

UNIVERSITY *of* 
West Georgia



Annual Report
of
Institutional Progress
2006-2007

University of West Georgia

2006-2007 Annual Report of Institutional Progress

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Part A: Annual Progress in Assessing Institutional Effectiveness

Committed to *Educational Excellence in a Personal Environment*, the University of West Georgia continued to grow throughout the 2006-2007 academic year. The University's total enrollment for fall 2006 was 10,163, up 9 students from fall 2005 while graduate student enrollment declined by 120 students from fall 2005 of 1,808. The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students, however, increased from 8,907 to 8,941. This marks the fourth consecutive year, the enrollment exceeded over 10,000 students.

The following are demonstrative of the University's continued pledge to *Educational Excellence in a Personal Environment*.

Educational Excellence in a Personal Environment

- James magazine ranked the University of West Georgia eighth overall in its top 10 picks for its "People's Choice for 2006" list of Georgia's best institutions for academics and overall reputation. James magazine is a monthly news magazine that covers state politics. The rankings were calculated following a telephone survey of state residents.
- The Princeton Review has selected the Richards College of Business as an outstanding business school and will include it in its Best 282 Business Schools 2007. The RCOB is one of less than 15 percent of business schools worldwide to have achieved accreditation at both the undergraduate and graduate levels by AACSB-International—The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. Only about four percent of business schools in the world hold separate accreditations for their accounting programs.
- During fall 2007, UWG will begin offering a Master of Business Administration degree at the Newnan Center. The new part-time program will be open to students with both business and non-business degrees. The M.B.A. program is accredited by AACSB-International



– The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. (Bread and Butter Goal [hereinafter referred to as BBG] 3. Academic Programs)

- The University of West Georgia launched a new customer service initiative for student enrollment services to improve advisement and registration procedures. The initiative is part of a statewide effort started by the Governor's Office of Customer Service to implement, manage, and elevate the level of customer service. UWG's customer service plan includes streamlining advisement, registration and fee payment processes for students and creating an official e-mail address, MYUWG, for advisement and registration information. The plan will also provide deans and department chairs access to pre-registration numbers for enrollment in classes, which will make it easier to plan course offerings. (BBG 4. Public Relations)

Program and Need Assessment by Department

Each of the academic divisions of the college conducts assessment activities on an ongoing basis.

The *Department of Sociology and Criminology* determined after assessing the needs of undergraduate majors and their employment options, that acquiring methodological and statistical skills would aid their students in the current job market. The class size for statistical courses was limited to ensure that each student had an opportunity to acquire these important skills.

In the *Department of Special Education and Speech-Language Pathology*, faculty used the Praxis and the Knowledge and Skill Acquisition Standards (KASA) to update courses which should enable students to receive higher scores on the Praxis exams. In *Special Education*, faculty updated courses by adding essential content that complies with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) standards and meets the new Professional Standards Commission (PSC) preparation rules.

In fall 2006, faculty in the *Department of Physical Education and Recreation* became concerned about the 2.3 GPA required for sports management classes. Often, students who could not attain the 2.5 GPA required for physical education major in the teacher education program, by default, moved into the sports management major. Two changes were made this year. First, all sports management courses moved to require a minimum 2.5 GPA plus formal admission to the sports management program. Second, the curriculum was revised to include more preparation for and emphasis on the internship program. In addition, a

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collaborative effort with the Richards College of Business resulted in development of an MBA degree with a sports management emphasis. Academically, the sports management program is now on par with the rest of the college of education.

One significant change in the *Department of Nursing* that occurred in fiscal year 2007 related to departmental utilization of Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI), the standardized testing program designed to help students prepare for National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN). In response to a Georgia Board of Nursing recommendation (2006 site visit report), the Department of Nursing implemented a comprehensive ATI policy, faculty approved a rigorous standard for performance on the ATI master exams and the NCLEX Predictor Exam for 2006-2007. The standards established were based on data and literature concerning the use of standardized testing in nursing programs. At the end of fall 2006, it became evident that the standards were too rigorous and that more students than expected had not met the desired outcomes. In response, the faculty reviewed the policy, consulted with ATI, attended an ATI regional meeting, and made changes in the policy. A new standard was established spring 2007 and both students and faculty are more satisfied with the outcomes.

The *Department of Chemistry*, after considerable investigation and departmental discussion, instituted a process whereby students must have properly completed a pre-requisite course in chemistry and/or mathematics with a minimum grade of "C" in order to enroll in the next sequential chemistry course. This has helped us to screen students from taking a chemistry course before they are adequately prepared. Using the same rationale based on several years of student performance, we have a minimum threshold on the Freshman Index Number that an entering freshman must have in order to take the freshman chemistry series.

The *Office of Financial Aid* began a reorganization plan in order to better service students' needs. One area created was the Customer Service Team, trained to assist students and their parents with the processes involved in obtaining financial aid.

Along with other changes, UWG along with Kennesaw State University came to rely solely on the Higher One® card for financial aid refunds. The card service, offered by Horizon Bank, has saved thousands of dollars in man hours, postage, and supplies. Students who receive a refund of financial aid funds will have their refund deposited directly onto a Mastercard debit card which can be accessed via any ATM or at any retail that displays the Mastercard® symbol. (BBG 4. Public Relations)

Comprehensive Program Review Overview and History

The University of West Georgia, in conjunction with a University System of Georgia initiative, formed a plan for systematic periodic program review in 1995-1996. That plan called for a self study to be conducted by each unit and for an external critique of the self study. The University created a rotation cycle in which approximately one fifth of our academic programs would undergo review each year.

Though some departments conducted extensive assessments of their programs under this plan, changes in the Board of Regents' mandate for comprehensive program review led to alterations. In 2000-2001 a Program Review Advisory Committee was created to develop a new plan for comprehensive program review.

This new plan emphasized the role of periodic review in complying fully with the requirements for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation and the requirements of the Board of Regents. However, it also stressed that the broadest guiding principle for program evaluation is the improvement of programs according to their stated outcomes and in the role such assessment plays in achieving the mission of the University. Additional goals in the creation of the plan were to take full advantage of reviews already conducted for accreditation and annual reports so as to avoid duplication of work to the greatest extent possible and to streamline the reporting process to make communication easier.

