

University of Georgia 2020 Strategic Plan: 2016 Report of the University Council Strategic Planning Committee

August 24, 2016

During the 2015-2016 academic year, the Strategic Planning Committee reviewed data provided by the Office of Academic Planning on progress toward the benchmark goals in the University of Georgia 2020 Strategic Plan. The committee aimed to gain, at the midpoint of the plan's term, a broad view of the overall progress toward the goals of the seven strategic directions and to identify areas that might need additional attention or renewed efforts in the upcoming years.

The committee members recognized that the data were provided as a work in progress and should in no way be considered complete or final. As we present this report, we therefore want to note that some of our conclusions should be considered preliminary and fluid as other relevant information could re-frame them. However, we believe our review of the data provided gave us a good sense of the progress made toward the strategic goals and of the efforts of the university administration to document this progress. Areas recognized as needing additional data are noted in this report.

The intent of this report is not to provide detailed comments about specific benchmarks and the data provided in their regard, but instead to give a broad overview of the assessment process, to recognize areas where improvement in assessment or data collection might be needed, and to identify important areas where progress is either lacking or not yet documented.

The committee found the 2020 Strategic Plan to be a relevant and wide-reaching document while even in the past few years the changing landscape of higher education at research universities has perhaps adjusted and rebalanced priorities. Fiscal constraints continue to present challenges to universities across the nation, requiring a clear vision of goals and priorities so that scarce funds can be most advantageously allocated. The 2020 Strategic Plan provides a strong vision of the University of Georgia in 2020, but it is necessary to take a close look at progress toward that vision along the way, and to assess where efforts should be concentrated to make the best progress in the future. In addition, it is time to begin the process of forming the vision for 2030 and the next Strategic Plan.

The committee expects to work with the administration in the coming year to develop mechanisms for responding to the conclusions and recommendations of this report and to collect the additional data needed to provide a full picture of the University's progress on the plan. The committee also expects to begin preparing for the next cycle of strategic planning.

General Remarks about Assessment of Strategic Goals and Benchmarks

We begin with a few general remarks regarding the strategic goals and benchmarks.

- Many of the numerical benchmark goals in the 2020 Strategic Plan are non-specific, e.g. “Increase the number (or percentage) of ...”. The committee recommends that the administration work to develop specific, realistic numerical goals for these benchmarks. Overall goals might be developed in the context of data from peer and aspirational institutions while, as more local data are collected, realistic models for improvement should be developed.
- Several strategic goals or priorities seem to be unmeasurable (or at least not presently measured). If these goals are of high priority to the institution, the University community should seek to develop meaningful metrics or to redefine the goals so that metrics can be developed.
- Continuing the above point, it should be recognized that some strategic goals are not amenable to quantitative measure. In these instances, appropriate mechanisms to provide qualitative assessments and accounts of efforts and initiatives for achieving these goals should be outlined.
- Although the University has shown great progress on some of the specific goals, there are others in which little or no progress is apparent in the data that we reviewed. The University should identify these areas and their key stakeholders, provide additional data to document progress, and, where needed, develop and prioritize strategies for improving outcomes.

The Seven Strategic Directions

In the following brief remarks we point out key strengths or concerns for each of the seven strategic directions. We have endeavored to keep these brief so as not to dilute the important points.

1. Building on Excellence in Undergraduate Education

The University continues to be a leader in undergraduate education. Growth in Service Learning and the new initiative in Experiential Learning provide examples of this leadership while other initiatives in advising and class size reduction are improving the overall undergraduate educational experience. However, the committee found little quantitative or qualitative data on the first Strategic Priority: *Prepare graduates for life-long learning through problem-solving, collaboration, and critical thought; enhance engagement across the curriculum to promote development of analysis and communication skills in the student-centered classroom.* We recommend that appropriate tools or metrics are developed to demonstrate progress toward this goal.

