Georgia Gwinnett College
Strategic Plan: Institutional Level
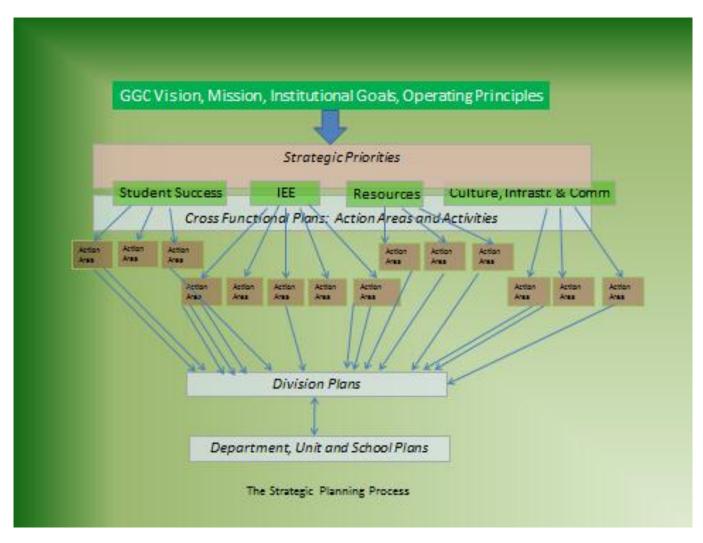
Contents

BACKGROUND:

Georgia Gwinnett College's first strategic plan in 2006-07 was a plan to stand up a brand new college. This next plan, six years later, is a plan to evolve the still new, but now established, College to its next stage. It is a plan to build on what has been a remarkable success story that established a strong base in terms of accomplishments, number of students enrolled (9400 in fall 2012 versus 118 in fall 2006), number and qualifications of faculty and staff, and facilities, despite the worst economic environment since the Great Depression.

This strategic planning process has been extensive and inclusive, beginning with a strategic analysis that examined both external and internal factors that will impact GGC in the future. The external analysis reviewed key data and trends in a variety of areas including globalization, technology, the economy, employer needs, population changes, higher education, secondary education, and the University System of Georgia. The internal analysis included quantitative review of factual data and trends as well as interviews and focus groups with approximately 30% of faculty and staff, as well as students. Data included enrollment history and projections, student characteristics, admitted student survey data, retention trends, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) trends, budget history, staffing and facilities. It also identified "successes and stressors" relative to facilities, funding, retention, educational technology, academics, student life, infrastructure, culture, communications, workload and scalability. A summary of major takeaways and implications follows. The full strategic analysis is available on the my.ggc portion of the College's website.

During the planning process the College's vision, mission, goals and operating principals were reaffirmed. The vision and mission are reviewed on an on-going basis, so reaffirmation during this planning phase is part of a continuous review process. Because these high level elements of the strategic plan have been reaffirmed, this strategic planning process focused on identifying what GGC must do to better serve its mission and achieve its vision. The first step, after the strategic analysis was completed, was to come to consensus on GGC's strategic priorities. Four over-arching strategic priorities were identified and form the core of plan. These were approved by the Cabinet in December 2011. From January through March 2012 the strategic analysis was reviewed with faculty and staff through a series of small meetings and town hall discussions. In

summer and fall 2012, cross-functional planning groups met to develop recommended action plans for each of the four strategic priorities. The College's five divisions, each led by its vice president, used this cross-functional planning as input into their divisional plans in fall 2012 as well. Unit level plans will be developed in spring 2013 to complete the planning process.

After the strategic analysis, the strategic planning process followed the flow shown below.

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS MAJOR TAKEAWAYS:

Based on strategic analysis, the following takeaways are particularly relevant and are addressed in the strategic plan.

1. What GGC began was important in 2006; it is **even more important** now. GGC has wildly succeeded in creating a strong foundation that can support efforts to enhance the College's ability to serve its mission and achieve it vision.

2. The College's passion/commitment is **colliding with reality.** GGC faculty and staff have worked extremely hard to get the College to where it is and to provide the educational environment the students are now experiencing. However, constant budget pressures, growing pains, and needs of students have taken a toll. There is no silver bullet or short term solution that will help GGC address its stressors. The College is "in it for the long haul."