Below are some highlights of the Plan.

- Programs will undergo periodic program review every five years (in line with accreditation reviews and updates)
- The department will form a review committee to conduct a self study. At the dean's discretion, an external review of this committee's report may be put in place before the report is submitted to the dean. This external review committee may be formed entirely of faculty within the University. Given that so many of our programs undergo external reviews (SACS, NCATE, AACSB, etc.), the original call for external critiques of programs has been modified on the assumption that such decisions are better left at the level of the college. In addition to the self study (based on annual reports, faculty vitae, any surveys of students used by the program, other data accumulation relevant to assessment, etc.), departments will submit an Action Plan based on the self study. Subsequently, the report will be critiqued by the academic dean, the Program Review Advisory Committee, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The department will provide a follow-up on the action plan one year later.

Major Findings and Recommendations by Program

During fiscal year 2007, eleven degree programs were reviewed by the Program Advisory Committee (PRAC). The following and below are some of their findings and recommendations:

The *Department of Accounting and Finance* undergraduate (BBA) programs and the Master's of Professional Accounting are strong programs that strive to attract and retain quality students, recruit well-qualified faculty, maintain faculty qualifications, and provide students with an up-to-date curriculum. All programs in the Richards College of Business are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business-International (AACSB-I), but the BBA and the MPAcc programs are also separately accredited by the AACSB-I.

All undergraduate accounting students take an entrance exam (AICPA Level I Examination) in ACCT 3212 that provides an entrance score for the students. The AICPA Level II exam is then taken in ACCT 4261, which is the last in the accounting sequence. The Level II Examination is used to assess the effectiveness of learning. Results are discussed in a departmental meeting and changes in course content and methodology are undertaken when deemed appropriate. The Master of Professional Accounting program requires each student to pass an exit examination, which gives instructors feedback to assure that objectives are being achieved.

A portfolio for both programs is also maintained for each student. These are assessed by the Portfolio Review Committee which issues a report stating whether the attainment of goals regarding writing and technology are supported by documentation in the portfolios. Exit interviews are also conducted by the chair to obtain student feedback on the program.

The undergraduate and graduate accounting programs has had modest to consistent growth over the past five years. Since 2001, the number of undergraduate majors **increased 30 percent** (from 93 to 121) while the number of students graduating with a BBA **increased 35 percent** (from 26 to 35). The MPAcc program averaged five graduates per year since fiscal year 2001. The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students per FTE faculty in fiscal year 2005 was 30.63 (this is for the department as a whole and not broken down by program). There were 7,321 credit hours generated in fiscal year 2005, with a credit hour to faculty ratio of 732:1. The departmental budget for fiscal year 2005 was \$1,191,323 and

the cost per credit hour for the department (not program specific) was \$162.73.

The accounting program strengths are its up-to-date and well-structured curricula and its small class sizes for providing a personalized environment. There is a strong job market in accounting. While there are only seven Accounting faculty, the department is adequately staffed. Projected growth for the area will provide an opportunity for growth for accounting, and USG's Intellectual Capital Partnership Program has identified accounting as one of the fastest growing occupations in the state. The program also fills a need for those seeking CPA licensure. In the state of Georgia, 150 semester hours of education are needed to obtain licensure, semester hours that the program provides beyond the bachelor's degree.

Unfortunately, the small size of the number of faculty does not allow for multiple sections of upper level undergraduate courses or for specialization within the MPAcc program, which can cause difficulty for students and necessitates careful scheduling. Also, when a faculty member is ill or out of town, coverage of classes becomes an issue.

In order to meet the goals the department has set and to address the concerns raised in the program review, the Department of Accounting and Finance faculty plan to:

- Maintain and develop good relations with the business community.
- Maintain an up-to-date curriculum.
- Develop and improve assessment procedures.
- Maintain and/or increase enrollments.

In addition to the departmental plans listed above, the changes to the assessment process should be implemented as well as developing a plan for increasing internship opportunities for students.

In the *Department of Marketing and Real Estate*, the undergraduate marketing program is the second largest program in the Richard's College of Business while the undergraduate real estate program is one of the smaller programs. The department of Marketing and Real Estate has a total of five tenure-track faculty positions and two lecturer positions. Of these positions, only two are focused on the Real Estate program and teach the entirety of the Real Estate classes, as well as fulfilling needs in the Marketing curriculum.

All Marketing and Real Estate faculty use multimedia in the classroom, with all course syllabi and Powerpoint

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presentations available online. Student sales presentations are recorded and are available online for review and critique.

Marketing majors create a marketing plan for a local organization each year, and they have done outside projects which were praised by the firms and resulted in donations to the department. Internships for students have increased 250 percent (from 6 to 21). Real Estate majors must complete term projects in the research class and a comprehensive project that helps demonstrate theoretical knowledge and its application to business situations. Exit interviews and surveys show that a majority of recent graduates found jobs in the appropriate field either before or within a few months of graduation. Fifty-four percent also indicated an interest in pursuing a graduate degree.

Marketing graduates are required to complete term projects in required and elective courses, with comprehensive projects completed prior to graduation. These projects enable students to demonstrate understanding of theoretical knowledge and its application to business situations. Exit interviews and surveys show that a majority of recent graduates had found jobs in the appropriate field either before or within a few months of graduation. Seventy-six percent also indicated an interest in pursuing a graduate degree.

Assessment of the Real Estate program is largely based on passing grades in specific courses. The assertions made are not linked to any other evidence. Some assessments used outside of course grades were exit interviews, alumni surveys, and input from the RCOB Advisory Board. While students are “happy” with the curriculum and alumni express “high levels of satisfaction” with the program, the results of the assessment process should lead to continual improvement. The results obtained from current assessment practices do not provide the necessary information that lead to that improvement. Therefore, the Marketing and Real Estate programs need to implement a program level of assessment, looking across course offerings to examine student learning and program effectiveness, specifically at the end of the course of study. The results from these assessments can then be used to implement the changes needed to improve student learning and the program overall.

The marketing program has experienced modest growth during fiscal years 2001-2005. Since 2001, the number of majors and pre-majors has **increased 34 percent** (from 387 to 519) while the number of graduates has **increased 9 percent** (from 65 to 71). The number of students enrolled in Marketing courses has **increased 73 percent** since 2001 (1,095 to 1,893).

