

DRAFT

**Strengthening P-16 Transitions: The Georgia Case
Admissions and Placement Policies
Phase I Report**

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¹ Data for Phase I report collected in 1999.

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Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the context of Georgia’s dramatic policy changes in education, followed by descriptions of educational reforms affecting postsecondary admissions and placement policies there. Higher education institutions included for discussion in this paper are: The University of Georgia at Athens, and the State University of West Georgia. The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding how admissions standards are set, how they evolve within institutions and state government, and how they are operationalized by admissions officers and other institutional staff. Data were collected through document reviews, published studies and reports, web sites, and interviews with forty-five administrators and institutional researchers directly involved with admissions and placement policies and processes. The importance of academic preparation for access to and success in higher education prompts a discussion of efforts to align K-12 and postsecondary reforms.

Change within a dynamic political and demographic environment characterizes the educational reforms occurring in Georgia public education systems.

In addition to more selective admissions and placement standards in Georgia higher education, in-migration is a key contributor to more selective admissions. Burgeoning growth patterns exert pressure on educational sectors to grow and contributes to the redistribution of students across postsecondary education.

Along with dramatic population growth, the political environment affects educational reform. For example, the election of a new governor created shifts in approaches to educational reform in Georgia (as indicated in Figure 3). Through the development of the HOPE scholarship program and pre-school funding for all four-year olds, the focus for educational reform was on postsecondary and pre-kindergarten reform under former Governor Zell Miller. These initiatives are funded from state lottery proceeds. The HOPE scholarship program is a merit scholarship available to students who attain and retain a B average in a public high school and while in college. According to a report from the California Higher Education Policy Center, “the HOPE scholarships are significant because they represent the first time the state has placed a high

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priority on attending college.” Many other states and nations are interested in emulating this initiative (Bracco, 1997, p.21). It is seen as an excellent incentive to promote higher education in the state. Observers refer to the scholarship as “a middle class benefit” or “Georgia’s GI Bill.”

Former Governor Miller and the University System of Georgia Chancellor Portch also promoted an increase in admissions and placement standards in Georgia public higher education. While Governor Barnes indicates that he will continue the educational reforms begun by his predecessor, he intends to also focus on K-12 education and wants to work on bringing up the educational performance of this student group. In response to continued low SAT scores for the students in Georgia, he remarked, “I’m sick of excuses.”

Raising Admission and Placement Standards

Briefly, the key differences between old and new higher education requirements are:

- The University System of Georgia College Preparatory Curriculum is required for admission to public colleges and universities in Georgia.
- A fourth college prep unit in math has been added to bring the total number of college prep units required to 16.
- Eligibility for admission also will be determined by a Freshman Index or FI. The FI is based on a student's SAT or ACT score and high school core grade point average -- or HSGPA (the HSGPA is calculated only on the 16 college prep units required for all students.)
- There also are minimum SAT/ACT score requirements.
SAT minimum score - verbal is 430; math is 400.
ACT minimum score - English is 17; math is 17.

Raising standards for admission to the University of Georgia system is expected to affect all public postsecondary institutions. All four-year institutions, including public Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), are expected to have fewer or no "learning support" students by the year 2001. This will minimally, if at all, affect the already selective four-year institutions, such as the University of Georgia. However, state universities and HBCUs, which traditionally enrolled high numbers of learning support students, are affected by the pressure of changing enrollment policies. The Department of Technical and Adult Education sector is affected by rising standards since the two-year college and the technical institutes will be major avenues for enrollment of students not accepted at the four-year college level. Because not all regions in the state have accessible two-year, some exceptions to this policy are being made.

There are varying interpretations by state and institutional policy makers of the increasing standards for the University System of Georgia admissions and placement. While increasing standards are viewed as “raising the bar” and “closing the back doors” by some who support these educational reforms, concerns are raised by some policy makers and institutional representatives that the changes will “narrow the path” for access to higher education especially

for Georgia's minority students. For example, the phasing out of learning support in the four-year college may make transportation a problem for students who must take learning support courses in institutions further from their home. Also, according to one respondent, the two-year sector has not had a good record of serving minority students.

P-16 Policy Alignment Issues

Postsecondary educational reform affects the K-12 education sector broadly because K-12 prepares students to enter the workplace as well as the changing higher education environment. In the implementation of the above reforms, several areas of concern for student transition from high school to college or the workplace were identified by study respondents. We refer to such concerns as alignment issues.