A second area of concern for the committee was Strategic Priority d): *Increase matriculation, retention, and graduation rates among a diverse undergraduate student population.* The benchmarks for matriculation and retention of underrepresented groups present a case in which specific numerical goals should be discussed and an aggressive yet realistic plan should be outlined. The data evaluated through fall 2015 did not show convincing progress across all groups. Additional data should be provided and efforts for achieving these goals should be examined and fortified where effective.

II. Enhancing Graduate and Professional Programs

While the committee recognizes that the graduate program is presently evolving under new administration it found that there has been little or no progress by fall 2015 toward two of the most important goals:

Priority a) *Enhance competitiveness for graduate and professional student recruitment by increasing financial support (i.e., scholarships, fellowships, travel awards) and other benefits.*

It is recognized that graduate student compensation and its competitiveness are hard to measure because of variation across the disciplines, but this is important data for understanding the challenges of improving the graduate program. We recommend that the graduate school make a concerted effort to gather appropriate financial support data (at the discipline level if necessary), compare it to data from peer and aspirational institutions, and to develop a model of best practices for compensation, fees, and benefits.

Priority b) *Increase total graduate and professional student enrollment as a percentage of total enrollment and simultaneously increase the diversity of the graduate and professional student population.*

Specific goals have been stated for percentage of graduate and professional students and for percentages of underrepresented minority groups but the data reviewed so far shows that little progress has been made toward these goals. It seems unlikely that the stated goals can be achieved by 2020, but administration should develop a comprehensive plan for moving rapidly in this direction.

III. Investing in Research Excellence at UGA

This is another area in which data we evaluated showed limited progress on several of the specific benchmark goals (in particular, increases in both internal and external funding benchmarks defined in the plan). Again, a broader set of measures for the University's research investment and productivity should be provided, and a comprehensive plan for moving rapidly towards these goals is recommended. The committee also questioned whether the data being collected on internal research support was broad enough to show the whole picture. It is suggested that measures

might be broadened to recognize internal research support funding beyond OVPR, for example at the university (e.g., various hiring initiatives), college, or departmental level. Finally, if funding goals are not achievable, then realistic goals should be developed as a partial measure.

IV. Serving the Citizens of the State of Georgia and Beyond

Once again, the committee questioned whether the data being collected gave a broad enough picture of outreach activities across the university. Most of the measurements are based on activities of the Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach. Efforts should be made to include education and outreach activities across the University, especially at the college, department, and student organization levels. As numerical measures are developed, if improvement is determined to be needed, specific goals should be set.

V. Improving Faculty Recruitment, Retention, and Development

Although the committee applauds recent efforts to obtain faculty raises, UGA is still far from reaching the goal of matching the mean levels of peer institutions. Other goals, such as *'Improve competitiveness of start-up packages'* are ill-defined and not presently measured, and yet others are non-specific: *'Increase travel funding ...'*. Specific, realistic goals should be developed and implementation plans should be outlined.

Finally, diversity goals are non-specific and show no progress in the data evaluated so far. Efforts to improve diversity should be documented and increased. In addition, we recommend that measures of gender diversity should be tracked. Promotion and salary equity should also be tracked for underrepresented groups.

VI. Improving and Maintaining Facilities and Infrastructure to Provide Excellence in Instruction, Research, and Service

The University has completed or made strong progress toward completing most of the specific building projects mentioned in the plan. In addition, great progress has been made in modernizing the computer systems infrastructure. Finally, while the formation of the Space Recommendation Committee represents progress towards developing a clear process for assessing space needs, the committee stresses that it is important that this process is perceived as open and uniform across the campus.

VII. Improving Stewardship of Natural Resources and Advancing Campus Sustainability

Strong progress has been made toward specific goals of reducing carbon emissions, and energy and water consumption. In addition, goals have been met or exceeded in integrating sustainability into the student experience. A

few specific goals such as waste reduction and alternate transportation methods do not appear to be on track in the data evaluated. Some of this is likely due to market and economic forces, while other goals require shifts in social attitudes. In the latter cases, if goals are not being met, efforts to change social attitudes should be documented.

APPENDIX: Detailed Notes on Strategic Priorities

The following is compendium of detailed notes the committee compiled while studying the data provided.