Real Estate has experienced excellent growth during the same period. Since 2001, the number of majors and pre-majors has **increased 97 percent** (from 68 to 134) while the number of graduates has **increased 138 percent** (from 8 to 19). The number of students enrolled in Real Estate courses has **increased 184 percent** since 2001 (159 to 451).

The number of FTE students per FTE faculty in fiscal year 2005 was 43.92 (this was for the department as a whole; it was not broken down by program). There were 6,876 credit hours generated in fiscal year 2005, with a credit hour to faculty ratio of 860:1. The departmental budget for 2005 was \$647,657. The cost per credit hour for the department (not program specific) was \$94.19.

Both the Marketing and Real Estate programs meet the University’s “Bread and Butter” goals related to enrollment management, academic programs, public relations, university experience, external relations, regional collaboration, and information technology, and the “Visionary” goals related to faculty-directed student research and professional activities, technology, and professional preparation.

One of the strengths of the Marketing program is the increased number of graduates, majors, and pre-majors. The faculty in the program does a great job of connecting students with local firms, having students perform class projects and consulting projects for these businesses. There has also been an increase in the number of internships offered through the program. The faculty has increased the incorporation of online technologies into their classes and has made extensive class materials available to students online.

Resources for the marketing program, especially new faculty appointments, have not kept pace with growth, which may cause problems maintaining program quality, especially in upper-level classes. Marketing classes continue to have the most credit hours generated per faculty member, which symbolizes their commitment to teaching but hinders their research productivity and could impact their interactions with students on an individual basis.

The strengths of the program include the growth in majors/pre-majors and graduates. Faculty in the program receive high teaching evaluations, and the Real Estate Club has hosted guest speakers for the students benefit. The faculty have increased the incorporation of online technologies in their classes and have extensive class information available through web sites. The faculty are also extremely active in service activities.

A major weakness of the Real Estate program is the low number of degrees conferred. While the numbers of majors and pre-majors has grown, the number of degrees conferred

has not yet kept pace (though that number has risen above “threshold” level). This weakness in no way diminishes the work of the faculty – in fact, the graduation and enrollment data is impressive when viewed in the context of only two tenured faculty shepherding the whole program. Unfortunately, that does not alleviate the concern for the future of the program. The fact that only two tenured faculty members, who are close to retirement are managing the program, is a major weakness and cause for concern.

The lack of clear assessment procedures for each goal of the Marketing and Real Estate programs and the lack of indication of changes made to the programs as a result of assessments make it difficult to comment on future viability of the program.

In order to meet the goals the department has set and to address the concerns raised in the program review, the Marketing faculty plan to do the following:

- Request funding (and provide justification) for hiring an additional faculty member.
- Continue development of placement internship activities and streamline entire internship process.
- Introduce new marketing selective courses to offer students the opportunity to focus their studies.
- Develop and enhance advising so students are advised by faculty members familiar with their specific areas of career interest.
- Continue development of Marketing Club activities geared towards preparing students better for the job market.
- Focus on more individual and more in-depth research projects that are likely to lead to presentations or publication.

The Real Estate faculty plans to do the following:

- Get the Real Estate Principles course as a selection in the RCOB business core curriculum, which would give more students an opportunity to be exposed to the program.
- Continue to focus on internal recruiting activities to increase enrollments.
- Increase focus on business outreach and relationship building activities with an eye towards recruiting students and enhancing placement and internship opportunities.
- Use increases in Marketing faculty to reduce the involvement of the two Real Estate faculty in teaching Marketing courses.

- Coordinate with Career Services to develop placement and internship activities.
- Continue to develop and enhance their advising system towards having Real Estate majors advised mainly by the two Real Estate faculty members.
- Develop Real Estate Club activities towards more specific student membership requirements and introduce more career-related activities.
- Provide encouragement, support, and rewards towards increasing faculty research output.

In addition to the departmental plans listed above, changes to the assessment process recommended in the Quality section above should be implemented as well.

Section 2: Overall Institutional Health

The University of West Georgia's celebration of its 100th anniversary began August 18, 2006 with a year-long series of events reflecting on the University's rich history and looking ahead to a new century of innovation and opportunity. While the University has grown from its rural roots of an A&M School, Junior and Senior College, to a University with a global reach of educating students, it has remained true to its values of diversity, social responsibility, caring, and academic excellence.

The centennial year began with a birthday party and the re-enactment of a tree planting ceremony that was held to commemorate the planting of 13 oak trees from different varieties on campus almost a century ago. In 1919, the principal of the Fourth District Agricultural and Mechanical School asked governors from the original 13 colonial states for a gift of an oak tree in a variety indigenous to their state. Several are still growing along Front Campus Drive.



Also, as a tribute to UWG's centennial, student playwrights from the West Georgia Theatre Company wrote a series of ten minute plays that capture 100 years of the university's history. Directed and designed exclusively by students, *West Georgia Stories* explores a wide range of issues faced by the institution through the years, including student diversity, political tension, and turbulent social conditions.

Atlanta Regional Council for Higher Education (ARCHE)

The information provided in this report supports the assertion that UWG's overall institutional health is strong. Further validation was provided by the report "*How the Atlanta Region's Colleges and Universities Are Enriching Georgia*" by the Atlanta Regional Council for Higher Education (ARCHE) which brings together data from Atlanta-area private and public institutions and shows an impact from the institutions, their students, employees, and visitors of more than \$9.2 billion annually.

The University of West Georgia contributes \$220.3 million to the state of Georgia's economy according to a study released by the Atlanta Regional Council for Higher Education (ARCHE). According to the report, the University's economic impact upon the state and the west Georgia region includes \$194.3 million in annual spending by UWG and its employees, students, and visitors to Carrollton and Carroll County.

While the report confirms that the university is a significant economic engine, it underestimates its contribution it provides to the quality of life and cultural enrichment created by the university presence. Not only do amenities benefit the local community directly, they also make the community more attractive to prospective businesses. The impact of the university extends far beyond its economic impact

The ARCHE report also recorded a \$26 million impact from capital improvements on the UWG campus and more than 2,000 jobs generated across all industry sectors in the region.