K-12 and Higher Education alignment issues emerging from this study include the following (these are further elaborated in the body of this report):

- No single definition of what constitutes a college preparatory curriculum.
- No single definition of a math/English class
- Confusion over which courses will count for college admission
- No single high school grading system
- Grade inflation in response to higher standards and to qualify for a HOPE scholarship
- Course title inflation in response to higher standards
- No standard definition of honors classes
- Curriculum assessment on different planes for high school and college; one assessment has little or no relationship to the other
- Colleges question some high school accreditation
- No single definition of what constitutes a transcript

In order to address these and other concerns, several ways to enhance communication among educational actors have been developed in Georgia. Thus, the P-16 Council Initiative, the Post-Secondary Readiness Enrichment Program (PREP), and the Georgia Easy web site were established to provide information to all interested persons and to provide arenas of communication for the two year, four year, K-12, business, and community sectors. Such efforts attempt to bring different constituencies around the table to discuss common issues.

Georgia is the only state in the country with both state and local P-16 councils. Three activity strands comprise the P-16 councils: alignment of educational systems (preschool through college; with standards expected of students at each level); teacher quality (involving both teacher preparation and professional development); and with an elevation of educational standards, an alignment of expectations for students to move smoothly from pre-school through grade 16 (college graduation). The P-16 initiative sought to promote active and productive school (local level) and university relationships lacking in the past. The state council, housed in the system office, serves as an oversight unit with the local councils acting to communicate and implement policy changes. Currently, 15 councils exist across the state and act, among other things, as a mechanism to pilot new programs and procedures developed by the system office.

While many hail the importance of the P-16 Councils for their role in promoting cross-institutional communication to address common problems, there is some confusion as to what is and is not a P-16 project. "Turf" issues continue to arise. Some respondents talk about the P-16 initiative as "a university system baby."

The sweeping education reforms undertaken by Georgia has attracted national attention. Policy makers in many other states are recognizing the need to build efficient P-16 transitions for all students. For that reason, they are closely following the development of Georgia's multiple reform efforts.

Strengthening P-16 Transitions: The Georgia Case Background for Overall Study

Description of Policy Problem

The Problem. While educators and policymakers share the common goal of improving student performance, they often act in isolation; thus, efforts are sometimes conflicting or duplicated, and certain needs are sometimes never addressed. This is not the fault of a particular set of people or institutions. Rather, the current organization of secondary schools and universities is such that communication between levels is often difficult, if not impossible. Reform initiatives at different levels within the entire K-16 education system must be better integrated or the whole mission of increasing opportunities for all students for higher education could veer dangerously off course.

The lack of compatibility between K-12 and higher education policies and practices causes many problems. For instance, in the southeastern U.S., there are nearly 125 combinations of 75 different placement tests, oftentimes devised by university departments without enough regard to secondary school standards (Kirst, 1997). Entering first-year students know little about the content of these exams; this could lead to poor scores on placement exams and the need for remediation. Thus, the current array of policies may send vague and confusing signals to students about what is required to succeed at colleges and universities. Also, the signaling process utilized to inform students and their parents of higher education admission policies and practices is unequally distributed. This is particularly important given the demise of affirmative action practices in several states' public university systems.

Literature on higher education admission-related issues and the intersection between K-12 and higher education has posited that mixed policy signals and expectations can lead to an inability by students to perform well academically (Kirst, 1997; Bishop, 1996a; Powell, 1996). Bishop (1996b) stresses the need for good information, or signals, as an important part of incentive-building from a policy perspective. In addition to signaling that academic achievement matters in real life, another form of signaling is having credible and clear measures of academic performance. He writes that the behavior of students, teachers, parents, and others in the education system is dependent upon the incentives facing them. Those incentives depend on the reliability and cost of the signals set forth regarding the outputs of the system, such as graduating from high schools and entering higher education (Bishop, 1996a).

An underlying belief of this study is that, while higher education admissions-related policies are only one of many factors shaping students' college attendance decisions, if the state and other entities develop policies, they need to be clear, consistent, compatible, and systemic. Policies are designed, often, to affect people's behavior; consequently, it is essential to analyze the policy environment in the context of the practical and theoretical concerns to ensure that the policies contain positive incentives and are compatible. In addition, they need to be disseminated equitably to all stakeholders in order for all students to have equal access to all types of higher education opportunities.

