State University of West Georgia

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State University of West Georgia
Summary of Major Institutional Accomplishments in the Preceding Year

The 1997-98 academic year was an industrious and rewarding one for the State University of West Georgia. While maintaining Educational Excellence in a Personal Environment as a guiding element in planning activities, West Georgia continued to prepare its students, faculty and staff for the advent of semester conversion. The Freshman Center augmented the efforts of faculty members in bettering student retention rates. The Advanced Academy and the Honors Program continued to attract and retain talented students through a strengthened commitment of resources and learning opportunities. The University, after beginning the process in Fall 1997, completed its facilities master plan in Winter 1998 and began implementation in June. West Georgia was brought closer to ADA compliance through campus-wide modifications. Annual fund raising efforts yielded a 164 percent growth from the previous year. Under Sponsored Operations, the three Colleges demonstrated a 75 percent increase in the total award amount of faculty grants, and the total average award amount increased by over $10,000. The number of awards in the Office of Financial Aid increased fourteen percent in the last year. The West Georgia Department of Intercollegiate Athletics celebrated a triumphant year in NCAA Division II and Gulf South Conference competition, with West Georgia teams winning or sharing four Gulf South Conference titles and winning the NCAA Division II South Central Region Tournament in baseball.

Educational Excellence in a Personal Environment

The following illustrations demonstrate how West Georgia’s commitment to Educational Excellence in a Personal Environment is not merely a maxim but a long-term pledge to quality instruction:

- The Graduate School was selected to become a member of the prestigious Council of Graduate Schools.
- Over 3500 students visited the University Writing Center, receiving individual attention in developing their writing skills.
- Implemented post-tenure review.
- The Association for Research and Creative Humanities (ARCH) was established by Chemistry Professor Andy Leavitt and the Vice President for Academic Affairs for the purpose of supporting and celebrating of student research and creative efforts at the University.
- Dr. Greg Stewart received the Margaret Green Award, a national excellence in undergraduate teaching award presented by the American Society for Microbiology.
- The West Georgia Debate Team qualified for the National Debate Tournament for the 26th consecutive year, a record matched by only five educational institutions in the nation. The team placed fifth at the National Debate Tournament.
- Political Science & Planning faculty member Dr. Barbara Neuby received the Regents’ Distinguished Teaching Professor Award.
- Ten online credit courses were delivered over the Internet, thirty-four courses were delivered through GSAMS technology, and thirteen courses were supplemented by an online component.
- The Richards College of Business was awarded separate Accounting accreditation from the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business for both its undergraduate and graduate degree programs. This accreditation places the College in the top 7 percent of business programs in the United States and makes us the only non-doctoral degree granting institution in the University System with this level of accreditation.
- The College of Education was selected as the first national training site for Pacesetter, an innovative curriculum, standards, and assessment program of The College Board.
- Over the past academic year, 534 faculty and 332 staff undertook training for professional development, and of those 57 received intensive training in Distance Learning.
- Academy student Eric Koperda conducted independent research through the use of sophisticated technology evaluating the acoustics of large recital halls. His research received first place in the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair. Because of the implication his findings have on the government’s development of underwater simulation, Eric has been asked to speak at a meeting of the Armed Forces Communications Engineers Association.
- There were 240 undergraduates enrolled in the Honors Program during 1997-98. The number of structured Honors courses increased 24 percent from 1996-97 to
Two-thirds of the graduating class chose to attend University junior status depending upon their entering classification. Schools, as well as progressing to either college sophomore or completed the program and graduated from their local high awards. All of the eighteen seniors in the 1997-98 class completed the program and graduated from their local high schools, as well as progressing to either college sophomore or junior status depending upon their entering classification. Two-thirds of the graduating class chose to attend University System institutions, including one-third who chose to continue their studies at West Georgia.

A highlight of the 1997-98 academic year was the establishment of the Board of Trustees for The Academy. Dr. Julian C. Stanley, Director for the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth and Professor of Psychology at Johns Hopkins University, accepted chairmanship of the Board. Other members include Regent Elridge McMillan, Regent Edgar Rhodes, Georgia Superintendent of Schools Linda Schrenko, and Director of Emory Executive Women’s Health Dr. Brenda C. Fitzgerald, also a member of the State Board of Education.