James Magazine Ranks UWG

James magazine included the University of West Georgia among the top 10 picks in its list of Georgia's best institutions for academics and overall reputation "People's Choice for 2006". UWG ranked eight overall. *James* magazine is a monthly news magazine that covers state politics. The rankings were calculated following a telephone survey of state residents conducted in November.

The University Experience (Bread and Butter Goal, 5. The University Experience)

Tuition Rates Help Students

The second phase in a long term strategy of establishing fixed tuition rates for incoming classes of Georgia residents for four years was approved by the University System of Georgia and the Board of Regents. In April 2006, the University System of Georgia approved a "Fixed for Four" program to help students and parents plan for college tuition with more certainty. The program guarantees a locked tuition rate for a student's first four years. The new program will provide greater predictability in planning costs of the university, while simultaneously providing incentives to students to make steady progress toward a degree.

May 2007, the Board of Regents approved a continuance for the incoming freshman class. However, it has been set at a

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slightly higher rate. For these incoming freshmen, taking summer classes is a way to ensure that they graduate in four years as opposed to five, which is slowly becoming the average.

UWG named “Robust Tier”

The Board of Regents approved a new tuition model and designated UWG as a member of the new “robust tier” of doctorate-granting comprehensive universities created by the University System of Georgia. This move is part of the board’s new strategy to focus on institutional growth and to help meet its predicted enrollment growth of 100,000 new students by the year 2020 because the state’s larger research universities cannot, for fiscal and capacity reasons, absorb all of this growth, institutions such as West Georgia will have the opportunity to enroll the increasingly larger numbers of high school graduates seeking a traditional collegiate experience. In addition to UWG, this tier of universities consists of Georgia Southern, Kennesaw State and Valdosta State, all of which offer doctoral degrees in specialized categories. UWG currently offers doctoral degrees in the fields of education, of which 14 degrees have been conferred since 2003, and psychology, now in its inaugural year.

“As a part of our emerging role in a “robust tier” of comprehensive universities in the state of Georgia, academic programs will serve as the essential component for our part within that tier,” said Dr. Thomas J. Hynes, acting president for fiscal year 2007 *“If our current predictions of demand for and quality of these and other programs proves correct, new, modified and continuing academic programs will be at the heart of our success.”*

TouchNet Payment Process

In an effort to provide greater security for students’ credit card information, UWG contracted with TouchNet Tuition Payment Service for the processing of tuition and fees by credit card. Credit card information will no longer be retained by the university, and credit card payments will no longer be accepted over the phone or in person, which will reduce UWG’s security risk.

To cover the cost of the TouchNet service, a 2.75 percent processing fee will be added to the bill of any student who chooses to pay by MasterCard, American Express or Discover (VISA is no longer accepted).

In the past, UWG paid the credit card merchant fee for those students paying by credit card. Using the TouchNet Tuition Payment Service process, the student paying by credit card is charged for the transaction rather than the university.

Under the new system, students who pay by check or cash will no longer subsidize those using credit cards

Several other institutions within the University System of Georgia (USG) utilize this service, including Georgia Institute of Technology, the University of Georgia, Georgia State University, and Kennesaw.

UWG Web Redesign

The University of West Georgia’s Web Redesign Committee launched a redesign of the university website www.westga.edu in August 2006 after studying the latest trends and patterns in website design. As the key communications channel for the wide variety of internal and external university audiences-including current and prospective students, faculty, staff and alumni-the redesign was primarily focused on marketing to external audiences, primarily prospective students. Templates are being developed for optional use by departments that will give a cohesive look and feel throughout the site.

Financial Aid Call Center

University of West Georgia students and prospective students and their families have a new Call Center to help with their financial aid and registration questions. The center is a cooperative effort between the offices of Financial Aid and the Registrar to help alleviate anxieties that students can have when registering for class or seeking financial assistance.

The Call Center, which opened June 2007, has been busy receiving a wide range of calls numbering 250 to 500 each day. The director of Financial Aid and the Registrar for UWG, hopes the center will make life less stressful for University staff and students.

Personnel are trained to answer general questions, and if the students or family members need to talk about very specific issues, then they are transferred to the appropriate staff for individual help.

Customer Service Recognition Program (Bread and Butter Goal, 6. Student, faculty and staff morale)

The *Division of Business and Finance* began a Customer Service Recognition Program to acknowledge excellence in customer service skills and development of its staff. Each quarter all employees working within the division will be eligible for nomination into the program and recognition of their exemplary service. Winners will receive a certificate, lunch with the vice president of the division, a parking space for three months and recognition in local publications.

The candidates for this award should exemplify the division's motto of "Personally Serving You-Faster, Friendlier, Easier," and demonstrates skills such as knowledge of job, responsiveness, courteousness, helpfulness and accessibility. The program is a follow up to the customer service training conducted last spring.

External Funding

One of UWG's top priorities is to increase external and private support. The grants and funding from external sources continue to help maintain and expand programs and services of the University, as well as to ensure the professional development of personnel. The *Office of Sponsored Operations* reports that the amounts of the external funds are staying competitive and the following are several proposals and amounts awarded over the past year.

- \$15,000 was awarded to Health Services by the Governor's Office of Highway Safety Collaborative Safety Initiatives Grant for the fourth consecutive year to fund UWG safety programs for university students and the community.
- The American Chemical Society Petroleum Research Fund awarded \$35,000 to Dr. Megumi Fujita for the Type G "Starter" Grant to fund a proposal titled "Development of Transition Metal Catalysts for Environmentally Benign Oxidation of Hydrocarbons by Nitrous Oxide."
- The Center for Public History received a \$5,000 teacher enrichment grant for the center's Veterans History Project to fund "Living in the Shadow of War" program that will create a traveling trunk to share history lessons on the Cold War era and to upgrade an existing World War II traveling trunk. The program is geared toward middle-school students.
- The Department of Physics received a renewal of the grant from the Georgia Space Grant Consortium-NASA with an increase of 51 percent to \$34,500 to continue work with undergraduate researchers investigating carbon nanotubes; analyzing downloaded photos of Mars using digital photography techniques; and designing, constructing, and flight-testing a virtual composite ultralight aircraft.

UWG also uses private dollars received by the University of West Georgia Foundation for such purposes as funding scholarships and fellowships for students, recruiting outstanding new faculty, providing travel and research support for current faculty, and buying classroom and lab equipment, as well as books and other materials.

