Case Statement

Following years of unprecedented growth, Kennesaw State University is stronger today than at any time in its history. At the forefront of this strength are our nationally recognized first-year initiatives—featured in *U.S News & World Reports*’ “America’s Best Colleges” listing for more than a decade.

Compelled by this strong momentum, Kennesaw State seeks to ensure its continued progress into the future by fostering the next generation of scholars, those who will not accept the status quo but who seek to affect the way students learn, manage, and succeed during their first year of college.

Imagine students as professors and administrators who have not only an in-depth knowledge of their formal disciplines but also the capacity to change those disciplines in ways previously unimagined. Preparing educators to teach first-year college students has traditionally been embedded in conventional disciplines such as science, English, math, and history but just imagine students graduating with the unique ability to teach the principles used to improve graduation outcomes through documented transitional experiences and research.

In fall 2015, Kennesaw State University will offer an online graduate degree program in First-Year Studies, the first of its kind in the country. The M.S. in First-Year Studies degree will equip students with the knowledge of the transitions first-year students face to prepare them to design, manage, deliver, and assess both curricular and co-curricular programs to help them succeed. This graduate program is intentionally designed to enhance the education of the next generation of student affairs professionals and faculty members.

KSU is excited about the future and ensuring student success. However, an increasing number of students are faced with taking on additional college debt to pursue postgraduate education. According to the U.S. Department of Education, tuition has increased more than 72 percent since year 2000. To offset these financial challenges, University College has developed the “Next Generation of First-Year Scholars” scholarship fund to provide financial support for students accepted into the M.S. in First-Year Studies program.

University College is committed to providing the best possible education and has launched the Next Generation Scholars in First-Year Studies scholarship campaign with the goal of generating $20,000 over the next three months. We invite you to join us as we ensure the ability to meet the opportunities ahead. We are confident that with your support, our dedicated faculty and staff members will equip tomorrow’s faculty and staff members to create and grow curricular and co-curricular initiatives that contribute to first-year student success.
Nearly $6 out of every $10 in financial aid comes in the form of a loan that must be repaid

"Given the increased diversity and complexity of incoming first-year students, faculty and staff who teach and support these students need advanced and unique skill sets that go beyond what most graduate programs currently offer. I am thrilled that KSU has developed a program that fills this critical gap, and am confident that it will generate a new level of expertise ready to infuse the ever-changing landscape of higher education."

- Michael L. Sansevero, Ph.D.
  Dean of Student Success
  Kennesaw State University

"Our graduate program will elevate and advance this new discipline. The Master of Science in First-Year Studies, the first academic program in this discipline, has been designed for any prospective faculty or staff member who aspires to work with or teach first-year students or other populations of students in transition."

- Stephanie M. Foote, Ph.D.
  Director, Master of Science in First-Year Studies
  Kennesaw State University
A Distinctive Degree for an Emerging Discipline

A Vision 30 Years Ago

When Dr. Betty L. Siegel became the second president of Kennesaw College (KC) in 1981, she brought with her a profound interest in students’ success. One initiative she established was a “Freshman-Year Experience (FYE) course,” KC 101. President Siegel had long admired the work of Dr. John N. Gardner, inviting him to the college to lead workshops to train selected faculty and administrators in innovative, effective ways to teach first-year students.

The first KC 101 courses were taught in 1983. The course became the centerpiece of a three-part program called “The New Student Experience” consisting of a revamped orientation program, a newly created academic advising center, and KC 101. The NSE was housed in the CAPS Center, under the leadership of Dr. Nancy King, in close collaboration with Academic Affairs.

During the decade of the ’80s the course was coordinated by King and Dr. Bowman Davis. Dr. Davis made major contributions by recruiting faculty to teach KC 101 and conducting research that demonstrated the effectiveness of the course in retaining both high—risk students and surprisingly—high-achieving students.

A significant milestone occurred in 1996 when Kennesaw became Kennesaw State University. In 2004 University College was established, and in 2007 the Department of First-Year and Transition Studies was created to house tenured and tenure-track faculty dedicated to teaching first-year seminars. Today the department’s nationally recognized faculty teach approximately 150 sections of first-year seminars . The department, which will house the M.S. in First-Year Studies, also administers learning communities, transition seminars, and a digital literacy course.

KSU’s dedication to first-year students has been highlighted for more than 10 years by U.S. News and World Report. The foundation for these award—winning initiatives is KC 101 and the vision of President Siegel, Dr. King, and Dr. Davis.

M.S. in First-Year Studies Graduate Program

In Fall 2015, Kennesaw State University will offer a fully online graduate degree program in First-Year Studies. The M.S. in First-Year Studies program will equip participants with the knowledge of the transitions that first-year students face to prepare them to design, manage and deliver both curricular and co-curricular programs to help first-year students succeed.

Program Highlights

100% Online Degree: Students are seeking the opportunities for flexibility of scheduling and cost efficiency that online studies can offer.

Students will benefit by having:

- Ease of accessibility
- Range of options
- Control study time

One-of-a-Kind: KSU is the first in the nation, first in the world, to offer the only graduate degree expressly designed to prepare the next generation of educators so desperately needed by colleges and universities to increase student success in the critical first year of college.

Advancing Scholarship: Students completing research papers and theses in the program will advance the body of scholarly research in the emerging discipline of first-year studies. Moreover, students will be taught to evaluate arguments and evidence, and relate ideas with an emphasis on developing the interdisciplinary aspects of their future courses.

Campaign Steering Committee Co-Chairs

"It is my professional judgment that this new graduate program is one of the most exciting developments in the college student success field over the past four decades. The University needs your support to show the way. This program will surely become a model for others in the country and abroad, showing much more must be done to provide a dedicated graduate degree specifically for future educators who aspire to help first-year college students be successful in the critical first year."

—John Gardner, president, Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education.

"Building upon the foundation laid by John N. Gardner and other giants in the First-Year Experience movement, KSU is taking a major step in preparing the future generation of FYE leaders. Beginning fall 2015 the University will offer an M.S. in First-Year Studies (FYS). This first-of-its-kind degree program will prepare students for a career in the growing FYS field. My sincere hope is that you will support this exciting new program through your contributions to the Next Generation Scholars Scholarship. Your support will have a significant impact both on the graduate students enrolled and the future first-year students whose lives they will touch."

—Nancy King, executive assistant for Strategic Initiatives, Kennesaw State University
Scholarship Campaign Objective

Building Foundations

To build upon the foundations of excellence that have been defined by our University, we ask you to join us in preparing the next generation scholars in first-year studies to enable our students, and all succeeding generations, to realize their full potential as individuals, advance their professions, and contribute to our country's academic success.

Dr. Keisha Hoerrner, Interim Dean of University College, has launched the Next Generation Scholars in First-Year Studies scholarship campaign with the goal of generating $20,000 over the next three months. These funds will be strictly used for graduate scholarship aid for the M.S. in First-Year Studies degree program.

We need your help. All of the efforts of imagination and preparation will not matter if students cannot afford the opportunities we offer. Your support allows students to live out their goals without worrying about repaying student debt.

Making a Gift

For ways to give to the Next Generation of Scholars in First-Year Studies scholarship campaign, please complete the enclosed pledge card and use the reply envelope to designate your gift of any amount.

If you have any questions regarding your interest in contributing to this scholarship, contact University College at (470) 578-6326 or email loretta_daniels@kennesaw.edu. More information about the Next Generation Scholars in First-Year Studies can be found on the web at www.kennesaw.edu/uc/donate.

Campaign Steering Committee Members

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