Improved Retention Rates

The University’s retention rates have steadily risen from Fall 1990 through Fall 1997. There has been a 9.88 percent increase of freshman students returning the subsequent fall term from the Fall 1990 persistence rate of 55.58 percent to 65.46 percent Fall 1997. West Georgia maintained similar retention rates from Fall 1996 to Fall 1997, with an increase of 64.99 percent to 65.46 percent. West Georgia is reinforcing the efforts of the Division of Student Services’ Mentoring Program through Freshman Center operations, HOPE Scholars, and the Minority Achievement Program (MAP) peer mentoring and advising program. The College of Education has hired two full-time academic advisors for undergraduate students. The Richards College of Business experienced an 11.9 percent growth in Business majors.

The Advanced Academy of Georgia

The 1997–98 academic year proved to be another milestone for The Advanced Academy of Georgia. In its third year, Academy students continued to establish themselves as exceptional scholars. The entering class had an average SAT composite score of 1289 and a high school college preparatory curriculum grade point average of 3.88.

The 1997-98 class grade point average was 3.2, higher than the usual freshman class annual average. Students presented papers at the Georgia Honors Council State Conference and the Georgia Sociological Symposium; and two students presented research in Physics and Geology at the Georgia Academy of Science competition, taking first place awards. All of the eighteen seniors in the 1997-98 class completed the program and graduated from their local high schools, as well as progressing to either college sophomore or junior status depending upon their entering classification. Two-thirds of the graduating class chose to attend University

Technology Enhancements

The 1997-98 year brought about further development of technological resources for instruction at the State University of West Georgia. Distance Learning course enrollment increased 51 percent over FY97. The number of GSAMS locations increased by 25 percent, going from 24 to 30 sites offering credit courses. The Distance Education Center, in conjunction with Continuing Education, offered the first Distance Learning Certificate Program in Georgia (and one of the first five nationally). Twelve new multimedia classrooms were designed, installed, and became operational during the year. The Office of Information Technology Services’ training efforts increased with 37 classes offered to faculty, staff and students.

In the College of Arts and Sciences, over 174 faculty and staff benefited from college-wide efforts in computer training, attending over 100 workshops throughout the year. Also, over $350,000 was invested in bringing technology into classrooms and placing new, updated computers into student labs and faculty offices.

The Richards College of Business broadened its scope of integrating technology into its curriculum and professional development. Two new programs were initiated, one of which is the undergraduate degree program in Management of Technology. One hundred percent of faculty have used multimedia presentations in their classrooms and 65 percent of the faculty have distance learning teaching experience.

Among the College of Education’s teaching innovations were the extensive uses of the Internet, chat rooms, e-mail communications, bulletin boards, and instructional software by faculty and students. The Department of Research, Media and Technology was a leader in the delivery of distance learning classes (10) and online classes (2) as well as a leader in the preparation of colleagues for teaching distance learning classes. For the second consecutive year, the College provided over $200,000 in support of faculty, staff and student
technology, including the addition of two multimedia classrooms. Faculty and staff attended 179 training workshops.

The Division of Business and Finance incorporated new software and other technologies, in addition to job responsibility reorganization to enhance operational efficacy. The Division also planned for the utilization of Banner to reconcile financial aid funds, the installation of Bermuda software for monitoring short-term loans, and the implementation of the PeopleSoft Human Resources/Payroll System software which are expected to have a significant impact on productivity. A twenty-four hour job hotline was implemented as well. With the assistance of Business Information Systems, a data-warehousing program was developed to deploy information on the Internet such as budget information and other reports.

The Division of Student Services complemented the enhancement of technology efforts in the academic arena during 1997-98. A new card access system was installed in the residence halls to provide much greater security for students living on campus. Installation of computer connectivity in the residence halls has also begun. The Office of Undergraduate Admissions expanded the use of the Banner Student Information System in its operations and installed an automated telephone system to better serve our constituencies. In addition, Banner Web now permits students to utilize the web in checking class schedules, checking for holds, registering, adjusting schedules, changing addresses, obtaining a copy of unofficial transcripts, and checking grades at the end of a term.

The Division of University Advancement also made strides in increasing use of technology in its operations. In the Department of Development and Alumni Services, a new server was installed for the computer network along with new computers for all staff members. Alumni Services entered into a contract to provide an online component in addition to the printed 1998 Alumni Directory. It also established a listserv for all members of the Georgia Education Advancement Council which greatly enhances communication for the University System as well as private institutions in Georgia. The Department of Public Relations created a new computerized filing system for stories and photographs. The first full year of providing four-color (process) printing onsite was a highlight of our Department of Publications and Printing.