Governmental Relations/Advancement (Bread and Butter Goal, 7. External Relations)

The *Office for University Advancement's Program for Governmental Relations/Advancement* has had a very successful second year. Through the University's advocacy program, a liaison with the general Assembly and Board of Regents, and other initiatives, the Department has cultivated relationships with key decision makers and opinion leaders and advanced the University's legislative agenda, which includes full formula funding and the approval of \$3 million in bonds for furniture, fixtures, and equipment for the new Health and Wellness Building scheduled to break ground this fall. Evidence of success includes recognition by a state news magazine and awards from external entities. Service on University and external



committees, along with professional development activities have contributed to the effectiveness of the program.

The success of the program is evident in calls and personal contacts initiated by legislators themselves, seeking information or assistance. The accomplishments of the program's second year have been built on the successes of the first year. This rapid pace of growth and achievement bodes well for the future of the program and the University.

Faculty and Staff Achievements (Visionary Goal: Faculty-Directed Student Research and Professional Activities)

The following are some accomplishments in learning and teaching, students and faculty were recognized during fiscal year 2007:

Faculty:

- Dr. Allison Nazzal, assistant professor of middle grades education, is the first UWG instructor to gain recognition for developing a Five-Star Online Course. The Five-Star Online Course Review program was developed as a way to promote online course quality. Faculty whose courses are designated as Five-Star become eligible for the annual Apollo Awards for Excellence in Distance Teaching and Mentoring.
- Dr. Jorge Gaytan, associate professor of business administration and director of business education, received the 2006 Southern Business Education Association (SBEA) Collegiate Teacher of the Year Award. Criteria for the regional award include

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exceptional teaching, research, and service and receipt of the association's state teaching award.

- Dr. Denise Overfield, professor for the foreign languages and literatures, received the Professor of the Year Award from the Georgia Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish & Portuguese.
- Dr. Satyanarayana Swamy-Mruthinti, professor of biology, has been listed in the 2006 inaugural edition of *Leading Scientists of the World* magazine.
- Six UWG geoscientists presented research papers at the 118th annual meeting of the Geological Society of America. Dr. Curtis L. Hollabaugh, chair of the department of geosciences and professor of geology; presented findings from research conducted by students and faculty at the Center for Water Resources. Dr. David Bush, professor of geology; Drs. Kent Ratajeski and Philip M. Novack-Gottshall, assistant professors of geology; Dr. Rebecca L. Dodge, associate professor of geology; and Randa R. Harris, instructor of geology. Topics of the presentations ranged from mercury and arsenic levels in the west Georgia watershed to the hurricane impact upon southeastern coastlines and the use of cyberinformatic data in the classroom.
- Professor of Geology, Dr. David Bush's collaborative research with colleagues Dr. Robert Young, professor of geology at Western Carolina University and 2001 UWG graduate and coastal geologist Chester Jackson has yielded dozens of media and geological inquiries in the post-Katrina era. The group presented the Hurricane Impact Scale they created to measure the risk of rebuilding and the coastline devastation at the Geological Society of America.

Students:

- Six students of the *Department of Educational Leadership and Professional Studies* presented a research paper on school finance at the annual conference of Eastern Educational Research Association (EERA).
- Mary Tressa Cooley was co-winner of best undergraduate student paper in the Earth and Atmospheric Section of the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Georgia Academy of Science (GAS). Mary was the *Department of Geosciences's* ninth winner at GAS in the past ten years.
- Ten UWG Honors College students presented their research to the prestigious National Collegiate Honors

Council (NCHC) in November 2006. It is the 15th consecutive year that UWG students have had research proposals selected for presentation at the council's annual meeting. It is also the seventh time in the past nine years that no college or university in the nation has had more research proposals accepted for presentation than UWG. This year, UWG tied for the most proposals accepted with the University of Alabama-Birmingham, a much larger institution. Approximately only about 10 percent of research proposals submitted to the NCHC are accepted each year for presentation.

The Honors College students who will make presentations this year are: Kelly Antion of Cartersville; Emily Briegel of Canton; Reba Cox of Norman, Okla.; Lorri Dee Dukes of Douglasville; Idoreyin Esenyie of Lithia Springs; Jessica Henry of Braselton; Logan Leslie and Adam Woodward of Carrollton; Brannen Morris of Armuchee; and Everett Smith of Marietta.

- Logan Leslie, who graduated summa cum laud from UWG in May 2007 with a degree in biochemistry, was awarded one of the most prestigious scholarships in the world, the Gates Cambridge Scholarship. The award will cover the full cost of graduate study at Cambridge estimated at \$40,000-\$50,000 a year.



**Dr. John Hansen, Logan Leslie,
Dr. Andrew Leavitt**

Sir Alan Fersht, director of the Centre for Protein Engineering and the world's leading expert in the field, invited Leslie to join his research group at Cambridge.

His research at UWG has provided much-needed insight into the processes that lead to protein aggregation, which results in Alzheimer's and mad cow diseases. Leslie would be able to continue that research with Fersht at Cambridge as a graduate student.

This year, there were 600 nominations from the U.S.; 124 were invited for final interviews, and 48 were offered scholarships.

Leslie's extensive undergraduate research at UWG attracted notice over the years and has resulted in numerous honors including being named a Goldwater Scholar and a member of the All-USA College Academic Team's second team.

- Ajay Pillai of Warner Robins, a 16-year-old enrolled in *The Advanced Academy* at UWG, presented two years of research at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research.

A chemistry major and a UWG junior, Pillai completed two years of undergraduate research in the laboratory of vision proteomics in the Department of Biology under the guidance of faculty advisor Dr. S. Swamy-Mruthinti, professor of biology.



Ajay Pillai

Pillai assisted in providing evidence that molecular chaperones bind to aquaporins when the latter are undergoing thermal stress. In other words, a rise in temperature can lead to conditions that cause cataracts in the human eye.

Under heat-induced stress, the lens in the human eye will stop functioning properly and will lead to cataracts and blindness. The research could be an important first step in understanding how loss of vision, especially in individuals over 65 years old, can be better prevented and treated, said Mruthinti.