Strategic Direction I: Building on Excellence in Undergraduate Education

Prepare graduates for life-long learning (Strategic priority a)

Assessment:

- The committee found no measures that have been developed for this priority beyond a few institution-level standardized tests and surveys (Collegiate Learning Assessment, College Basic Subjects Exam, and National Survey of Student Engagement).

Recommendations:

- Additional metrics for evaluating improvement of problem solving, critical thinking, and communication skills should be developed.

Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP): (Strategic Priority b)

Assessment:

- The First Year Odyssey Program was introduced in 2010 as the QEP for accreditation by the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).
- Assessment data available to the committee was primarily focused on student and faculty evaluations.

Recommendations:

- Efforts to ensure and document the success of this program will be important in future accreditation reviews.
- An interim report on the program is due in 2018.

Experiential Learning, Service Learning and Research Opportunities:

(Strategic Priority c)

Assessment:

- There has been rapid growth on campus in these areas.
- The new Experiential Learning requirement is a game changer in this area.

Recommendations:

- Clarify how these areas differ and how they work together as these initiatives evolve.

- Clarify the availability of support and resources for colleges to implement these initiatives.

Matriculation, Retention, and Graduation Rates for a Diverse Undergraduate Population: (Strategic Priority d)

Assessment:

- Two recent initiatives designed to improve retention and graduation rates are the increased number of advisors and the small class size initiative.
- The data evaluated for underrepresented groups show little progress towards increasing the numbers of these students matriculating but retention rates remain strong and 4-year and 6-year completion rates for some groups show strong growth.
- The Campus Climate Survey was a good beginning in determining the present atmosphere inclusiveness on campus.

Recommendations:

- Provide additional data related to these priorities.
- Provide information on what measures are being undertaken to ensure the success of the advising and small class initiatives and how they will be assessed.
- Set specific goals for the retention and completion rates for underrepresented groups.
- Examine and document efforts to improve the campus climate for underrepresented groups.
- Catalogue support mechanisms for at-risk students and evaluate their effectiveness.

Strategic Direction II: Enhancing Graduate and Professional Programs

Enhancing competitiveness for graduate and professional student recruitment: (Strategic Priority a)

Assessment:

- The increase in the number of endowed graduate and professional scholarships and fellowships has exceeded the goal of 75%.
- Recruitment funds have nearly tripled.
- We did not find any assessment of the competitiveness of the compensation for teaching assistantships.

Recommendations:

- Although actual stipends vary widely across the campus, the graduate school should track appropriate statistics and compare to peer and aspirational institutions. Fee structures and benefits should also be tracked and compared.

Increase total graduate and professional student enrollment and simultaneously increase the diversity of these groups. (Strategic Priority b)

Assessment:

- The data available to the committee indicated no progress in either increasing the percentage of graduate students or in increasing the percentages of underrepresented groups.
- Recently schools and colleges were charged to develop strategic plans for increasing the quality and quantity of graduate and professional students. The Provost and Graduate School are working with deans to provide financial incentives that support the school and college plans.

Recommendations:

- The new plan should specifically address efforts to recruit and retain underrepresented groups.
- Collect data to measure the impact of the new plans developed by schools and colleges.
- Catalogue support mechanisms for at-risk students and evaluate their effectiveness.

Provide and promote additional opportunities for interdisciplinary, dual, and joint degree experiences for graduate and professional students. (Strategic Priority c)

Assessment:

- The number of interdisciplinary and dual degrees offered has shown good growth, exceeding the benchmark goal.

Recommendations:

- The number of Interdisciplinary Certificates should also be monitored.

Document and track doctoral graduate student research productivity, including but not limited to, peer-reviewed publications, conference proceedings, books, chapters, grants, competitive fellowships, juried performances, and exhibitions. (Strategic Priority d)

Assessment:

- The only data available to the committee were the number of graduate students with NSF fellowships. Progress with this metric has exceeded the stated goal.
- It is expected that UGA Elements will eventually expand to include graduate students.

Recommendations:

- Expand UGA Elements to include graduate students.