**Technology Planning**

The University is integrating information technology into its academic and administrative mission to ensure that students, faculty, staff, and the community are well prepared for life in a knowledge-based and technologically-dynamic society. As a means to this end, the Vice President for Academic Affairs established the Technology Planning Committee in 1996-97 and charged it with developing a vision statement and strategic goals for Information Technology Services. A permanent council was founded to assist Information Technology Services in implementing this new vision. The Council addressed student computer requirements and recommended that the State University of West Georgia require all students to have a personal computer beginning fall semester, 2000. They also suggested that Auxiliary Services should determine the feasibility of operating a computer store with full support services. They asserted that the UWG budget for technology should be dedicated primarily to infrastructure support. Other Council priorities are enabling 100 percent student access to computer and information technology, to further develop faculty access and ability to integrate technology into instruction, and investigating means of obtaining integrated and continuous funding for technology related expenses.

During the last year, the University web page and various links have evolved to be a focal point in University communication strategies. Investment in the expanded web server makes it likely that the evolution will continue.

One issue of particular concern is the Year 2000 problem. In late spring 1998, Information Technology Services outlined a full-scale implementation plan to resolve any compliance problems existing on campus. This program will begin in the 1998-99 academic year.

**Teacher Education as a University Priority**

The focus of teacher education at West Georgia has been assumed as a University-wide responsibility. The College of Education collaborated with the College of Arts and Sciences and the Richards College of Business in beginning to achieve the goals of the P-16 Project. West Georgia faculty from various disciplines served on the West Georgia P-16 Council and STEP Task Force, as well as volunteering to serve on the alliance teams. Several Arts and Sciences faculty as well as numerous teachers and school personnel attended the Pacesetter orientation. The Teacher Education Advisory Committee was reconfigured to include more representatives from the Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Business. In addition, representatives from these groups have been appointed to the Field Placement Advisory and NCATE Committees. The College of Education's "Meeting K-12 Standards Through Teacher Education" program received an $8,000 grant from the Georgia Department of Education. The College of Education collaborated with the DeKalb County Schools in the development and delivery of an innovative
curriculum for provisionally-certified teachers that was partially funded by the Professional Standards Commission and lauded as a state-wide model. The College of Education Advisory Committee recommended that the preparation of Early Childhood majors needed to be strengthened in Reading, and, as a result, a third reading course was added to the semester curriculum.

Economic Development

The Richards College of Business opened the doors of its Small Business Development Center this past year after securing a grant of $85,000. The SBDC has provided nearly 700 hours of business counseling to 280 local business owners in the first six months of operation. Eighty-four hours of continuing education programs were completed with 316 participants during that same period. In addition to the SBDC, the Richards College of Business initiated the Economic Forecast Breakfast for 300 area business leaders; organized another Executive Roundtable with keynote speaker Dr. Hyler Bracey, CEO, Atlanta Consulting, Inc.; and continued the efforts of its Executive-in-Residence program.

On another high note, the Department of Continuing Education was awarded a grant from the West Georgia Private Industry Council in the amount of $130,000 for a job training program. This program, a conjoined effort in accordance with state and federal objectives, sets a departmental goal in motion to re-train unemployed workers and allow them to reenter the workforce in a productive capacity.

Productive Faculty

The University’s faculty had another productive year of research. During the past academic year, faculty members elevated their research efforts while maintaining West Georgia’s commitment to Educational Excellence in a Personal Environment through small class enrollments and faculty-taught courses (as opposed to graduate teaching assistants). During 1997-98, faculty members produced 40 books and monographs, 302 peer-reviewed articles, 770 papers and presentations, and 144 other publications. Faculty also participated in 52 juried and 51 non-juried performances or exhibits. Compared with the previous year, faculty production of papers and presentations increased by 22 percent and peer-reviewed publications increased by 17 percent.

Sponsored Operations is continually expanding its operations to bring new opportunities to enable faculty research to prosper at West Georgia. As a part of new employee orientation, faculty members are encouraged to meet with the Director of Sponsored Operations for advisement and to learn procedural guidelines for grant writing. Through combined efforts of the Department of Sponsored Operations and faculty members, 47 research grants were funded for a total of $1,747,570 from external sources. Of particular note are the $413,790 National Institute of Health “Bridge to Doctoral Program II” award to the Department of Biology; and the $130,000 Job Training Grant from the West Georgia Private Industry Council awarded to the Department of Continuing Education. The College of Education received $139,520 in grants from the Georgia Department of Education for its P-16 and Pre-Kindergarten programs.

Semester Conversion

Academic year 1997-98 was spent in final preparations for semester conversion. In an effort to alleviate potential pitfalls with conversion, the University focused its efforts advising students and faculty, created a schematic for course offerings so that students could map out degree requirement course work, and provided an online guide to semester conversion (available at www.westga.edu/semcon). The fall semester course catalog was prepared well in advance of term registration to better serve students’ needs in preparing for the conversion. The University anticipates a very smooth transition to the semester calendar due to the depth and scope of its preparations.

