

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE 2018-2021 Strategic Plan: Building Blocks for the Next Three (3) Years

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

University College was established in 2004 to provide a structure for and lend greater visibility to a variety of programs, academic support services, and projects to enhance the academic success, retention, and engagement of undergraduate and graduate students both in and out of the classroom. The college is home to three academic departments; the Department of First-Year and Transition Studies, the Department of Leadership and Integrative Studies, and the Department of Culinary Sustainability and Hospitality. All three units are interdisciplinary, reflecting the commitment of the college to diversity of thought, innovative collaborations, and courses that challenge students that will lead to the development of their critical thinking capabilities for today's contemporary society.

The Department of First-Year and Transition Studies is an interdisciplinary department dedicated to fostering the success of first-year college students and other students in transition. A nationally recognized leader in First-Year Studies, the department offers high-impact curricular initiatives such as first-year seminars, learning communities, and global education opportunities for students in their first year of study. These programs are designed to contribute to the success of students entering and progressing through the university. The department also offers programs that provide services to targeted student populations with the goal of facilitating students' academic success and their progress through college to graduation. One of the department's signature program is the Thrive Scholars Program, a national-award-winning program that provides services to incoming first-year students who are awarded the HOPE scholarship—a unique scholarship and grant program that rewards students with financial assistance in degree, diploma, and certificate programs at eligible Georgia public and private institutions of higher learning. The goal is to help HOPE scholars succeed academically and retain their HOPE scholarships while creating a community of engaged students with a seamless transition into their college experience. The department also provides learning communities that include bundling general education courses based on desired majors, as well as for special interest groups such as First-Generation students and those students who desire education abroad their first semester of college.

University College's first degree program, the innovative Bachelor of Science in Integrative Studies, produced its first graduate in 2006. Housed in the Department of Leadership and Integrative Studies, this academic program allows students the flexibility to customize a curriculum that will guide them toward accomplishing their personal and career goals while working towards a Bachelor of Science Degree. The college boasts over 100 graduates each year and is delivered through either a traditional classroom learning experience or an online format. In 2011, the department began offering a Certificate in Leadership Studies. Through a theory framework and practical experience, this certificate is designed to prepare students in any major for the dynamics of leading diverse groups and teams, engaging and empowering others, responding to situational leadership opportunities, and acknowledging the power of trust and ethical leadership practices. Five leadership courses, each with a multidisciplinary focus, offer the opportunity to develop, strengthen and use leadership abilities.

In 2015, the college became the home of the Bachelor of Science in Culinary Sustainability and Hospitality. This unique program, housed in the Department of Culinary Sustainability and Hospitality, infuses sustainable best practices into all facets of the culinary and hospitality industries, educating leaders with the skills, knowledge, and abilities to maximize efficiency, productivity, and profitability.

University College also includes numerous departments and programs that assist learners in finding their individual strengths and in creating a unique path that will allow their strengths to flourish. The Office of Orientation and Transition Programs welcomes and assists all First-Year and Transfer Students in their transition to Kennesaw State University. The University College Advising Services office is the primary advising resource for students who have not yet chosen a major, as well as those who are considering a change of major. The Office is also a secondary advising resource for students who have a declared major but need assistance with general education requirements or university policies.

While there are a myriad of student resources available across the KSU campus, University College offers several academic support initiatives, on both campuses, designed to foster academic success during the students' first year of college and throughout their academic careers. These initiatives include the Science and Math Academic Resource and Tutoring (SMART) Center, the Supplemental Instruction (SI) program, and the English as a Second Language (ESL) Center.

The college also provides services for future college attendees in the form of the Dual Enrollment Program (DEP). DEP provides an outstanding opportunity for high school juniors and seniors to get a head start on college. DEP students take college classes while attending high school and can earn college and high school credits simultaneously. Under this program, students may take courses in English, mathematics, social sciences, science, and foreign languages. The goal for students participating in this program is to make the transition to university life in a familiar and supportive environment. The Achieve Atlanta Program is another prime example of how University College continues to cultivate community partnerships with organizations committed to students' seamless transition into higher education and to their academic success. Established in the Fall of 2017, this program is a collaborative effort that provides intentional support services for high school seniors from the city of Atlanta, Georgia, to persist and earn their undergraduate degree from KSU. The college was selected to house the partnership in the Department of First-Year and Transition Studies because of the college's stellar reputation as a strong retention and academic success driver for KSU, as well as being recognized and appreciated for an authentic passion for serving all students who are part of the campus community.

