply):	

<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pathways <input type="checkbox"/> Mindset <input type="checkbox"/> Change Management <input type="checkbox"/> Data & Communications
<b>Activity/Project Overview or Description</b> (what this is?)
<b>Increase the number of freshmen completing fifteen credit hours in their first semester at GSW. Freshmen students are enrolled in classes for their first semester by FYE advisors that include 14-16 credits. They are advised by FYE advisors at early registration for spring classes to register for enough hours to accumulate 30 credit hours during their first year.</b>
<b>Is this also an ASPIRE Priority</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Activity/Project Activity Status</b> (where is this in process?) (replace box with "X" for all that apply)
<input type="checkbox"/> Studying <input type="checkbox"/> Initiating <input type="checkbox"/> Piloting <input type="checkbox"/> Scaling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Refining/Maintaining <input type="checkbox"/> Retiring
<b>Evaluation/Assessment plan</b>
We are tracking the percentage of student in the FTFT cohort who attempt 15 hours each semester, as well as the overall average hours attempted for all students in the cohort and for those attempting 15 or more hours. We are also tracking average completion percentage of all students in the cohort and students with 15 or more attempted hours. Our target is for all FTFT students to complete no less than 67% of their attempted hours (to maintain SAP), and hopefully more than 75% to ensure that completing a degree in four years remains possible.
<b>Progress, Insights &amp; Adjustments</b> (what has been accomplished, what have you learned, and what changes do you feel you need to make)
<b>We have learned that students may agree to register for the requisite number of hours, but then either drop classes after seeing an advisor, or withdrawal later in the term.</b>
<b>Plan for the year ahead</b> (What steps will you be taking in 2025)
<b>All FT students (FT and PT) have a hold on their registration/drop-add for their first semester that does not allow them to adjust their schedules without approval of their FYE advisor. We have also reinstituted advisor approval for all withdrawals to give advisors a chance to speak with students about the advantages and disadvantages of withdrawing from a class. We are working on training faculty to have effective conversations about academic success during advising sessions and when student seek approval for a withdrawal.</b>
<b>What challenges will affect your ability to do this activity?</b>
<b>The student perception that taking fewer credits hours will lead to more success, a perception that research does not support is an aggravating factor in any attempt to increase credit hours attempted. This belief is even held by many faculty members.</b>
<b>What support do you need from outside your institution</b> (e.g., the System Office or other institutions) to be successful?
Do you know how to combat the perception that fewer credit hours attempted will lead to greater student success?
<b>Project Lead/point of contact:</b>
David Jenkins, Director of First-Year Experience and Student Success