3. Now that GGC has established a large student base, is it possible to shift the scale more towards the quality of the student experience and less towards the number of students? In the beginning, GGC had to place enormous effort on reaching out to prospective students who had not heard of, or at best had minimal interest in, GGC. "Bringing in students" so the College had "enough" was critical. GGC has reached the point now where it does have, and should continue to have, a large base of students. More students are necessary to support growth plans and projections, but are not needed to "prove the College's worthiness."

4. Promoting **and delivering to Student Success** is the most important thing GGC must do, and there is a long way to go. Student success, from initial acclimation to college, to retention and progression, career development, graduation and ultimately job or graduate school placement, is a daunting task. Even a "stable" organization like the USG has not made any improvement in retention in a decade – even with focused efforts to improve. GGC, with its rapid growth and need to build systems, culture, processes, staff and infrastructure during the worst economic crisis since anyone at GGC was born, has been hit with a multiple whammy. Yet GGC still outperforms almost all others USG institutions, given the characteristics of entering students. However, the absolute levels of retention and progression are far below GGC's goals. Staffing to support student success also lags. All of this aside, GGC's vision and mission dictate that the College will excel at student success. Thus, much has to be done.

5. The **educational technology world is moving faster than** is GGC; to make a meaningful difference in using educational technology to enhance learning, GGC must focus energies to identify and leverage technology. The strategic analysis has indicated that the technology world, including educational technology, shows no signs of slowing its rate of change. It showed that businesses are focusing on creating new educational technologies, but history has shown that many new technologies do not provide meaningful benefits. The analysis also shows that students entering college have different expectations of, and familiarity with, technology. Also, every few years students come with new expectations. For GGC to be "a resource for innovation for the broader educational community," the College must identify and successfully use emerging technologies more effectively than other institutions.

6. The demand for **innovative scheduling and delivery options is increasing**. GGC already has a large number of students who work and have outside obligations who may not be able to attend college on a "normal" 8 to 5 schedule. Other institutions are providing alternative solutions that students find attractive. The idea of taking courses from multiple institutions is more common than before. Technology enables possibilities. Students, like all U. S. consumers, are becoming more demanding in terms of service "needs." All of this begs for GGC to proactively develop options that serve its student population effectively and, in fact, more effectively than other institutions can.

7. GGC acts like a **State University,** in only offering a four-year program, in its performance, and in its faculty qualifications.

8. Students are not receiving a **full student/ college experience.** Although it can be argued that many of GGC's students are commuter students and therefore may not need as robust of a "full college" experience as residential students want, all GGC students benefit from feeling and being actively involved in the life of the College. Involvement creates loyalty and encourages students to remain and persist. Additionally, non-residential students still need a variety of support services, ranging from counseling to tutoring, disability services to career development.

9. There needs to be greater **college-wide commitment to resource development**. Quite simply, a new college does not have the resource base of older more established institutions. A 100 year-old College the size of GGC may have 40,000 living alumni, some of whom have substantial wealth. GGC just graduated its 500th graduate, and none of its graduates have been out in the world long enough to have acquired substantial wealth. Older institutions have established relationships with businesses and philanthropists. Many have solid grant programs and a history with, and long-term success stories to provide to, foundations. GGC does not, purely because of its age. To move forward in resource development, everyone at GGC needs to be committed to doing their part to impact resources in large ways.

10. Resources are not limited to dollars. GGC's facilities are operating at capacity and will need to expand continually to enable the College to serve the projected student base.

11. GGC has the opportunity to **leverage** aspects of USG's Complete College Georgia and to build its reputation within the USG. GGC has a history of succeeding when it puts its mind to it. The College has developed strong relationships with the BOR and with legislators. In the USG's recent RPG effort GGC set the standard. Complete College Georgia is a similar effort, even broader in scope than the RPG effort, and many of the ideas and recommendations being discussed at the system level are already being addressed at GGC. Success with Complete College Georgia has the potential to provide additional funding to the College because the USG is now proposing to provide incremental funding to institutions that perform.

12. GGC needs to **devote time and resources to itself and its people** - its culture, communications, student and administrative services, and infrastructure. GGC is a community of very dedicated people who believe in the College's vision and mission. They work very hard to help the dream become a reality. Growth has caused strain. Statewide budget cuts have caused strain. The much larger GGC family (570 full time employees, 850 total employees at the end of 2011 compared to a "handful" in 2006 and 200 in 2007) has growing pains. Communications at times suffer, feelings get hurt, and the culture can be overlooked as constant pressures interfere with being able to live the spirit of GGC.