Increased Financial Support

The Division of University Advancement had a tremendous fund raising year in 1997-98. The pinnacle of annual fund raising efforts, A DAY FOR WEST GEORGIA, saw the total amount of funds generated through gifts soar to a record high of $2,774,319, due to the generosity of our many supporters. This amount includes a $1.5 million gift from the Richards Foundation to name the Richards College of Business for the late Carrollton industrialist, Roy Richards, Sr. It also includes an estate gift of $121,436 in the form of an endowment to attract and retain outstanding debaters, a $300,000 Bowdon Area Hospital gift, and a $200,000 anonymous gift to benefit The Advanced Academy of Georgia.
Annual Progress in Institutional Strategic Planning

During 1997-1998, the State University of West Georgia underwent several strategic planning processes including tactical planning to continue or to implement programs and policies in accordance with System and University goals, most notably the prescribed comprehensive facilities master planning process.

Planning Structure and Process

West Georgia’s planning process is participatory in nature with decision-making responsibilities assigned to the strategically appropriate level. The University’s strategic planning process is “top-down” only to the extent of establishing the general vision and direction of the institution. The President, as chief executive officer, holds ultimate responsibility for the process of strategic planning at the State University of West Georgia. The President’s Advisory Committee, which functions as the University’s strategic planning team, sets the general vision and direction for the institution and encourages critiques and suggestions from our constituents.

Priority Areas and Specific Goals

The State University of West Georgia continues to work toward successfully achieving the following priority areas and specific goals set in 1996-97 in a manner consistent with University System of Georgia strategic planning assumptions:

Priority Areas

- The State University of West Georgia continued to provide access to academic excellence for Georgia citizens and thereby increasing the proportion of citizens who are more highly educated.
- The State University of West Georgia continued to be a forerunner in providing quality instruction to ensure that we are producing prepared and qualified teachers.
- The State University of West Georgia endeavored to be a leader in the training of technology and educating students through technology; the University took full advantage of technology for administrative purposes.
- The State University of West Georgia continued to serve as a major contributor to Georgia’s graduate education.
- The State University of West Georgia’s unwavering commitment to diversity in its employment and recruitment practices persisted.
- The State University of West Georgia promoted regional economic development.
- The State University of West Georgia used academic program review to improve effectiveness and environmental scanning to identify emerging societal needs.

Specific Goals

- The University recruits and enrolls undergraduate students who are likely to persist and graduate; and the University promotes student persistence.
- The University requires each academic program to systematically evaluate its activities every five years; the University considers judiciously new academic program proposals.
- The University considers the use of technology as immutable and permanently connects technology needs to the institution’s budget to protect West Georgia’s investments in technology in future years.
- The University provides students and faculty with a diverse learning environment by continuing to attract and retain traditionally under-represented persons.
- The University continues to preserve its commitment and practice of “Educational Excellence in a Personal Environment.”

Detailed action plans, designed to help realize specific goals, are located in West Georgia’s strategic plan. This report is on file with the University System of Georgia’s Office of Planning and Policy Analysis.

Enrollment Planning

During 1996-97, the State University of West Georgia established planned enrollment targets. Those plans projected that West Georgia will grow between 1998 and 2002, even in the face of more rigorous admissions standards and the surge to complete degree programs prior to semester conversion. This growth will occur for several reasons; the most important reason being improvements in undergraduate retention rates resulting from more rigorous admissions requirements and institutional efforts. Through increased recruitment efforts, the University’s first-time undergraduate student enrollment will grow slightly from Fall 1998 through Fall 2000. Graduate student enrollment will grow slightly if at all. That growth will emphasize increased use of distance learning technology,
initiatives that involve technology training for teachers, and new programs designed to satisfy regional needs. The University will continue modest out-of-state and international student enrollment growth. Furthermore, if the System is successful at making two-year institutions the cornerstone of enrollment management, the number of entering transfer students should increase. West Georgia's complete “Request for Proposed Enrollment Plans” is on file with the University System of Georgia’s Office of Planning and Policy Analysis.

The University also continued planning for the University System of Georgia’s enhanced admissions standards initiative scheduled for full implementation by 2001. More rigorous admissions standards and fluctuations in the student population led Learning Support and Testing to expand its scope and redefine its mission. While Learning Support anticipates a substantial decline in remedial courses for traditional students, the unit also expects a continued need for some form of learning support for adult, international, and continuing education students.

