Project Request: IPEDS First Time Freshman Retention by Georgia Southern College and by Pell and Hope Eligibility Status.

Requested by: Dr. Jayne Perkins Brown, Senior Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management and Director of Strategic Research and Analysis

Project Abstract: Data were requested on 1st year retention rates of the IPEDS First Time Freshman Cohorts of the last six fall semesters to include by College, HOPE Eligibility Status, and Pell Grant Status. The report is updated each year as the latest fall data in finalized.

Methodology: The Board of Regents (BOR) Census Enrollment files were used to identify the cohorts and determine 1st year retention. The Banner table fainmgr.rpratrm was used to determine students awarded Pell Grants their first year. The table gasis.zhrhacc was used to determine the last HOPE eligibility status of students their first year. The major for the student upon their initial enrollment at Georgia Southern is the major defined in this report. Retention rates reflect students’ return to the University but not necessarily to the same college or major.

The cohorts tracked in this report are the IPEDS First-time Freshmen defined as fall term, first-time, full-time, degree-seeking undergraduates. The cohort includes students enrolled in the fall term who attended first time in the prior summer term, and students who entered with advanced standing (college credits earned before graduation from high school). Students who graduated from high school within the same calendar year of the fall term are included even if they previously attended college. These are the same cohorts as reported in the IPEDS Enrollment Survey.

Note. Data in this report reflects the following eligible exclusions (deceased or military withdrawal) as defined by IPEDS: Cohorts - 2008 (1 COST), 2009 (1 CIT and 1 CLASS), 2011 (1 Provost), 2012 (1 CLASS), and 2013 (1 COSM). As of Fall 2012, the College of Information Technology is now the College of Engineering and Information Technology and the College of Science & Technology is now the College of Science and Mathematics. The data in this report is not yet affected by that change.

HOPE - Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally - Georgia's HOPE Scholarship is available to Georgia residents who have demonstrated academic achievement. The scholarship provides money to assist students with their educational costs of attending college in Georgia. See https://secure.gacollege411.org/default.aspx

Federal Pell Grant Program: Federal Pell Grants are awarded to students on the basis of financial need and do not have to be repaid. These grants are considered the foundation of federal financial aid, to which aid from other federal and non-federal sources might be added. See http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/PellGrants.jsp

Project Timeframe: November 2014

Project Costs: staff time
Executive Summary

Georgia Southern University tracks retention of freshmen by using the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) - Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems (IPEDS) and University System of Georgia definitions. These definitions define the cohorts as those students who are:

- First-time,
- Full-time,
- Degree-seeking, and
- Major upon initial enrollment

Additionally these students are undergraduates who enter college for the first time in the noted Fall Term or who have graduated from high school within the same calendar year of that Fall Term. First-time summer students are also included if they are enrolled in the Fall Term. Also included are first-time students who entered with advanced standing (college credits earned before graduation from high school).

The major for the student upon their initial enrollment at Georgia Southern is the major defined in this report. Retention rates reflect students’ return to the University but not necessarily to the same college or major. Georgia Southern’s overall first-year retention rate for these students was at its highest rate since 2008-2009 at 81% (2013-2014). It increased 1% from the previous year (2012-2013). The following Colleges saw increased retention rates from the previous year: CEIT (1.1%), CHHS (1.2%), and COSM (.5%). The following Colleges saw decreased retention rates from the previous year: COBA (.7%), COE (3.4%), CLASS (.1%), and Provost (1.9%).

This report also provides detail on these same cohorts but reviewing several other paths of interest: by college and majors, by HOPE scholarship eligible/not, and by PELL Grant eligible/not. The College of Public Health first started offering undergraduate degrees in Fall 2013.

Across the five years of this report, whether a student received a PELL Grant or not did not significantly affect their first-year retention. In contrast, students who maintained HOPE eligibility their first year were retained at a much higher rate: 84.7% to 73.4% for the Fall 2013 Cohort.

These data continue to be useful as departments and colleges review initiatives relating to academic progress and retention to the University. Additionally the changes to academic advising processes may be a topic for further investigation to assess any potential impact on improved retention for students.