Offering innovative interdisciplinary programs and courses, University College's curricular and co-curricular initiatives challenge and support students from their first day on campus through commencement. The college's faculty and staff are dedicated to the academic success and professional development of all KSU students and seek to build on each student's strengths in order to promote their leadership development and enhance their global engagement in ways that will help them realize their personal and professional goals.

MISSION STATEMENT:

University College provides integrative, transformative, and innovative learning experiences for students while providing opportunities for student success through academics, services, and programming in an inclusive culture that nurtures community engagement and a partnership with all campus constituents.

VISION STATEMENT:

University College will be recognized as a national leader for innovative and high-quality engaged teaching, scholarship, programs, and services to advance the development of students for academic, professional, and personal success.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE VALUES:

Student-Centered: Students are the focus of our teaching, service, support, and scholarship. We facilitate transformative learning practices in the students' college experience from start to finish.

Diversity, Multiculturalism, and Global Vision: Diversity of thought, discipline, and perspective guide our teaching and learning. We support an inclusive culture that embraces diverse lives, qualities, and experiences, which create a global citizenry.

Interconnected Learning: We contribute to student success through integrative teaching and learning that fosters collaboration among all constituents, academic disciplines, co-curricular activities, and campus resources.

Innovative & Ethical Leadership: We value ethical, innovative, diverse, and student-oriented leadership. We support our students' and colleagues' informed ethical leadership decisions.

Active Community Engagement: We develop socially responsible citizens through service learning, volunteerism, and community-based learning in our curricular and co-curricular programs.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE'S SWOT ANALYSIS:

In the Fall of 2016, the College's faculty and staff were asked to respond to questions about the current internal strengths and weaknesses as well as those external opportunities and threats for University College. An analysis of the data collected from the survey responses was completed and shared with the University College Strategic Planning Committee as a source to make informed decisions when reflecting on the current environment and developing the three-year strategic plan for the College.

Strengths

The most common recurring themes cited as a strength of University College are the use of High-impact Practices and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning as key student-centered approaches to

academic success. Data findings also indicated that faculty and staff are friendly and committed to student's overall well-being as a key attribute of the college. One respondent shared "there is an intentional responsive and collaborative atmosphere among colleagues." Respondents also repeatedly indicated that the college's diverse programs and faculty from multiple disciplines are great strengths. Furthermore, recognition of the College's leaders' support and the effective use of transparency when sharing communication as a strength. Additionally, there were several programs cited as innovative which were considered areas of strength of University College. Programs cited were the First-Year seminars and THRIVE, both of which have national prominence, the Bachelor of Science in Integrative Studies, Bachelor of Science in Culinary Sustainability and Hospitality, and the academic support areas, such as Science and Math Academic Resource and Tutoring (SMART), Supplemental Instruction (SI), and the English as a Second Language (ESL) Center. Furthermore, constituents feel that the addition of the University College Advising Services office and the Office of Orientation and Transition Programs to the college solidifies credibility and signals recognition of the college's excellent work.

Weaknesses

In the 2016 survey, by far the most commonly identified weakness of University College is the lack of resources, personnel, appropriate facilities and the continuous practice of "doing more with less." As described by one respondent, University College has "not enough faculty and staff as well as financial resources to meet the expectations placed on the college." Related to this is the belief among the college constituents that the "budget constraints are adding pressure to meet the demands and now has created low morale". One responded commented "not having an assigned development officer to assist in fundraising is a weakness for our college." Additionally, it was commonly stated that salaries are extremely low and do not align with work responsibilities. Specifically, faculty respondents shared "more demands on faculty for scholarship, service without additional compensation" and "no release time or additional pay for faculty charged with administrative work."

In addition to a lack of resources, concerns around the college's senior leaders was often noted as a weakness of the college in the survey. Feedback shared around this weakness pertains to the attrition numbers for the Deans who have left the position and the hardship with the "lack of permanent leadership." Other comments shared concerning leadership included "internal hiring process for some senior leaders seems unfair," "there is a lack of diversity in senior leadership roles and in the Dean's suite," "leaders are not holding people accountable," and "top down leadership is lowering morale and trust."

Another weakness of University College, according to some 2016 respondents, is the perception that there is no visible collaboration between the college's units. A respondent stated, "there is no connections between departments and no intentional efforts toward collaborative opportunities."