Facilities Planning

The University established a facilities master planning process that concluded this past academic year. The result was a comprehensive facilities master plan for the State University of West Georgia, improving the function and appearance of campus, reducing vehicular traffic, and altering the campus design in favor of pedestrians.

The plan was developed through participation of University constituencies (students, faculty, staff, community members, System staff). Beginning with focus groups, the consulting firm elicited impressions and experiences of these campus constituencies. This information provided guidance for the designers and was incorporated into the plan. The resulting comprehensive facilities master plan was adopted in winter 1998 and implementation is slated to begin June 1998. Some of the immediate changes to occur on campus are: signage, closing roads to through traffic, relocating park areas, restructuring campus parking, establish walking paths and a pedestrian mall, and improving the institution’s shuttle service.
Annual Progress in Assessing Institutional Effectiveness

During the 1997-98 academic year, the State University of West Georgia accomplished many institutional goals. First and foremost, the University made progress in maintaining its commitment to Educational Excellence in a Personal Environment. The Advanced Academy of Georgia had another successful year attracting, retaining, and developing aptitudinally-talented students. The University enhanced its use of modern technology, increased the level of funding generated through gifts, and modernized facilities. Faculty improved their scholarly productivity and prepared for semester conversion. Persistence rates were maintained at about the same margin for first-year freshmen as in 1996-97.

External Accreditation

The State University of West Georgia enjoys a strong record of accreditation. The highest external recognition of effectiveness takes the form of institutional and discipline-based accreditation. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accredits all of West Georgia’s programs. Furthermore, some disciplines offer the opportunity for national accreditation, a very demanding and rigorous process. Currently, West Georgia’s thirty active graduate programs have achieved this highest honor of national accreditation. No other university in the United States has a better record on this dimension.

The University maintained its accreditation from many discipline-based organizations, including the American Chemical Society, the Consortium for Diversified Psychology Programs, the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, the National Association of the Schools of Music, the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, the National League of Nursing, and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

This past year saw further growth of the Richards College of Business as an academic leader of Business evidenced by its recent accounting-specific accreditation by AASCB in both undergraduate and graduate programs. Added to the existing accreditation, this honor places the Richards College of Business in the top seven percent of business programs in the nation and earns it the status of being the sole master’s degree-only granting institution in the University System to have this level of accreditation.

Academic Program Review

The University began the process of periodic program review in the 1996-97 academic year by holding discussions between the Vice President for Academic Affairs’ office and the academic deans. Conceptualizing the structure for program review was completed at the dean’s level and initiated at the department level during 1997-98. The review process is slated to begin during the first year of semester conversion, with a rotation of one-fifth of programs reviewing themselves each year starting with Fiscal Year 2000.

The guiding philosophy of the University on program review is to focus on multiple measurements of institutional effectiveness. The theoretical principles influencing the University in this effort are fundamentally coupled. The first phase is to initiate a self-study by each program, guided by core values, principles and correlating methodologies that result from the conceptual stage. The second and more significant phase of this program review is to invite external evaluators to help in the assessment of learning outcomes for each program.

Assessing Learning Outcomes

College of Arts & Sciences

- **Art**: Two art students created watercolor paintings under the direction of Bruce Bobick for the Jekyll Island Museum; three students had work accepted in the 5th Annual Collegiate Juried Art Exhibition at the Art Place-Mountain View; and one student had a print accepted in a national juried exhibition in Tennessee. Two recent art majors were accepted by early decision to medical school.
- **Biology**: Over 50 undergraduate research projects were conducted in the Biology Department. Four Biology majors were accepted by early decision to medical school.
- **Chemistry**: Fifty percent of Chemistry graduates will be attending graduate school in chemistry. One student passed all five cumulative examinations in his first year at UCLA. Sixteen Chemistry students presented joint research papers at professional meetings.
- **English**: West Georgia remains in the top third of USG institutions on the essay portion of the Regents’ Exam for first-time examinees with this year’s average of 83.46 percent. Seven graduate candidates presented a total of eleven papers at professional conference. One student was awarded first-place honors for her presentation on James Fenimore Cooper at the Sigma Tau Delta English Honors Society National Convention. Two graduate students published short articles in *Notes in Contemporary Literature*.
Geology: One student who received a research fellowship sponsored by the National Science Foundation presented her research at the Sigma Xi Geology Honors Society competition and at the Georgia Academy of Science and had an abstract published in the Georgia Journal of Science. Three students received fully-funded teaching assistantships at the University of Tennessee.