13. GGC's growth over the life of the strategic plan will require review and likely changes in the academic **curriculum and programs** to meet the changing demands and needs of students and employers.

GGC'S VISION, MISSION, INSTITUTIONAL GOALS, OPERATING PRINCIPLES and INTEGRATED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

The first major takeaway discussed that what GGC began in 2006 is even more important today. The strategic analysis, as well as annual assessments, reinforce that the College's vision, mission, goals and operating principles remain sound and relevant. There are shown below.

Vision

Georgia Gwinnett College will be a premier 21st Century Liberal Arts College where learning will take place continuously in and beyond the confines of the traditional classroom. Its cornerstones will be innovative use of educational technology and a commitment to an integrated educational experience that develops the whole person. GGC will be a wellspring of educational innovation. It will be a dynamic learning community where faculty engagement in teaching and mentoring students will be the hallmark. It will be a driving force for change in student success. As such, it will be a model for innovative approaches to education, faculty engagement with students, and highly efficient student, facility, and administrative services.

Mission

Georgia Gwinnett College provides access to targeted baccalaureate level degrees that meet the economic development needs of the growing and diverse population of the northeast Atlanta metropolitan region. It emphasizes the innovative use of technology and active-learning environments to provide students enhanced learning experiences, practical opportunities to apply knowledge, increased scheduling flexibility, and a variety of course delivery options. Georgia Gwinnett's outstanding faculty and staff actively engage students in various learning environments, serve as mentors and advisors, and assist students through programs designed to enhance their academic, social, and personal development. GGC produces contributing citizens and future leaders for Georgia and the nation. Its graduates are inspired to contribute to the local, state, national, and international communities and are prepared to anticipate and respond effectively to an uncertain and changing world.

Georgia Gwinnett College
Strategic Plan: Institutional Level

Institutional Goals

As a charter 21st Century Institution GGC will:

- Produce graduates who can anticipate and respond effectively to the changing world
- Inspire graduates to be contributing citizens and community leaders
- Achieve significant levels of student success in retention, progression and graduation
- Innovatively design and deliver educational programs and support services
- Engage with Gwinnett and surrounding communities to support student development and community needs
- Create a culture devoted to the holistic development of students
- Acquire the resource base needed to accomplish its mission and vision
- Serve as a resource for innovation for the broader educational community

Operating Principles:

Georgia Gwinnett College is committed to:

- Continuous review, assessment, change, and experimentation
- Holistic development of students
- Building partnerships with its business and community constituents
- Developing a workforce of highly competent teachers and staff who are also action oriented and innovative
- Innovatively integrating technology into educational experiences
- Diversity and building a multicultural environment to prepare students to succeed in a global society
- Being the community of choice to work for faculty, administrators, and staff
- Providing a supportive work environment that encompasses involvement, open communications, a spirit of collegiality and an appropriate reward system

Ultimately this strategic plan will ensure that Georgia Gwinnett College's students, the people for whom the college exists, learn to anticipate and respond effectively to the changing world and to become contributing citizens and community leaders. The college identified the important educational outcomes goals to be:

Integrated Educational Experience Outcome Goals

- Clearly communicate ideas in written and oral form.
- Demonstrate creativity and critical thinking in inter- and multi-disciplinary contexts.
- Demonstrate effective use of information technology.
- Demonstrate an understanding of diversity and global perspectives leading to collaboration in diverse and global contexts.
- Demonstrate an understanding of human and institutional decision making from multiple perspectives.
- Demonstrate an understanding of moral and ethical principles.
- Demonstrate and apply leadership principles.
- Demonstrate competence in quantitative reasoning.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Based on the strategic analysis, and in support of GGC's vision, mission, institutional goals, operating principles and integrated educational experience goals, the following strategic priorities are critical to the success of the strategic plan.

Strategic Priorities

1. Significantly enhance GGC's student success efforts; make it the College's niche.

2. Implement enhancements to the Integrated Educational Experience (IEE) to address evolving needs and types of students.

3. Preserve, strengthen and diversify the resource base.

4. Enhance GGC's organization culture, infrastructure, and communications.

Each strategic priority is discussed below. Background rationale describes why the priority is important, and a description of the future is provided that creates a picture of what GGC will be like when the strategic priority has been achieved. In a sense, these descriptions of the future are outcomes for each strategic priority. Also included is the set of major action areas that will be addressed in support of each strategic priority.

1. SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCE GGC'S STUDENT SUCCESS EFFORTS; MAKE IT THE COLLEGE'S NICHE.

Background:

GGC's vision and mission are all about helping all students, from learning support students to honors students, with varying types of preparation, succeed in college and be prepared to succeed in life. GGC is all about reimagining higher education, and has shown remarkable progress overall in working towards this goal. However, major improvements in student success are difficult to achieve. Retention throughout the USG has not improved in a decade. GGC is experiencing some growing pains resulting in lower retention levels versus the previous year, although still comparatively high. In GGC's first strategic plan, student success was subsumed within the Integrated Educational Experience strategic priority (number 2 below). For this plan, because of the overarching importance of student success, it is being singled out as a standalone strategic priority.

To make student success GGC's niche, a wide range of plans and activities need to be enhanced, developed, or re-imagined. Increased emphasis on the importance of student success needs to be felt throughout the College, at all levels and in all areas. "Speed to action" needs to increase.

Some areas that fall within this strategic priority include: ▫ *Reimagining the first year,* ▫ *Improved results with learning support courses,* ▫*Improved and innovative use of education technology, particularly to support early interventions,* ▫ *Matching services to student needs,* ▫*Programs throughout a student's entire experience at GGC, from first semester retention through job placement, and* ▫ *Providing staffing and process infrastructure to support implementation*.

In addition to being GGC's niche, student success is a very visible area, within the USG and at the state and federal levels. Funding decisions are planned to be based on successful performance in these areas.

Description of the Future

- GGC's definition of "success" will include graduation and retention, job placement and salaries, and additional assessment criteria.
- GGC will substantially outperform other comparable USG institutions in all RPG areas and post-graduation performance as well.
- GGC will be viewed as a national model of how to effectively accept any qualified student and help him or her succeed in college.
- First semester retention results will be markedly improved because of extensive early intervention for all students who need intervention. Intervention will be tailored to the individual student's needs and will include pre-college programs such as boot camps when needed.
- Educational technology, some of which is yet to be developed, will effectively support improved first semester and first year performance.
- GGC will improve the preparedness of incoming students prior to their first day of classes.
- High schools in Gwinnett County, and throughout the state, will work with GGC to ensure their students are appropriately prepared to succeed in college.
- Transfer rates from GGC will be lower than that of other comparable USG institutions.
- GGC's student population will be diverse (age, race, interests, preparation, income levels) and will be reflective of the needs of the community and surrounding areas.

Action Areas
1. Fully understand risk factors that are obstacles to student success and first year persistence, <u>prior</u> to students' entering GGC and while attending GGC.
2. Align admissions policies and processes to allow students to have a smooth transition to GGC and to support GGC's access mission.
3. Ensure all students, at-risk and all others, start off their GGC experience on the right foot.
4. Re-engineer the mentoring program.
5. Develop and implement appropriate, intensive and timely initial and on-going interventions.
6. Create a positive and student-centric student culture and student sense of community.

Action Areas
7. Ensure strong and consistent faculty involvement in student success.
8. Establish comprehensive Student Success programs for 2nd, 3rd and 4th years.
9. Establish the appropriate administrative structure for Student Success.
10. Provide adequate systems and resources.

2. IMPLEMENT ENHANCEMENTS TO THE INTEGRATED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE (IEE) TO ADDRESS EVOLVING NEEDS AND TYPES OF STUDENTS.

Background:

The Integrated Educational Experience is another hallmark of GGC. It acknowledges that a student's education is multi-dimensional and is not confined to the traditional classroom. GGC has always viewed educational activities in the broadest sense. The statements in GGC's first strategic plan that social, physical and moral growth (which evolved to be of the Wellness Model) are equally as important as intellectual growth remain valid today. The strategic analysis indicates that the "value-add" of college education includes communications, leadership, self-direction, creativity and critical thinking skills. Business leaders are looking for graduates who are more than "book smart."