Provide and promote additional opportunities for international experiences.
(Strategic Priority e)

Assessment:

- The percentage of international graduate and professional students has made good progress toward the goal of 20% of the graduate and professional student population.
- The data available to the committee indicated that the number of graduate and professional students participating in international training and experiences has remained relatively constant (there was some concern that data collection methods changed midstream so that conclusions may be inaccurate).

Recommendations:

- Improve data collection.
- Make faculty aware that increasing international experiences for our graduate and professional students is a goal of the University.

Offer increased access to University of Georgia graduate education through extended campus educational programs and online education degree programs. (Strategic Priority f)

Assessment:

- The number of graduate degree programs on extended campuses has held relatively constant, showing little progress towards the goal of a 25% increase.
- The number of online graduate degree programs has increased nearly four-fold.

Recommendations:

- The University should reconsider and redefine goals of extended campus graduate programs in light of the growth of online programs.

Strategic Direction III: Investing in Research Excellence

Hire, Promote and retain world-class research faculty. (Strategic Priority a)

Assessment:

- The number of tenured/tenure-track faculty has grown steadily but is falling short of the goal of 15% increase.
- Only tenure line faculty are being tracked while many peer and aspirational institutions are seeing a large growth in non-tenure line research faculty.

Recommendations:

- Track numbers of non-tenure line research faculty and compare to trends of peer and aspirational institutions.

Use the Capitol Campaign to increase funds for research faculty endowments and research facilities. (Strategic Priority b)

Assessment:

- The committee needs additional data to evaluate this benchmark.

Recommendations:

- Request the UGA Foundation to provide data on endowments for faculty and research facilities.

Improve physical and intellectual research infrastructure. (Strategic Priority c)

Assessment:

- Progress is being made on the development of an institutional space policy. The Provost has recently created a new Space Recommendation Committee that manages and makes decisions on space requests and needs.
- UGA Research and Startup support as reported by the OVPR has seen modest gains in the available data but severely lags behind the goal of 25% increase.

Recommendations:

- The University should consider broadening the measures used for research support to include non-OVPR expenditures such as university-level hiring initiatives, college contributions to research and startup, and other overall institutional support of research.

Advance UGA's research enterprise to a new level. (Strategic Priority d)

Assessment:

- UGA's NSF ranking has declined slightly since 2010.
- The average annual number of complex grants has increased only slightly in the data available to the committee.

Recommendations:

- Broaden measures used to track this priority to gain a more complete picture of progress in UGA's research enterprise.

Expand research and scholarship in the humanities and arts. (Strategic Priority e)

Assessment:

- Institutional funding for arts and humanities research has risen only slightly and is not likely to reach the goal of a 50% increase.
- The average dollar value of grants to support scholarship in the humanities and arts has declined nearly 20%.

Encourage interdisciplinary hiring across college boundaries, especially in areas of strategic value. (Strategic Priority f)

Assessment:

- UGA launched an interdisciplinary hiring initiative in 2013, targeting 16 new interdisciplinary faculty hires.
- No data on the number of interdisciplinary faculty were available to the committee.

Recommendations:

- Track the number of faculty holding appointments in two or more departments.

- Track the number of faculty affiliated with interdisciplinary centers and institutes.

Continue to develop a College of Engineering. (Strategic Priority i1)

Assessment:

- As of FY 2014 Engineering had 5 accredited undergraduate degree programs.
- NSF reported research and funding expenditures under Engineering has remained flat in the data evaluated up to FY 2013.

Recommendations:

- The benchmark goal of a 3-fold increase in research and development expenditures in Engineering seems unobtainable. Administration should reassess this goal to estimate what might be realistically achievable.

Strategic Direction IV: Serving the Citizens of the State of Georgia and Beyond

Overall Assessment and Recommendation: Many of the benchmarks for this Strategic Direction are qualitative and not easily tracked. Most of the information evaluated is specific to programs of the Office of Public Service and Outreach and so does not include the overall impact of the University. We recommend that the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach meet with other university stakeholders, such as the Vice Presidents for Instruction and Research and the Deans of the Schools and Colleges to develop broader measures of the full university impact. If qualitative benchmarks are important, then an effort should be made to chronicle and evaluate them. If additional measures, such as economic impact, are also determined to be appropriate measures for this strategic direction, then benchmarks and goals should be broadened to include them.