History: Forty-nine students were initiated into Pi Gamma Mu Honor Society for the Social Sciences and nine students were initiated into Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society. A new scholarship established by the Abraham Baldwin Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution was awarded to a History major.

Mass Communications & Theatre: Two students were selected to participate in the American College theatre Festival’s Irene Ryan Competition and one student advanced to the second round of competition. One graduate of the theatre program was awarded a full graduate assistantship in theatre design at UNC-Greensboro.

Mathematics & Physics: Four students presented research at the Georgia Academy of Science meeting and had articles published in the Georgia Journal of Science. One of these papers was selected as the Best Student Paper in the Science Education Section, and one was selected as a tie for Best Student Paper in the Physics Section.

Music: Eight students were chosen to perform in the Georgia Music Educators Association All-College Chorus. One student played principal trombone in the International Youth Wind Orchestra for the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles Conference in Vienna.

Political Science & Planning: One student won the National Council for Geographic Education Award. An MPA candidate interned in the Office of International Affairs for Mayor Bill Campbell of Atlanta.

Sociology & Anthropology: One student was the youngest ever to present a paper at the University of Georgia Undergraduate Sociology Symposium and another presented a paper at the annual meeting of the Georgia Sociological Society. Two students received full scholarships to pursue doctoral programs, one at UC—Santa Barbara and the other at Penn State. The Georgia Gerontological Society Graduate Student Paper Award for 1997 went to a West Georgia Master’s degree candidate and another won the Alternate Award for the AARP Andrus Foundation Scholarship, a national competition.

Richards College of Business

The College uses the AACSB-approved Test of Common Body of Knowledge to assess the extent of learning that all business students have retained through their entire curriculum of study regardless of particular majors. Specific changes in curricula and teaching methods arising from these assessment results include redesign of courses in statistics, computer information systems and business education. The results were also used to redesign the courses in the common body of knowledge for the conversion to the semester system.

Other methods are used to measure effectiveness such as comprehensive exams, student portfolios, personal interviews, review of course outlines, and alumni surveys that are conducted every five years. The information has been used to change teaching methods to include more actual business cases and greater utilization of technology in the classroom. Specific managerial skills have been identified and included in course objectives which focused on team building and oral presentation skills. A speech course is now required of all business majors as a result of assessment feedback. The Administrative Systems curriculum is currently being completely reworked to better match employer demand. Asynchronous and synchronous systems of delivering instruction have been implemented in Management and Business Education courses.

Accounting & Finance: Five students won externally competitive scholarships. Of special note are The Association of Government Accountants Scholarship, the National Order of Omega Scholarship, and Georgia Security Association Award. Accounting students constituted 50 percent of Beta Gamma Sigma inductees. Sixty out of sixty-one students who graduated during the 1997-98 report year have secured appropriate positions or enrolled in graduate school. According to alumni surveys, exit interviews with graduating students, and comparative salary and placement data indicate that 98 percent of our graduates obtain gainful employment within a month of graduation (90 percent prior to graduation).

Management & Business Systems: Several students were inducted into Beta Gamma Sigma and Phi Kappa Phi honor societies. One graduate was offered and accepted a position with Anderson Consulting (a big-six consulting firm).
College of Education

- In response to students’ requests, College faculty are teaching more distance learning classes, will be offering Ed.S. classes in Early Childhood Education in Dalton, began teaching Saturday courses, and have extended computer lab hours. The College collaborated with the DeKalb County Schools in the development and delivery of an innovative curriculum for provisionally-certified teachers that was partially funded by the Professional Standards Commission and lauded as a state-wide model.

- The College reports that 486 Bachelor’s and Post-Bachelor’s or Master’s students successfully completed initial preparation program requirements and 605 Post-Bachelor’s or Master’s and CAS/Specialist students completed advanced preparation programs. Furthermore, the University requires all units to submit operational unit plans, statements of assessment results, and funding priorities. These reports require units to link assessment, planning and budgeting. The President’s Advisory Committee uses these documents to assist their efforts with developing the University’s budget.
Overall Institutional Health

Over the course of the last year, the State University of West Georgia steadily progressed toward the accomplishment of its goals and priorities. The semester conversion and facilities master planning processes aided in redefining and reifying System and institutional objectives while keeping the University’s commitment to *Educational Excellence in a Personal Environment* vital. Continuous efforts are being made to attract a diverse student body and improve retention rates as we move closer to the full implementation of the more stringent University System admissions requirements for 2001. In the area of instruction, the University is advancing toward enhancing quality and implementing technology usage throughout the curriculum, with a focus on improving teacher education. Regional economic development contributions and outreach activities will continue to be an essential component to the mission of the institution. West Georgia is poised to further assert itself as a vanguard institution of Georgia, and with the continued support of the University System of Georgia and the legislature, it will most assuredly do so.