Summary of Project. The Bridge Project is a five-year project funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the U.S. Department of Education. Project researchers are studying state-, higher education institutional-, high school-, and district-level K-16 transition policies in six states and the ways in which these policies are communicated to stakeholders. Such policies include institutional admission, placement, and remediation policies and high school exit-level standards (e.g., state assessments and graduation requirements). We intend to use project data to make cross-state comparisons among Georgia, California, Illinois, Maryland, Oregon, and Texas as we seek to understand the specific dynamics that operate in each state. States were chosen for inclusion in the study because they are all involved in innovative K-16 reforms. The Principal Investigator for the project is Michael Kirst, Stanford University Professor of Education and Associate Director of the Stanford Institute for Higher Education Research. A research team is assigned to each state.

Overall Project Purpose. The overarching purpose of the project is to improve opportunities for all students to enter and succeed in higher education by strengthening the alignment between higher education admissions-related requirements and K-12 curriculum frameworks and by improving the flow and content of K-12 transition policies. Our research aims to help educational entities and federal, state, and local agencies accomplish this goal by providing an analysis of relevant policies as well as disjunctures that exist in the current policy environment, the views and understandings of stakeholders, and ways to improve the current system.

Toward this end, we will formulate both short- and long-term policy and practice recommendations. We focus on ways to improve the delivery of information and policy signals for all students. The inclusion of the perspectives of many stakeholders in our data collection design (students, parents, educators and researchers, and other representatives from higher education institutions, school districts, and high schools) ensures that this project will provide rich contextual information on which to base policy recommendations, including a self-study protocol that other researchers, educators, and policymakers can use to assess such K-16 linkages in their own state.

Research Questions

This multi-state study addresses the following primary project research questions:

- What are the signals and incentives sent by existing higher education admissions and placement policies?
- What are the formal and informal higher education admissions-related policies?
- Who are the key decision-makers and policymakers regarding higher education admissions-related policies in each state?
- How compatible are those signals and incentives with K-12 exit-level standards and assessments?
- How are higher education admissions standards and placement policies communicated to, and interpreted by, secondary school-level educators, parents and students? Are there differences in the communication processes utilized by, and understandings of, different student subgroups?
- How might specific proposals to reform college admissions policies affect or improve current patterns of communications and signaling?

Methodology

In each state, field research was conducted in relevant state agencies; two public universities; and two or three school districts, including several high schools per district. In Texas, three middle and junior high schools were included as well. Honors and nonhonors classes were sampled in each school. The project mixes qualitative and quantitative methods in order to provide contextual information, in addition to specific individual-, classroom- and school-level data. The perspectives of major K-16 stakeholders are included. At the higher education level, university administrators, researchers, and faculty were interviewed, as were state agency personnel. At the K-12 level, students were surveyed and interviewed in focus groups, and their parents were surveyed. State agency personnel, district and school-level administrators, counselors, and teachers were interviewed. Similar questions were asked of each stakeholder group in order to compare and contrast responses and perspectives. Qualitative data were analyzed using NUD-IST software; survey data were analyzed using SPSS software

In each state, the study is proceeding in three phases, briefly described below:

Phase I is primarily a descriptive stage focused on defining and describing the current undergraduate admissions-related policies at the state-level and in the selected universities. In this phase, researchers gain an understanding of how admissions standards are set, how they evolve within institutions and state governments, and how they are operationalized by admissions officers and other institutional staff. Data were collected through document reviews and interviews with administrators and institutional researchers directly involved with the policies and processes we hope to understand. Phase I provides necessary contextual information for Phase II.

Phase II examines how the standards and policies developed and implemented by these states and institutions are understood, interpreted, and acted upon by parents, students, and secondary school and district personnel (the Texas study included junior high and middle school students as well). Data are collected through use of survey instruments and individual as well as group interviews.

Phase III utilizes the data from Phases I and II to assess recent admissions-related proposals to reform higher educational admissions standards, to analyze the status quo in the three states, and to propose recommendations for change.

This report presents Phase I research findings from an examination of state- and university-level higher education admissions and placement policies in Georgia. Higher education institutions included for discussion in this paper are: The University of Georgia at Athens, and the State University of West Georgia.

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Introduction

“Strong education governors have moved the state forward. Despite a few missteps, Georgia has put promising policies in place and now must resist efforts of some to reverse direction.”

Education Week on the Web, Quality Counts ‘97

Change within a dynamic political environment characterizes the educational reforms occurring in Georgia public education systems. This report provides a brief overview of the context of Georgia’s dramatic policy changes, followed by descriptions of educational reforms affecting postsecondary admissions and placement policies there. The importance of academic preparation for access to and success in higher education prompts a discussion of efforts to align K-12 and postsecondary reforms.