Document educational and outreach programs that enhance the social, economic, and environmental well-being and health of communities; make businesses more successful; and make government more efficient and responsive. (Strategic Priority a)

Assessment:

- Benchmarks used are specific to Public Service and Outreach programs. These benchmarks do show a positive trend overall.

Recommendations:

- Benchmarks should be broadened to include the impact of the entire University.

Link UGA research and innovation to real-world problems by supporting and encouraging faculty involvement in public service and outreach activities ... (Strategic Priority b)

Assessment:

- No data for this benchmark were available to the committee.

Recommendations:

- Provide data and/or qualitative narrative to describe and track these activities.

Collaborate with the state of Georgia to compete globally through expanded international programming and state collaborations and partnerships ...

(Strategic Priority c)

Assessment:

- The only data available to the committee were student involvement in study abroad. Although percentages of students in these programs has held steady over time, the national ranking of UGA in the percentage of students studying abroad has declined.

Recommendations:

- Develop better measures for tracking UGA's partnerships with the state to improve global competitiveness.

Develop opportunities throughout UGA's schools and college for students to engage in service-learning courses and University outreach initiatives...

(Strategic Priority d)

Assessment:

- The numbers of service learning courses and students participating in service learning has been growing at a strong pace.
- No data were available to the committee on internships and internship opportunities.

Recommendations:

- Develop better tools to track student internships.

Support College readiness through partnerships with the K-12 community

(Strategic Priority e)

Assessment.

- No data for this benchmark were available to the committee.

Recommendations:

- Track programs and grants that involve partnerships with the state's K-12 community.

Strategic Direction V: Improving Faculty Recruitment, Retention, and Development

Increase Resources for faculty recruitment and retention. (Strategic Priority a)

Assessment:

- Faculty salaries for associate and full professors continue to lag behind those of peer institutions.

Recommendations:

- Administration should continue to seek to correct this problem.
- Recruitment benchmarks such as start-up funds could be tracked.

- The Office of Faculty Affairs could track success of recruitment efforts and compare to peer institutions.

Provide new resources for high impact and emerging areas of research and scholarship. (Strategic Priority b)

Assessment:

- Travel funding has been variable in the data evaluated by the committee.

Recommendations:

- Travel funds for peer institutions should be tracked and compared.

Enhance faculty development, creativity, and innovation through summer teaching and research opportunities. (Strategic Priority c)

Assessment:

- Provost and OVPI summer teaching and research faculty grant programs are on the decline.

Recommendations:

- Track other support of summer research, teaching, and course development at the college and center level.

Achieve faculty and staff diversity (Strategic Priority d)

Assessment:

- African American and Hispanic percentages were evaluated and remain essentially steady.
- No specific data on financial resources for diversity recruitment has been evaluated but some narrative information on efforts of schools and colleges is followed by the Office of Institutional Diversity.

Recommendations:

- Funds for diversity recruitment should be tracked both at the central level and at the level of schools and colleges.
- Track gender diversity and funds to assist recruitment in groups showing disparity.
- Consider developing models to bring UGA graduate students and postdocs from underrepresented groups into faculty positions.
- Track staff diversity and effort for recruitment of underrepresented groups.

Improve quality of life for faculty and staff to enhance recruitment, retention, and productivity. (Strategic Priority e)

Assessment:

- Human Resources conducted a survey of benefits for peer and aspirational institutions in FY 2012 but no comparison data have been evaluated presented.

Recommendations:

- Specific data comparing UGA benefits to peer and aspirational institutions should be tracked regularly.

Enhance opportunities for faculty to teach and conduct research abroad.

(Strategic Priority f)

Assessment:

- No data for this benchmark were available to the committee.