The State University of West Georgia has identified areas in which greater support is required in order to achieve its defined goals and objectives. The two primary areas are new facilities and additional faculty positions.

During the last decade, West Georgia’s enrollment grew by 32 percent, while the institution’s facilities (in square feet) grew by less than eight percent. Moreover, seventy-four percent of our buildings are aged from 30 to 155 years old and ninety-eight percent of our buildings are over 20 years old. The areas of strongest need include thoroughly renovating the current Student Center and constructing a Physical Education and Lifelong Learning Center.

While some renovations were made during 1997-98 to the Student Center, these changes were primarily to the mechanical and electrical systems and very little was accomplished structurally to modify existing functional space due to a lack of funding. The current structure still falls short of the needs and expectations of our students and supporting community. This project is critical to the successful recruitment and retention of students and to the students’ cultural and social development. The building’s current configuration renders much space unusable for recreation and the social needs of today’s active students.

The State University of West Georgia needs a Physical Education and Lifelong Learning Center that would serve the primary areas of undergraduate and graduate physical education majors and continuing education participants. It would also serve the student body by offering modern exercise facilities, currently available only at off-campus locations. West Georgia’s present physical education facility was built in 1965, and the institution leases space to accommodate continuing education offices and activities. Of the space provided by a new Physical Education and Lifelong Learning Center, greater than 80 percent would be dedicated to instructional use. The facility would increase the space available for student and adult learning from 49,000 square feet to 135,940 square feet. The new structure would contain instructional classrooms, distance learning classrooms, faculty offices, staff and graduate research space, necessary storage space for instructional equipment, aerobics classrooms, a large instructional assembly area, conference and seminar rooms, faculty and student locker rooms, and a human performance laboratory.

West Georgia needs additional faculty positions. With the commitment to its enrollment projections in mind, the University has estimated, in a mathematical “what-if” analysis, that it would require an additional 18 faculty positions by fall semester 1999 to return the student/faculty ratio to the 1997 level (or an additional 48 faculty positions to meet the under-funded 1991 level). Likewise, the preceding numbers do not consider the important changes brought on by enrollment increases through higher persistence rates. Upper division programs require different configurations of resources than do lower division courses. Restated, enrollment increases at West Georgia will come from advances in retention rather than advances in admissions, and the costs of instruction delivery to a greater proportion of upper division students will rise.
Overall Institutional Health
Addendum: Student Opinion Survey

The 1997 – 1998 Georgia Student Opinion Survey provided the State University of West Georgia with a marker by which to gauge its efficacy in a variety of areas. Overall, West Georgia ranked higher than the national average in 68 percent of college services surveyed and 60 percent higher than other Georgia four-year institutions.

Benchmarks

The University is extremely pleased with students’ impression of its Honors Program, ranking it first among the other eighteen state universities. We also ranked notably higher in satisfaction than the national sample of public four-year universities. Our Honors Program is the second largest within the University System and also maintains the highest retention standards. It will be challenging to maintain and, indeed, to improve upon the existing high level of instructional performance and satisfaction experienced by Honors students. As standards and expectations are increased for System and West Georgia students, so too will the costs of recruiting and providing enhanced educational opportunities for gifted students be increased. A part of the challenge to provide opportunities for students to evolve as scholars will be continuing to attract motivated and learned faculty and to expand the diversification of courses within the Program. With these objectives in mind, the University is progressing toward its goal of instituting an Honors College to better serve students’ educational needs and to propel West Georgia’s Honors Program into national preeminence.

West Georgia students also indicated an exceedingly strong appreciation of the University’s academic services. Specifically, students noted their satisfaction in the following areas: course content in a major field of study; instruction in a major field; out-of-class availability of instructors; library facilities and services; and class size relative to the type of course. We firmly believe that these areas esteemed by students are attributable to West Georgia’s commitment to “Educational Excellence in a Personal Environment”—a responsibility which requires a significant allocation of resources to fulfill both student expectations and key principles of the University’s Mission and goals. Sustaining students’ positive assessments of these areas is a formidable task. One important determinant of successful academic achievement is our smaller student to faculty ratio (e.g., Fall 1997 -- 27:1). Another part of the favorable academic performance equation is the Freshman Center, a relatively new support service for first-year students, that provides help to all freshmen but which targets those most at risk. The quality and availability of technological learning tools and other learning resources that enable students to take their educational attainment to new heights come with a high price tag. Having success only creates conditions of increased demand for technological resources. These resource needs must be met with appropriate levels of budgetary support so that our students and faculty can continue to excel in a competitive and ever-changing environment.