Organization of Postsecondary Education in Georgia

Georgia’s public system of higher education, referred to as the University System of Georgia (USG), is a unified system with constitutional autonomy. It is governed by the Georgia Board of Regents, appointed by the Governor, which oversees 34 institutions, including 4 research universities, 2 regional universities, 13 state universities and senior colleges, and 15 two-year colleges. One respondent notes that “we have 34 institutions in the system that are very different from each other.” One thing in common, though, is that there are no independent boards of trustees at each campus.

USG has set minimum standards for admission with an eye toward eliminating learning support (developmental studies) in all but the two-year institutions by the year 2001. Two-year colleges in USG function primarily as “junior colleges,” providing the first two years of the baccalaureate curriculum with some vocational programs. Not all communities have close access to a two-year college.

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The Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE) is a separate postsecondary sector with a governing board separate from that of USG, also appointed by the Governor. DTAE oversees 33 two-year technical institutes which offer applied associate degrees, certificates, and adult education programs. Technical institutes are placed throughout the state.

The Department of Education regulates public K-12 schools. There is substantial local autonomy within the school districts. The state superintendent is elected by popular vote while the board of education is appointed by the Governor.

Unique state initiatives: Two recent state initiatives highlighted in this report are the P-16 initiative and the HOPE scholarship.

*“Georgia and Maryland are the only states with statewide P-16 councils. Georgia is the only state with **state and local P-16 councils**. I knew that the state council was going to be very important but I also knew that if you did not have local councils nothing would happen. With the two together, the state could work on the impediments to reform that local partnerships wanted and needed to make.”*(State Official)

On July 1995, former Governor Miller appointed the Georgia P-16 Council. Georgia’s Pre-School-Postsecondary (P-16) partnership includes the USG, DTAE, State Department of Education, and the Office of School Readiness. The latter, a separate agency at the state level, oversees pre-school (funded by the state lottery monies providing cost free programs) and kindergarten education for students ages 4 through 6. The state level P-16 council has four co-chairs (for each of the partners noted above) rotating duties during the four meetings per year. The University System of Georgia is the fiscal agent. However, agenda building and coordination are handled by the Board of Regents and the Department of Education. Briefly, such initiatives are described as strategies “to reduce high postsecondary remediation among entering freshmen students who were recent high school graduates.” (Wallhaus, 1997). Most of the funding for the P-16 initiatives has come from private foundations. There are fifteen local P-16 councils. Some policy observers point out that while the P-16 initiative can be very influential and promote many excellent activities and programs, “it has no real power under Georgia’s state constitution.” (Cumming, p. 14)

Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) is a merit scholarship program initiated in 1993 by former Governor Zell Miller with oversight by the Georgia Student Finance Commission. According to a report from the California Higher Education Policy Center, “the HOPE scholarships are significant because they represent the first time the state has placed a high priority on attending college.” Many other states and nations are interested in emulating this initiative (Bracco, 1997, p.21). College participation rates and educational attainment rates in Georgia are low compared to the rest of the nation. Funded by state lottery proceeds, the HOPE scholarship covers full tuition, mandatory fees, and a book allowance for students who are Georgia residents, graduate with a B average from high school, and choose to attend a Georgia public college or university. By popular vote, the state constitution has been amended to insure that the “lottery fund would always be spent on free pre-kindergarten and student scholarships.”

Present Governor Barnes stated in a June 1999 speech, however, that despite all of the reforms in public education, “our progress in education has not been fast enough or good enough or bold enough.” Further change is in the making, beginning with the newly formed Governor’s Education Reform Study Commission.

State Context

Population and demographic changes

“The South and the West regions each grew by 1.4 percent during the 1993 to 1994 period, but the South grew by the largest amount of any region, expanding by 1.3 million persons. The Southern states of Texas, Florida, and Georgia ranked first, second, and fourth, respectively, in the nation in amount of population growth. Georgia was the South’s fastest growing state, growing by 2.2 percent during the 1993 to 1994 period.” (U.S. Census Bureau)

“We have a burgeoning growth pattern in Georgia. We are one of the top 10 growing states. If you look at it, we have a steep, steep exponential increase in the numbers of high school graduates that are predicted. Only Florida and Nevada and a couple of other states have a higher percentage of high school graduates through 2006, so we have a larger pool of students. We’re growing fast. We will have so many more persons in the applicant pool. I think we will have a different clientele. People who may have started at a four-year college may have to start at a two-year college. So, that is redistribution’s result.” (Study Respondent)

In 1998, the state was estimated to be home to 7.64 million people, ranking it tenth nationally. Further dramatic growth is forecast for the early years of the new century. Georgia grew by 2% (145,000 people) from 1995-1996. Georgia is one of five states with "consistently high rates of net in-migration from other states" (US Census, 1998, p. 2). This growth has persisted throughout the 1990s making it "the only nonwestern state to be found among the top 10 every year" (US Census Bureau, 1998, p. 11). The growth forecast for 1995-2025 indicates Georgia will grow by an additional 2.67% annually (Census, 1998).

