



(g2)² – Get to Graduation in Two Years East Georgia

STATE COLLEGE®

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Project Background

A 6% 3-year graduation rate and a 10% 1st-year transfer rate reflect a campus culture that has traditionally supported transfer, rather than graduation. As a major factor for performance funding and a foundational component of CCG, the graduation rate now has increased significance and is a primary strategic goal.

Prior to Spring 2014, graduation was an option for less than 50% of EGSC's students because of our unique collaborative programs with Georgia Southern University and Georgia Regents University. Beginning Spring 2014, EGSC was approved to offer degrees at our Statesboro site.

Data for the last three years shows approximately 11% of our graduates complete a degree in two years from entry, and 30% finish within three years of entry (Table I).

In response, EGSC's Complete College Committee approved a "15-to-Finish" program in Fall 2013, the "Get to Graduation in Two Years" program, (g2)², developed to identify and support students who could potentially finish their academic program within two years.

Assistance was extended to students expressing interest in completing their degree in two years or six successive academic terms. In Fall 2013/Spring 2014, only six students followed through and committed to complete a program of study in two academic years.

Program adjustments: (1) Removed a commitment to the organization, (2) Actively began tracking all students who could complete a degree in two years, not just those who formally committed to the program, (3) Expanded reach by pairing with the "Commit to Completion" initiative sponsored by Phi Theta Kappa.

Project Synopsis

East Georgia State College (EGSC) was awarded a Complete College Georgia Innovation Grant in June, 2014 for its "Get to Graduation in Two Years" project, also known as (g2)², to increase the number of students completing their academic program in two years.

EGSC's (g2)² Team identified students who could complete their degree in two years and actively assisted them through faculty mentoring, intrusive advisement, degree planning, and a rewards program. Participating students received (1) Active attention from Academic Affairs staff and direct assistance from faculty and staff mentors, (2) Assistance in developing and following an academic plan focused on graduation, (3) A Graduation Fee waiver, (4) A learning community of like-minded students for mutual support, and (5) Recognition for achieving their (g2)² goals.

To initiate program refinements prior to the grant's full start-up, a sophomore cohort of 206 students was identified in June 2014 from students beginning Summer 2013 and subsequent terms. A cohort of 194 new freshman students was identified in October, 2014.

Lessons learned from the initial sophomore cohort will be applied to both the new student cohort, to facilitate degree completion in their second year of attendance, and to the semester cohorts, to assure continuation of the program. All identified students were asked to commit to the program and be actively tracked. Seventy-nine sophomore students actually signed commitment forms, and all 400 students are actively tracked.

Project Impact on College Completion

Graduation is a major emphasis in EGSC's College Completion Plan, and (g2)² was strategically implemented to promote and increase the number of students graduating on time. For FY15, a Complete College Georgia Innovation grant was received to financially support the program.

- Paired with the "Commit to Completion," (g2)² provides an integrated program of mentoring, academic graduation plan assistance, and recognition to students who can graduate in two years.
- Advisement and registration processes are being separated so that academic advisors advise students for their academic program and students handle class registration to become more active in their educational experience.
- The number of graduates finishing their program in two years increased from 14 in AY13, to 24 in AY14. Simultaneously, graduates finishing in three years increased from 57 in AY13, to 106 in AY14.
- A "reverse transfer" program is being developed with Georgia Southern University and Georgia Regents University to further increase the number of graduates.
- Preliminary data shows an increase in the three-year first-time full-time graduation rate from 5.76% in FY12, to 7.01% in FY13, and to 6.93% in FY14, with a predicted increase in the total number of graduates from 208 in AY14, to 225 in AY15.

TABLES OF DATA

Table I: East Georgia State College Graduates

Semester	Number of Graduates	2-Year Graduates	3-Year Graduates	Academic Year Graduates
Fall 2011	51	3	14	
Spring 2012	75	10	23	
Sum. 2012	28	9	3	154
Fall 2012	58	0	18	
Spring 2013	94	10	20	
Sum. 2013	21	4	5	173
Fall 2013	77	2	33	
Spring 2014	110	14	43	
Sum. 2014	21	8	6	208
Average	59.4	6.7	18.3	178.3

Table II: (g2)² Participants

Campus	Sophomore Cohort	Active Participants	Transferred	Freshman Cohort
Swainsboro	67	24	8	190
Statesboro	88	37	12	129
Augusta	18			69
Total	173	61	20	388

Key Findings

- Promotional material highlighting the Spring 2014 (g2)² graduates had the strongest recruitment effect. Medals worn at graduation by (g2)² participants have also created interest in the program.
- Despite promotion and active recruitment of students, less than half made a formal commitment to graduate in two years. The most common reason given for non-commitment was an inability to pay for summer terms to "catch up."
- Even before grant funding was obtained, the (g2)² program had some initial impact on graduation.
- A comprehensive marketing program is needed to promote graduation and change the institutional culture from transfer to graduation. Key points of emphasis: (1) Value of degree, (2) Range of options available to complete a degree (get to graduation in two years, reverse transfer, returning to college after "stopping out," etc.), and (3) Promotion of academic advisors as advisors, not registration clerks.

Conclusion

15 to Finish programs, such as (g2)², are successful in helping students remain focused on graduation and are particularly beneficial for institutions, such as EGSC, who serve a large population of first generation students. As with any comprehensive graduation promotion program, (g2)² has been designed to change the access college campus culture from a transfer focus to a completion focus. Key promotional messages include: Conveying the value of a degree, various options for obtaining a degree, and promoting academic advisors as advisors, not schedulers.

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