Pillai's research is a collaborative effort with UWG alum Joseph Fachini, who graduated in 2005. Fachini worked on the project as an undergraduate for several years. Together they presented their work, "Aquaporin O and Alpha-Crystallin Interaction During Thermal Stress," at the national conference.

At UWG, we are looking forward to the start of the next 100 years and are proud to have been designated as a member of a new "robust tier" of doctorate-granting comprehensive universities created by the University System of Georgia to help meet its predicted enrollment growth of 100,000 new students by the year 2020. Because the state's larger research universities cannot, for fiscal and capacity reasons, absorb all of this growth, institutions such as West Georgia will have the opportunity to enroll the increasingly larger numbers of high school graduates seeking a traditional collegiate experience.

Section 3: Summary of Major Institutional Accomplishments in the Preceding Year

The University of West Georgia, during 2006-2007, was focused on improving and advancing the strategic planning process and to implement programs and policies in accordance with the University System of Georgia and University goals.

Planning Structure and Process

In October 2005, the Institutional Studies and Planning Committee (ISP), a standing-committee of the Faculty Senate, was charged with the responsibility of reviewing the UWG's current Mission Statement against both the future goals of the institution as well as through feedback from staff, faculty, and administrators.

Based upon this research, the committee agreed that the current Mission should be redesigned in order to contain the essential elements of an effective mission statement: *The Purpose Component, The Essential Activities Component, and the Values Component*. By spring of 2006, the ISP committee had reviewed numerous drafts and examined institutional feedback. **The final draft was approved on January 16, 2007.**

Revised Mission Statement (Bread and Butter Goal, 1. Commitment to UWG's mission and goals)

The University of West Georgia seeks to achieve preeminence in providing educational excellence in a personal environment through an intellectually stimulating and supportive community for its students, faculty, and staff.

Purpose

The University, a charter member of the University System of Georgia, is a comprehensive, residential institution providing selectively focused undergraduate and graduate public higher education primarily to the people of West Georgia. The University is also committed to regional outreach through a collaborative network of external degree centers, course offerings at off-campus sites, and an extensive program of continuing education for personal and professional development. Opportunities for intellectual and personal development are provided through quality teaching, scholarly inquiry, creative endeavor, and service for the public good.

Essential Activities

West Georgia educates students in a range of disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and professional programs at the baccalaureate level. It also offers a significant number of graduate programs at the master's and educational specialist's levels. The University has a commitment to education at the doctoral level in the field of education as well as other selected areas. In addition to being accredited as an institute of higher education, the University maintains national accreditation or recognition in most undergraduate and graduate fields of specialization.

The University of West Georgia pursues its purpose through the following activities:

- Instruction in general education and the promotion of life-long learning that together lay the foundations of what is essential to being an educated person.
- Faculty-directed student research and professional activities that complement classroom learning through learning by doing and reflection on doing.
- Faculty research, scholarship, and creative endeavors that promote knowledge, enhance professional development, contribute to quality instruction, and provide for significant student involvement and field-based experience.
- Educational opportunities such as the Honors College and, for extraordinary high school-aged students, the Advanced Academy of Georgia that serve the needs of exceptionally prepared students.
- Systematic investigation of teaching and student learning that fosters innovation in teacher, professional, and pre-professional preparation.
- The use and exploration of existing and emerging technologies that improve opportunities for faculty and student learning.
- A broad range of public service activities and proactive partnerships that: promote more effective utilization of human and natural resources; contribute to economic, social and technical development; and enhance the quality of life within the University's scope of influence.
- Student services, including outstanding first-year experiences, which increase opportunities for academic success and personal development and enhance the climate of campus life.

Institutional Accomplishments

Values

The University of West Georgia values the following:

- High-quality general education, undergraduate and graduate programs, that:
 - 1) Are grounded in a strong liberal arts curriculum;
 - 2) Impart broad knowledge and foster critical understanding needed for intellectual growth, personal and social responsibility, cultural and global literacy and lifelong learning;
 - 3) Emphasize disciplinary rigor;
 - 4) Foster the development of effectiveness in communication, critical and independent thinking, problem solving, and the use of information resources and technology; and
 - 5) Create a learning community dedicated to instructional excellence where close student-faculty interaction enhances both teaching and learning for a diverse and academically well-prepared student body.
- Cultivation of a personal environment.
- Affirmation of the equal dignity of each person by valuing cultural, ethnic, racial, and gender diversity in students, faculty, and staff.
- Practices that embody the ideals of an open democratic society and that cultivate an environment of collegiality.

These commitments culminate in educational experiences that foster the development of thoughtful and productive leaders and citizens who make a positive impact throughout an increasingly global society.

Vision Statement for the University of West Georgia Year 2000 and Beyond

The University of West Georgia will be a leader within the University System of Georgia in providing educational excellence in a personal environment.

The University of West Georgia will seek to create for students from various backgrounds every possible avenue to intellectual achievement, personal development, and leadership potential without compromising academic excellence. The University will maintain close contact with all people of the region, be responsive to their needs while raising their aspirations, and generating a more highly-educated populace. The University of West Georgia will be recognized for excellence in teaching and learning, research, and public service in undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education. The University will be recognized as being fundamental to the educational, social, cultural, technological, and economic advancement of the region and state.

Specifically, the University of West Georgia will be characterized by:

- **Educational Excellence** evidenced by outstanding educational experiences, national and regional recognition of selected programs, faculty who excel in their disciplines, superior staff support, and an increasingly capable student body. At West Georgia, teaching, research, and service will be intricately intertwined and supportive of each other.
- **A Safe, Supportive Community** committed to enhancing learning, through close contacts between students and faculty, small classes taught by senior faculty wherever possible, and through dedicated staff who help provide a vibrant campus life.
- **An Outstanding, Diverse Faculty and Staff** who demonstrate effective communication and teaching skills; utilize new technologies and innovative strategies to enhance student learning; and exhibit the highest standards of intellectual achievement, research, and continuing growth.
- **Educational Opportunities for a Wide Range of Academically-Prepared Students** that include a strong academic knowledge base for the development of leadership skills and life long learning.

The University of West Georgia will help ensure its students' future success by developing the ability of individuals to access, interpret, analyze using current technology, and make use of, relevant facts, information, and knowledge to think critically, solve problems, work with, and communicate effectively with others.