Finally, the lack of understanding the role of University College by campus constituents and sometimes by colleagues within the college is a recurring weakness identified in the climate survey. There is a need to continue to raise awareness of the work and the value of the college to the campus and surrounding community. University College's visibility needs to be heightened, not only through marketing efforts, but also through scholarship, community engagement efforts, and presentations at pedagogy conferences.

Opportunities

As University College moves forward, many future opportunities worth pursuing will potentially strengthen and advance the work of the college as well as support the arching mission of KSU. Existing programs that are successful will be re-evaluated and intensified based on data driven decisions. Signature programs that appeal to incoming students and falls under this category are: THRIVE, Learning Communities, Bachelors of Science in Leadership and Integrative Studies, First-Year Seminars, and the Global Fellows Program.

There are also new campus initiatives that offer opportunities to collaborate with key external organizations and partners. Such programs as the **Atlanta Achieve Initiative** give the college an opportunity to work with the Atlanta Public School system to recruit and retain incoming students as they earn a college degree. **The Coca-Cola Scholarship** is an opportunity for University College to use the expertise garnered in the THRIVE Program in their efforts to help first-generation students persist toward graduation, with special emphasis on first-generation students in the STEM disciplines. Additionally, the college has an opportunity to work extensively with the University System of Georgia's initiatives, such as **Complete College Georgia** and the **Momentum Year Initiative**. Each requires those academic programs and support areas that the college is currently providing which enables student success.

There is also an opportunity for University College to tap into their alumni base as well as recruit members of the community for the college advisory board. More engagement with the external community in this capacity will help the college with its strategic direction while informing others of the work being conducted within University College. Creating these partnerships will assist in developing relationships which will garner resources for internships, scholarships, and additional external funding sources.

Threats

University College has several external challenges that may threaten the work being done by the college. Given the tenuous state of continuous budget issues for the nation and the state of Georgia, University College must be mindful of threats to its program and its financial place within KSU. Alternative resources, including those from external sources and those afforded by collaboration with other departments within both the college and the university, should be explored. The college's increased accountability with external collaborative programs, such as Gateway to Completion, Achieve Atlanta, and the Momentum Year Initiative may deem a threat to the college's credibility regarding meeting the demands needed for each. Given the role University College and its many programs play in KSU's retention, progression, and graduation efforts, expectations may be unrealistically high for these external initiatives with regard to the contributions the college is expected to make considering the college's current limited resources and funding.

KSU is also rebranding its image and recruiting senior leaders for key administrative roles. Uncertainty surrounding the potential new leaders and their vision for the university reinforces University College's

need to educate and promote the college's purpose and value as a vital entity in the future educational endeavors of the institution.

Non-competitive salaries continue to threaten the retention of talent within the college. The disparity among University College's salaries in comparison to other institutions and/or colleges at KSU is significant enough to compel current faculty and staff to seek other employment opportunities. In addition, recent new hires negotiated for salaries higher than current faculty and staff who have been in the college for many years. While this may have been necessary to attract quality faculty and staff to KSU and to the college, these hiring practices have negatively affected the employee morale.

University College – Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: Develop, implement, and evaluate student-centered programs, rigorous academics, and comprehensive support systems that foster student learning and promote retention, progression, and graduation.

- Review current curricular programs and co-curricular services for cost efficiency and educational effectiveness.
- Use of comprehensive assessments to inform programmatic decisions

Goal 2: Identify, secure and effectively utilize funding along with other key resources to assess, support and sustain current as well as future University College endeavors.

- Explore opportunities to secure more grant funding for programs and initiatives
- Develop internal and external relationships with business partners and donors

Goal 3: Cultivate an environment of respect, understanding, and support of diverse cultures and perspectives.

- Conduct strategic assessment of current programs related to the college's diversity and inclusion efforts.
- Based on data findings, determine which academic courses and co-curricular programming grounded in community engagement require enhancement.
- Promote comprehensive diversity and intercultural awareness among the faculty, staff, and students
- Create opportunities for students to become inclusive and ethical leaders

Goal 4: Increase marketing and communication efforts that effectively promote the work of University College to enhance student recruitment, facilitate resource development, and entice strategic partnerships.

- Increase the infrastructure for communicating accomplishments of the college, its departments, and constituents to internal and external stakeholders.
- Create an advisory board that consist of external stakeholders, business leaders, academicians, and potential donors.