Middle Georgia State University
Office of the Provost
Academic Identity and Strategy (version 2.0 - 4/2018)

Introduction

As Middle Georgia State University (MGA) implements its new strategic plan and delivers on its vision to help students receive elevated higher education, it is essential that we identify a clear-sighted and data-informed academic strategy that will guide this journey. Led by President Blake's vision 20/20 white paper, implementing academic strategy will require institutional resolve, intentionality, and agility. It will also require us to follow the imperatives in the new strategic plan including: growing enrollment with purpose, owning student success, and building shared culture.

This version of MGA's Academic Identity and Strategy (version 2.0) outlines and refines key elements of the academic strategy that guide our efforts to elevate middle Georgia. In academic affairs, these areas of focus include: *enthroning teaching and learning*, *elevating program-completion thinking*, and *extending research, scholarship and creative activities.*

Academic Identity

Middle Georgia State University is a student-focused state university with an access function. As such, we serve students who are not fully prepared for university-level education, students who are prepared to enter the university early, and students who are prepared to succeed independently. We also serve students who are financially savvy and well supported as well as those who are financial novices with no support. Serving this broad range of students is the key feature of our academic identity and will take all our efforts to accomplish. We are focused on elevating middle Georgia and our academic program offerings will reflect that identity.

Academic Strategy

1. Enthrone Teaching and Learning

Teaching is the primary mission of Middle Georgia State University. Every person in the division of Academic Affairs who is credentialed to teach, should place the highest priority on contributing to the teaching mission of the institution. It is the expectation that all administrators in academic affairs will lead by example in the classroom as part of their normal responsibilities. Enthroning Teaching is about placing teaching as our first priority and continually improving how we teach. Enthroning Learning is about increasing student success, increasing course completion rates, and deepening student learning simultaneously. It will take our best collaborative efforts to accomplish this objective.

2) Elevate Program-Completion Thinking

Program-Completion thinking is encouraged by initiatives such as Complete College Georgia, the USG Momentum Year, and an intense focus on Retention, Progression, and Graduation. In

implementing program-completion thinking, each of the five physical campuses and online programming have a specific focus as outlined below.

Cochran and Eastman campuses share similar characteristics in that they are both in rural locations and have a focused set of academic programs and on-campus housing. These two campuses create a cluster that can be classified as rural and residential. The program needs served in a rural residential environment include aviation, a limited set of liberal arts programs, and a limited set of professional programs at the undergraduate level.

Warner Robins and Dublin share similar characteristics in that both are located in more urban areas and have no residential student housing. Both locations also have quick access to large adult working populations. Academic program needs on these campuses should focus on evening professional programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels and full-time day time programs in the health professions, additionally, select undergraduate courses can be offered for dual enrolled students.

Macon and online share similar characteristics as students at the Macon campus include residential, commuter, working adult, dual enrolled, part time and full time students. Similarly, online programs reach a broad range of students who come from very different environments. As such academic program offerings in Macon and online should meet the needs of a diverse set of students.

With three clusters identified we can outline academic programs that meet the needs of students in each cluster. Please see the table at the end of this document.

Additionally, it is imperative that MGA is intentional in deciding which programs will be offered online and which will be offered face to face. The MGA Direct initiative will help grow online programs that can reach populations that can't attend in person on a physical campus.

Growing and enhancing both the face to face and online program-completion thinking are equally important and will be key elements of building MGA's academic culture.

Program-completion thinking is also enhanced by offering courses through careful scheduling in alternative formats, including eight week sessions and night and evening programming. When MGA offers a program at a location, we must commit to offer the course needed for a student to graduate without needing to travel to another campus. This will not only help students, it will decrease travel cost for faculty and increase their time available to teach and engage in scholarship.

Degree maps are being built and implemented for each program at each location (including day or evening delivery). MGA's commitment must be to see a student through a program (not just select courses) from the point of admissions to graduation. This is program-completion thinking.

3) Extend Research, Scholarship and Creative Activities

Research, scholarship, and creative activities should be a shared experience. Given the resource limitations at MGA, we must think innovatively about the way research, scholarship, and creative activities are engaged in, created, and shared. It is highly unlikely that travel funds

will increase significantly in the near future. As such, we must work within our current budgets to create opportunities to share the quality academic and scholarly work that is being generated at MGA.

Not only must we be innovative, we need to assure that MGA is embedded in Middle Georgia by sharing research, scholarship, and creative activities within the region we serve. One extension of rethinking faculty development is understanding the need to elevate middle Georgia. We should reward tenure and promotion based in part on research, scholarship, and creative activities that have a positive impact here.

The extent to which we extend research, scholarship, and creative activities beyond our campus borders can be measured by the number of lives in middle Georgia that are impacted by these efforts. Literally extending the reach of these activities outside the walls of the university and into the society we serve will change lives and communities. Much of this work can be coordinated in research centers that focus on expanding and enhancing professional practice. Work with local agencies, businesses, or government organizations can lead to scholarly publications which is an important outcome, but it can also lead to better communities, improved lives, and a more functional society in middle Georgia. MGA's research, scholarship, and creative activities must keep faculty current in their field of expertise, but they should also impact the middle Georgians who we serve, and whose lives we are committed to improve.

Integrating Strategy and Budgeting

It is often said that if you want to know the values of an institution, look at its budget. As we work to implement this academic strategy and identity at MGA, we must align resources with this academic strategy. It is also essential that we are honest and accurate regarding the environment in which we operate and the likelihood we have to increase the resources that are available. We know that we are the state university low cost option. As such, we can't wait for resources to increase to grow or change. We must rely on internal reallocation of resources to fund the enhancement of our academic identity and strategy.

This means that programs (housed in colleges and schools) that are increasing in the quantity and quality of teaching (enthroning teaching), elevating program-completion thinking, and extending research, scholarship, and creative activities will receive greater resources. Those programs that do not, will receive fewer resources over time. Resource allocation (faculty lines, travel budgets, physical space, online support, technology, a marketing focus, etc….) will be allocated annually in alignment with MGA's strategic plan and academic identity and strategy.

Aligning strategy and budgeting is the embodiment of a clear-sighted and data-informed academic strategy. It is also the real test of MGA's institutional resolve, intentionality, and agility. By enthroning teaching, elevating program-completion thinking, and extending research, scholarship, and creative activities, MGA's academic identity and strategy will fill its role in elevating middle Georgia.

Strategy for Program Offerings by Cluster, Student Type, and Time of Day

Cluster	Campus	Daytime UG Programs	Evening UG Programs	Evening Grad. Programs	Dual Enrollment
Rural Residential	Cochran	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes
	Eastman	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes
Urban/ Commuter	Dublin	Health Science	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Warner Robins	Health Science	Yes	Yes	Yes
Suburban/ Online	Macon	Yes	Limited	N/A	Yes
	Fully Online	Available to all students, anytime			Yes
Additional off-site locations will be created when cohorts of students are identified and enrolled					