West Georgia will develop the whole individual so that as alumni they will continue to be contributing members of their families, institutions, communities, state, nation and world.

- **Educational Opportunities for Exceptional Students:** West Georgia's will build a reputation for having an honors college with a distinctive liberal arts curriculum and additional peaks of excellence in selected undergraduate and graduate majors and professional programs, with student involvement in faculty research, and themes that run across the curriculum, such as communication, leadership development, interdisciplinary studies, critical thinking, and problem solving.
- **A Region-Wide Learning Community that Engages and Inspires Traditional and Non-Traditional Students** to become educated persons with global and multi-cultural perspectives, and advanced technological knowledge. The University will help develop both ethical principles and intellectual flexibility for the future, and will

celebrate and energize the human spirit through respecting and supporting individual differences in learning styles, identities, and personal/professional goals.

- **Pro-active Partnerships with Public and Private Schools and Other Educational Institutions, Business, Industry, Government, and Cultural and Social Organizations** in order to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, predict, and respond to changing state and regional needs, to support Georgia's educational, economic, and cultural development, and to ensure graduates' readiness for the present and future.
- **A Unified, Clearly Focused, University** with each part contributing to and understanding how every other part contributes to the mission of the University and to the larger society.

The faculty and staff at the University of West Georgia are focused on efforts to improve retention and graduation rates. Several specific programs have been designed to improve student retention and to increase the likelihood for successful program completion. The following is a brief summary of the accomplishments of these programs:

Enrollment Management (Bread and Butter Goal, 2. Enrollment Management)

In fiscal year 2005 UWG hired the Associate Vice President of Student Services for Enrollment Management. The Associate Vice President has line authority for many of the units affecting enrollment including Orientation and Special Programs, Admission, Registrar's Office, Financial Aid, the EXCEL Center (first year advising, mentoring, and tutoring), and Student Affairs Web and Technology. This position also sits on many university-wide committees including the Faculty Senate Academic Policies and Procedures committee.

The major structure responsible for overall institutional retention, progression, and graduation enhancements is the Strategic Enrollment Council (SEC). The SEC is chaired by the Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, and has as members all other divisional Assistant/Associate Vice Presidents, the Dean of the Graduate School, and many Critical Functional Area leaders. The SEC reports to the Strategic Enrollment Executive Committee consisting of the Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs and Student Services, as well as the Associate Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management.

The original goal of the SEC was to update the campus Strategic Enrollment Management Plan during the 2006-2007 Academic Year. However it was determined that it would be prudent to wait on the System Strategic Plan and the West Georgia strategic planning process to proceed with the

Enrollment Plan. In the interim campus functional areas, supported by the Strategic Enrollment Council, have moved forward with many initiatives with the intent to increase enrollment and enhance institutional retention and graduation rates.

Retention, Progression, and Graduation

The Vice President for Student Services, Dr. Melanie McClellan, was one of six USG employees selected to serve on the Graduation Rate Outcomes Study Project conducted by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). As a member of the study team, she visited Montclair State University, New Jersey, one of 12 institutions identified as having unusual success in improving graduation rates.

A Graduation Task Force, co-chaired by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Student Services, was created in summer 2005 to focus on recommendations for how UWG can improve graduation rates.

In 2006, and again in 2007, UWG received a \$350,000 grant from the Georgia Board of Regents to increase retention, progression, and graduation. This grant fundamentally changed the nature of the Graduation Task Force, and UWG decided to place administrative responsibility for Retention, Progression, and Graduation (RPG) on the Strategic Enrollment Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is responsible for disseminating the RPG funds and providing overall direction for RPG initiatives. Such direction includes developing appropriate RPG goals and assuring that individual projects meet their intended goals.

Academic Intervention

The RPG Grant from the Board of Regents allows us to develop and implement some very active interventions aimed at increasing both our retention rate and graduation rate.

Retention research shows that the more interaction students have with faculty outside of the classroom, the higher their retention rates will be. To take advantage of this dynamic, one intervention UWG started even before grant resources were received from the Board of Regents was the Faculty Orientation Leaders initiative. For the New Student Orientation program during summer 2007, 21 faculty were hired to engage with students and parents during the program outside of their normal roles and duties. Throughout the four programs for residential students and two programs for commuters, faculty engaged with students and parents in a number of ways. Since many of these faculty also had other roles in the program (academic advisors, program presenters, etc), this provided a way to

Institutional Accomplishments

put the faculty “face” on the Orientation program. Faculty Orientation leaders engaged directly with parents of new students during a one-hour discussion session where they discussed faculty expectations, common student mistakes, and the student-faculty relationship. Additionally, faculty members talked to parents about our Common Reading book, *Choosing Civility: The 25 Rules of Considerate Conduct*, and why UWG have Civility as a first-year theme. Many Faculty Orientation leaders also met with students during the Dean’s meeting and academic sessions, and were present at other points in the program. UWG wants to send a message to students and their parents that faculty care and are involved with new students. In the Orientation Program Evaluation, both students and parents rated this part of the Orientation very highly, (4.32 out of 5). Beyond the Orientation program, this initiative has provided a way for faculty to get involved in RPG initiatives outside of their particular discipline and has led to the beginnings of a culture shift because of the groundswell of support from faculty for RPG programs and services.

The Strategic Enrollment Executive Council’s decisions about how to distribute limited RPG funding have revolved around making the biggest difference at the fastest possible pace. To determine where these differences could be made, we have completed quite a lot of institutional data analysis that has guided our decisions. For this reason our interventions are very diverse and share resources across the campus. Several core areas have shown great promise in terms of increasing retention rates and graduation rates. Although it cannot be said that any one intervention is “causing” rate increases, it is common belief that the combination of interventions is making a significant difference in a very short time.

Several interventions from 2006-2007 warrant mention.

Due to the RPG funding, UWG has been able to dramatically increase student involvement in First Year Programs. Historical data analysis has shown that First Year Programs at West Georgia have a statistically significant effect on retention rates. Students in these programs are more likely to be retained beyond the first year and have higher graduation rates. The UWG First Year Programs include Learning Communities; Freshman Seminar Classes; the FYRST program (First Year Residents Succeed Together), a residential academic support and mentoring program; HOPE Mentorship, Multicultural Achievement Mentoring, First Year Mentoring, and the Honors Program. In fall 2006 about half of the 1,709 incoming students participated in these programs, but in fall 2007 UWG was able to offer these programs to all incoming students.