Strategic Direction VI: Improving and Maintaining Facilities and Infrastructure to Provide Excellence in Instruction, Research and Service

Increase the capacity for STEM disciplines by 1) constructing a Science Learning Center; 2) building a Veterinary Learning Medical Center; 3) renovating the medical school campus infrastructure, and 4) providing adequate facilities for the new College of Engineering. (Strategic Priority a)

Assessment:

- These projects are completed or on track for completion.

Provide improved quality space for faculty to conduct research (Strategic Priority b)

Assessment:

- No data for this benchmark were available to the committee.

Recommendation:

- Request report from the Facilities Task Force (chaired by Dean Nadenicek) and the office of University Architects for Facilities Planning.
- Provide additional narrative information on efforts in this area.

Provide for technology infrastructure to meet the increased needs of instruction, research, service, and administration ... (Strategic Priority c)

Assessment:

- Although no data were evaluated, the committee is aware that progress has been made in replacing legacy programs.

Recommendation:

- A narrative assessment should be provided listing the modernizations that have taken place and that are scheduled for the next several years.

Provide library services of instructional, research, service, and student-programming needs (Strategic Priority d)

Assessment:

- The benchmark given is to raise the Library Investment Index as provided by the Associated Research Libraries to the median of aspirational institutions. UGA has made only small progress towards this goal.

Recommendation:

- This goal seems unrealistic. The University Librarian should reconsider the goal and assess what realistic progress can be made. A report from the Librarian on strengths and weaknesses of the UGA library systems and an

assessment of where progress could be made would be more valuable than a gross investment index.

Construct the Business Learning Community on the northwest sector of the campus (Strategic Priority e)

Assessment:

- This project is on track for completion.

Strategic Direction VII: Improving Stewardship of Natural Resources and Advancing Campus Sustainability

Annually evaluate and update the University's performance in instruction, research, public service, campus development, and operations activities (Strategic Priority a)

Assessment:

- Office of Sustainability released the 2014 Campus Sustainability Report in 2014. This is a comprehensive report on these activities.

Recommendations:

- A brief annual update should be reported in benchmark format.

Demonstrate a commitment to reducing fossil fuel use, thereby reducing the University's carbon emissions (Strategic Priority b)

Assessment:

- Progress is being made on multiple benchmarks.

Update UGA guidelines for Design and Construction to incorporate, implement, and monitor current sustainable design strategies ... (Strategic Priority c)

Assessment:

- Standards have been updated.

Integrate sustainability into the student experience through curricular and co-curricular activities both in the classroom and beyond (Strategic Priority d)

Assessment:

- Goals are being met or exceeded.

Enhance the coordination, support, and awareness of the University's sustainability efforts by establishing a coordinating body to lead efforts, increasing endowments for sustainable activities and promoting campus sustainability efforts (Strategic Priority e)

Assessment:

- The recommendation for a coordinating body does not appear to be actively pursued at this time.

Recommendations:

- The Office of Sustainability Review Team Report notes that there are challenges to advancing sustainability efforts in research and instruction and recommends that further leadership support is needed in this direction.

Encourage the further development and use of mass transportation to and on campus (Strategic Priority f)

Assessment:

- Bus ridership is increasing but data on alternative transportation to campus was not available to the committee.

Recommendations:

- Better methods for tracking alternative transportation use should be developed. Perhaps a campus survey would be appropriate.

Demonstrate a commitment to sustainability through reduced potable water usage, decreased waste, and increased use of sustainable and locally grown foods (Strategic Priority g)

Assessment:

- Potable water usage has decreased significantly and appears to be on track to meeting goals.
- Wastes stream to landfills has decreased slightly but is not near reaching an aggressive goal set in benchmark 2.
- Use of locally grown foods has increased slightly but is not on track to meeting the goal.

Recommendations:

- Office of Sustainability should determine the challenges in meeting benchmarks 2 and 3 and make recommendations for action on these goals.

Develop and implement a process for evaluating opportunities for on-site renewable energy in capital projects (Strategic Priority h)

Assessment:

- University Architects have developed a process with input from Facilities Management. This process is being implemented in current projects.