In the area of non-instructional college services, students indicated exceptional performance within the Division of Student Services. Most notably, students responded that our general admissions procedures; job placement services; college catalog and admissions publications; billing and fee payment procedures; and the availability of financial aid prior to enrolling are in the uppermost stratum of all Georgia research and regional universities. While we rank prominently in these areas, improvements can still be made in these services for our students. The Office of the Registrar is moving forward to make registration even more accessible to students now that Banner Web also allows students to access their student information and class schedules prior to registering. The Admissions Office is expanding its prospect pool with inclusive goals of improving its yield rate and attracting top applicants to the University. It also implemented an automated telephone system to better serve prospective students. West Georgia’s Office of Career Services is dedicated to providing employment and co-op/internship opportunities for its students. This past year students earned over $3 million in wages through the Student Employment program, and the Professional Practice Program saw a 63 percent increase in participation. Though these numbers are very encouraging, West Georgia is continually striving to ameliorate its services that are integral to the overall prosperity of its students and the University itself.

Issues of Concern

Although West Georgia students had many positive things to say about their University, they also indicated that there are areas to which more time and resources should be devoted.

Students were negative toward our physical plant. We ranked near the bottom of the four-year institutions in the following categories: student center, general conditions of buildings and grounds, and parking facilities and services. Through the master planning process, we have identified and prioritized capital outlay and MRR projects that would
refurbish existing buildings, construct new educational buildings, reroute traffic patterns, and improve connectivity on campus. One such project is the Technology-Enhanced Learning Center that will be the vanguard of educational facilities throughout the nation. But as the first new facility in several years, this alone will not increase positive reactions to the physical plant.

Furthermore, students were pessimistic about our student center. Our student center should be a social point of convergence for students; unfortunately, this is not the case. Students do not have enough organized meeting space nor do they have facilities for extracurricular activities to support the existing need. There have been a few cosmetic and structural changes to the Student Center since it opened in 1967; however, without adequate funding, we cannot complete the principal renovations so desperately needed and desired.

Another student frustration is a perceived lack of parking. The parking situation is something that we have been working on for some time now. With the master planning process came the necessary decision to push parking to the perimeter of campus and, thereby, creating further demand for the enhanced shuttle service. In addition to the eleven new, safer, solar-powered bus shelters, there are currently four shuttle buses serving our students and faculty. Plans are being discussed to route shuttles to neighboring apartment complexes that are traditionally used by West Georgia students to further remedy the parking situation.

West Georgia students were not favorable in their assessment of some University services. Some of these services are academic advising and personal counseling services. These findings were somewhat expected due to the preparations for semester conversion and the disorientation inherent to such a radical change. Nonetheless, West Georgia is taking steps to strengthened academic advisement for students. For instance, the College of Education has hired two full-time undergraduate advisors; the Division of Special Programs hired a full-time staff person for registration and counseling; the Freshman Center continues to provide advisement by staff and faculty volunteers to our undeclared first-year students; and the Minority Achievement Program (MAP) is further developing its peer mentoring and advising programs. The Student Development Center is also moving forward to improve its services. They are intensifying their minority student support and non-traditional student advising programs. Also, they are increasing the availability of international and disabled student counseling services by upgrading two positions. We believe that efforts such as these will have a significant impact upon our students and their academic performance.

Other areas of concern for West Georgia are racial harmony and cultural programs. Academic year 1996 – 1997 was an unusual year in terms of racial disharmony, and we believe that those circumstances played a considerable role in the outcome of the Student Opinion Survey. It is an issue that West Georgia does not take lightly. The University participated in “One America in the 21st Century: The President’s Initiative on Race” April 6–9, 1998 by having faculty members incorporate a dialogue on race into their classes that week. The feedback was markedly positive, and the scope of the intervention reached several hundred students. To address the students’ concern about cultural programming and racial issues, the Student Activities Office is re-establishing Diversity 101, inaugurating a Multicultural Council, and is implementing a four-year plan for The Black Cultural Resource Center in the Martha Munro building. The Townsend Center for the Performing Arts brought many talented artists to West Georgia in celebrating National Black History Month. West Georgia is hardly devoid of cultural programming and racial sensitivity, but we now realize that more effort should be expended to communicate the availability of these programs and resources to our campus community.

The Student Opinion Survey serves as a useful benchmark as well as an assessment tool for the State University of West Georgia.