Initial results from the fall 2006 cohort show that all of these programs have had a dramatic effect on retention. Students

without a First Year Program were retained at 67 percent whereas students in a First Year Program were **retained at 76.24 percent**. These gains led to an overall retention rate jump of **more than 2 percent** in one year. Currently the overall **retention rate for all first time, full-time, degree-seeking students is 72.76 percent up from 70.34 percent just one year ago**.

Academic intervention is very important to achieving gains in Retention, Progression, and Graduation rates. Two of the areas chosen to invest RPG funds focus specifically on the issue of high D, F, and W rates in core classes in mathematics and English.

During the summer 2006 semester (and continuing throughout the academic year) RPG funds helped the mathematics department provide additional academic support for students in core mathematics classes. The mathematics department provided extended hours in the math lab, but also provided additional problem solving sessions for some of the class sections offered over the summer. Initial analysis of the results suggest that the extra attention aided in lowering the D, F, and W rate for this cohort of students and also in terms of student learning and grades. For students taking Math 1111 the mean grade was almost an entire grade higher than the previous summer (2.52 vs. 1.73) and the percentage of students earning a D, F or W dropped to 26.9 percent (from 65.2 percent in Summer 2005). This intervention also seemed to have an effect on new freshmen students during the fall term also. The D, F, and W rate for fall 2006 was lowered by two percentage points from the previous fall and continued interventions should bring that rate down even further.

Another area that has high D, F, and W grades is in English—especially in the first-year courses ENGL 1101 and ENGL 1102. A significant portion of RPG funds has been placed into this area to decrease the failure rate. RPG funds have been used to purchase software that adds an additional feedback mechanism for students taking beginning composition; to undertake some data analysis to determine the effectiveness of the Writing Center and its effect on student success; and to pilot a directed intervention called “Stuff that Works”—a new technique for composition courses that creates a dynamic of challenge and support to enhance student writing skills. All of these are meant to increase the likelihood of student success in these crucial courses. Enrollment Management has just begun looking at the results of these interventions and there is no doubt they, in combination with other RPG initiatives, are having a very positive effect.

Fully realizing that intervening in the first year may enhance retention rates but not affect the graduation rates for several years, UWG has added initiatives designed to focus on

graduation rates. Based on micro-analysis of graduation data, and additional ongoing analysis of students who have attended UWG for at least 4 years, a professional staff member was hired to complete graduation checks and investigate the reasons why particular students have not graduated. The staff member works directly with the academic departments and advisors to provide guidance and intervention so that the student will graduate by the end of their sixth year. Where possible, and appropriate, faculty and department chairs will analyze degree audits to determine the quickest way to graduation—sometimes allowing course substitutions and independent study opportunities if the situation warrants.

UWG piloted a similar program in spring 2007 which relied on volunteer “graduation coaches” and identified specific students for intervention. This program met with some success, but it was determined that academic departments should take a more direct role in getting their students to graduation. Though this new process UWG is hoping that the direct connection with students will not only be supportive, but will show that UWG cares about student success and are using resources to directly affect the student experience.

Although this was the only programmatic effort to increase graduation rates, the campus culture has shifted somewhat, and there is an overwhelming sense that all faculty and staff are focusing on efforts to graduate students within 4 to 6 years. During the 2007 Orientation program for new students materials were distributed that set the 4-year graduation expectation to students and parents. Book bags, T-shirts, student planners, and other materials indicated that students were members of the Class of 2011—thus setting the expectation.

Non-Academic Interventions

Although the majority of RPG interventions are academic, three such programs are aimed to the non-academic support of students.

In fall 2006, the university offered an online program designed to develop a better relationship with the parents of new freshman students. The program, called Family Connection, is part of the GoalQuest suite of programs, and seeks to create a partnership with parents in the transition of their student to college. The purpose of developing this parent module is to engage parents in the knowledge about UWG’s programs and services so that they can provide that information when the student needs it. Parent participation was high with more than 50 percent of the parents of new students engaging in the program. UWG has renewed the program for a second year, and will enhance our

programming for parents through developing a Parent Association beginning spring 2008.

Another non-academic area where students are prone to attrition is related to alcohol and drug use. Through a CORE survey and other research on our students, students are coming to college with already developed drinking habits, many reaching the level of addiction. The use of alcohol leads to behaviors that have a profound affect on the student’s academic success, retention, progression, and graduation. Starting fall 2006, the university employed a part-time Addictions Counselor to assist students through their addictions so that the student can continue in school and graduate. It is difficult to assess success in this particular part of the RPG interventions, however the Addiction Counselor was constantly booked for appointments and the initial impression is that the interventions are successful. By intervening with students having trouble with alcohol, UWG may reduce the number of students leaving for alcohol-related academic, social, and discipline problems. Although it cannot be attributed directly to this intervention, UWG had 33 percent fewer discipline cases in fiscal year 2007 than in the previous year.

Finally, in spring 2007 the Strategic Enrollment Executive Committee distributed faculty and staff mini-grants to university personnel who showed interested in increasing retention, progression, and graduation. Mini-grants were awarded for 21 different initiatives ranging from providing additional course support for peer led instruction in Biology, to mentoring programs, to student callers for Financial Aid and HOPE scholarship recipients, to retention for music majors. Enrollment Management has begun collecting data to assess these individual initiatives. The mini-grants have been an opportunity to begin in changing the culture of the institution, and provide a financial incentive for entrepreneurial thinking regarding student success. The creation of an open grant process has generated a lot of institutional discussion around the issues of retention, progression, and graduation and, at a grass-roots level, that discussion has fomented the institution’s resolve to address and show improvement in these issues.

Graduation and Retention Rates

The University of West Georgia attributes its retention rates in part to its higher admissions standards implemented in fall 2005. Through the work of the Strategic Enrollment Committee many new initiatives will be put into place to affect retention and graduation rates. Of particular concern are the graduation rates which we hope to affect significantly over the next few years due to the increased attention by the Strategic Enrollment Council, individual programs and departments, and because of increased funding through the RPG grant.