Some areas that fall into this priority include: ▫ *Innovatively enhancing the education experience* ▫ *Integrating student affairs more fully,* ▫*Fostering partnerships with external constituents,* ▫ *The Wellness Model (6 dimensions: Physical, occupational, intellectual, social, spiritual, emotional),* ▫*Academics (educational technology to support innovation and pedagogical goals of each school, active learning environment, delivery and scheduling, in line with student capabilities and appropriate curriculum),* ▫ *Rigorous assessment, and* ▫ *Providing a more complete college experience.*

Description of the Future

- Students will have a complete college experience. Their education will incorporate academic, co-curricular, social, spiritual, occupational, emotional and physical elements that provide the opportunity to develop in all six wellness dimensions.
- Student Affairs programs and initiatives will be fully integrated into students' experiences and will positively impact the students on a level on par with Academic Affairs
- Partnerships with external constituents will be substantial and will meaningfully impact students' education at GGC. Students will have practical opportunities to apply knowledge afforded by GGC's partnerships with business and community constituents.
- GGC will have excellent academic programs that reflect the changing educational needs of a knowledge-based economy.
- GGC's programs will be globally oriented.
- GGC will expand programs as enrollment grows so that the needs of its students and community can be served.

- Innovation will take place within and across disciplines, and at the intersection of multiple disciplines.
- Technology will support innovation and the pedagogical goals of the College. Educational needs will drive the use of educational technology; technological tools will not be the drivers.
- GGC will be well known throughout higher education for its use of educational technology to enhance learning.
- GGC will have a very collaborative active learning environment focused on achieving student outcomes. Faculty will be engaged in teaching and mentoring students and students will be active participants in their learning and development process.
- Students will be attracted to GGC in part because of its flexible course delivery options.
- The demands of students and the environment will inform the distribution of course delivery options.
- The character of each discipline and course will be considered when determining what formats are used for each course.
- Students' capabilities will be considered (e.g. through advising) to determine their capacity for learning via different formats.
- Selective on-line classes may exist, but students will not be able to graduate with only on-line courses. All courses will have student interaction with faculty. The USG may require this of GGC. These courses will be selected where it makes sense pedagogically.
- Students will have practical opportunities to apply knowledge afforded by GGC's partnerships with business and community constituents.
- GGC will be a 21st century model for other colleges and universities.

Action Areas

1. Support the existing value in teaching and engagement throughout GGC so that faculty teaching and engagement effectiveness is a core competency of GGC.
2. Provide substantive faculty and staff development to support student learning.
3. Establish education technology to be a core competency as it relates to the academic enterprise.
4. Fully establish a holistic and integrated framework for student development.
5. Provide the optimal set of curricular offerings and configurations to meet the needs of GGC's student population.
6. Create a vibrant campus and student culture, a full college experience.
7. Enhance the assessment process to ensure learning outcomes are met.

---

3. PRESERVE, STRENGTHEN AND DIVERSIFY RESOURCE BASE.

Background:

GGC is a hugely successful new college, but it suffers from scarce resources due to several reasons:

1. Growth in student population outpaces USG funding models and construction of facilities.

2. Lack of established "bank accounts" (alumni base, endowments, major on-going donors, established relationships with foundations and grantees) that other more established institutions have.
3. Tuition is low at GGC, and does not reflect the higher cost University instructional model used by GGC to deliver a high quality student experience.
4. Fees are being used to support facilities versus programs – this is different than at other USG institutions.

As a result, all resources – physical, financial and human - are stretched. Successfully developing and implementing innovative approaches to increasing resources will be an important part of this strategic plan. GGC cannot afford to let resources develop along the standard timeline followed by other institutions.

Areas that fall into this strategic priority include: ▫ *Facilities – ensuring adequacy to support enrollment growth,* ▫ *Foundations and grants – successfully acquiring significant funds,* ▫ *Campus wide commitment – leveraging the connections and expertise of everyone on campus, and external constituents, to obtain incremental funding,* ▫ *Addressing USG and State performance funding criteria so that GGC is appropriately "rewarded",* ▫ *Maintaining a predictable and growing student population, and* ▫ *Matching growth to resources.*

Description of the Future

- GGC will have an integrated, collaborative and stable financial model that ensures adequate overall funding. The financial model will include state resources, tuition and fees, auxiliary enterprises and fund-raising, and will involve public and private monies for the overall financial portfolio including portions of academic funding.
- Facilities will continue to grow to meet the needs of the student population; different ways to finance facilities given changing direction from the USG will be used.
- All areas within GGC will actively support fund-raising and friend-raising, particularly senior leadership, each school and its administrators, educational technology, and athletics. Faculty will play a large role in securing grant funding.
- GGC will have and be implementing a comprehensive marketing plan to communicate GGC's relevance and attributes to all constituents.
- GGC will have and will be maintaining strong relationships with all external constituents.
- GGC will be on the speed dial of major foundations interested in improving higher education.
- GGC will be successful at a significant number of obtaining large gifts.
- GGC's reputation in the community and among prospective students will be strong and will interest a large number of prospective students.
- GGC will have communicated sufficiently and convincingly to the USG and the state to ensure that they understand GGC's needs. The state, through the USG system and other funding sources, will provide reliable and adequate funding for academic needs.
- A change in status to University, which reflects GGC's true character, will support financial stability
- If traditional ways of funding become less available, innovative plans will be developed to support the College.

Action Areas
1. Reach agreement on optimal annual enrollment goals based on obligations, students, and stair-step costs.
2. Develop agreement on resource needs, in priority order.
3. "Nail" Complete College Georgia.
4. Revise the comprehensive enrollment management plan in light of the financial model.
5. Maintain and update the comprehensive facilities plan.
6. Ensure there is 100% campus-wide commitment to engagement in fund-raising.
7. Develop a comprehensive plan to aggressively capture substantial public grant funding.
8. Ensure strong state funding.
9. SPLOST and other local funding
10. Develop a comprehensive development plan to raise substantial philanthropic funds
11. Leverage the Shackelford Leadership Institute.
12. Achieve university status.
13. Enroll a substantial international student population attending GGC and living on campus (full pay).
14. Develop other revenue generation areas.

---

4. **ENHANCE GGC'S ORGANIZATION CULTURE, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND COMMUNICATIONS.**

Background:

As GGC has grown in size and complexity, stressors have increased. Maintaining the culture of a small organization is difficult as the organization grows. Heavy workloads can interfere with responsiveness and communications. More is happening; keeping up with it becomes more difficult, and ensuring appropriate people are aware of what they need to know becomes harder. Lack of follow-through, when others are depending on it, causes unnecessary work and delays that ripple through an organization. Appropriate staffing decisions, given limited resources and a goal of maximizing effectiveness while minimizing resources, are difficult, especially when virtually *everyone* at GGC has come from someplace else. In many cases those other places have not followed GGC's model. All of these reasons make it particularly important for GGC to devote time "to itself" as it continues to service students. As this strategic plan is developed and implemented, a supportive culture is critical to successful implementation. It has been said that "in the battle between culture and strategy, culture wins."

Areas that fall into this strategic priority include: ▫ *Rekindling a deep sense of community, collaboration,* ▫ *Enhancing productivity and efficiency,* ▫ *Unbundling "communications issues" and addressing major components, and* ▫ *Maintaining a scalable structure.*

Georgia Gwinnett College
Strategic Plan: Institutional Level

Description of the future

- GGC will have a culture that makes working at GGC a hugely positive experience, both in terms of effectiveness and as an enviable place to work.
- GGC will have a supportive work environment encompassing involvement, teamwork, open communications, and a spirit of collegiality to facilitate decision making. The result will be that faculty and staff will be able to make effective decisions on a timely basis and to involve others who need to know.
- Diversity and development of a multicultural environment will be priorities. "Diversity" will be broadly defined.
- GGC will have a workforce of highly competent faculty and staff who understand and support the GGC vision and who are also action oriented and innovative.
- GGC will have recruitment and retention programs that maintain the quality and dedication of the workforce.
- GGC's academic and business departments will have sufficient infrastructure to be able to efficiently, and effectively support the mission and vision of the institution. Infrastructure includes facilities, policies, systems and processes, staffing and technology.
- An appropriate reward system will be in place.
- Burnout and workload issues will have been addressed.
- GGC will subscribe to continuous review, assessment, change, and experimentation regarding pedagogies, curricula, and technologies.

Action Areas
1. Develop and implement a plan to devote resources to re-establishing (or establishing) GGC's desired culture.
2. Eliminate organization barriers which hamper effectiveness, productivity, and communications.
3. Identify and address highest priority infrastructure and staffing needs.
4. Enhance the assessment process.
5. Develop an effective communications structure.
6. Select and develop very strong leaders and managers throughout the organization.
7. All operating units: Develop, implement and maintain strategic plans that fully support GGC's goals, mission and vision.