According to one policy maker, historically, Georgia sold itself as a state of "cheap labor" to manufacturing companies. From this perspective, the movement of manufacturing to foreign labor markets forced Georgia's leaders to realign its focus on an educated labor market that would attract corporations. The metropolitan Atlanta area shows the greatest population growth and is second in the top 10 metropolitan areas with the greatest population changes from 1990-1996. Atlanta, host to the 1996 Olympic games, added 582,000 people during this six year period (US Census, 1998) and helped Georgia become one of the "most economically vibrant of the 50 states," (Richardson et al., 1999, p. 107). Atlanta is home to a number of major corporations, including Coca Cola, Delta Airlines, CNN and Turner Broadcasting, UPS, and Holiday Inn. Atlanta has also long hosted the regional headquarters of numerous other major corporations. The state's economy is best characterized as mixed, with a tilt toward the service sector and away from heavy industry. Despite the rapid growth of the state and a low per capita

income, Georgia reflects a "lower than average percentage of its population in poverty" (Richardson et al., 1999, p. 108).

Some individuals who relocate to Atlanta, referred to as "heavy-hitting professionals" (respondent comment), bring with them cultural differences and expectations from living in different regions of the United States and abroad. According to a respondent, the influx of outsiders may create a dynamic that redistributes the population of high school seniors into institutions that might serve as second or third options.

In addition, Georgia is growing in its racial and ethnic diversity, providing further educational challenges and opportunities. Georgia is a larger and far more diverse state than many recognize. Much of Georgia's growth has come from among groups not traditionally calling the state home. Although Georgia's two largest racial/ethnic groups are and have long been whites and African-Americans (comprising about 67% and 27% of the population, respectively), the Latino/Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander communities have recently experienced extraordinary growth. In 1997, their portions of the state's total population were estimated at 2.8% and 1.8%, respectively.

A visually striking example of this diversity may be found in Dekalb County, a large suburban area just outside the city limits of Atlanta. Dekalb is Georgia's most racially and ethnically diverse county, with approximately 10-15% of its population neither white nor African-American. A trip down several miles of Buford Highway in Dekalb is eye-opening. This busy four-lane road could easily be confused with a thoroughfare in Los Angeles. Signs in Japanese, Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese, and Spanish easily predominate over those in English, and the variety of services, foods, and other products available is impressive.

Of course, Georgia as a whole is not as racially/ethnically diverse as Texas, California, or even its closer neighbors Florida and Virginia. Still, the state's increasing diversity is educationally quite significant. As the state becomes increasingly cosmopolitan and its economy increasingly more global, Georgia is clearly facing a new era of educational challenges and opportunities.⁴

One hundred years ago, "Georgia had only seven public high schools, and for the vast majority of our children, access to elementary school, much less a college education, did not exist. Today, a hundred years later, education is, as it should be, our top priority." (Inaugural Address, Governor Roy E. Barnes, January 11, 1999)

The following paragraphs are from a dialogue between one study researcher and a study respondent. They speak about the state of education in Georgia. Their discussion reveals some of the complex educational issues, stemming from the changes described above, facing Georgia today. As in any policy environment, the context is far more complex than initially imagined.

⁴ Source for data reported: documents available at web sites of the State of Georgia (<http://www.state.ga.us/>) and the Bureau of the Census (<http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/state/>).

“Georgia has a history of lagging behind, and this is still a critical issue for Georgia. We have, well, of all students who start into first grade -- about 60 percent graduate from high school. About 40 percent of 9th graders don’t make it to high school graduation. We have a long way to go. We have caught up a lot in the last decade. Our baccalaureate attainment rate is quite a bit lower than the nation’s. In 1990 it was 19.3; the nation’s was 20 point something. The estimates are higher now. We would like to be higher than the national average.” (Respondent)

“Correct me if I am wrong, but my sense of Georgia is bimodal in the sense you have a lot of highly educated people and also poorly educated people who have dropped out before high school. You look at Atlanta and see a lot of people with Master’s or Ph.D.s. But at the same time, you have others who have never attended...(Researcher)

“Right, this (pointing to a map) shows in 1990 the people without a high school diploma. Historically in Georgia, there was heavy growth in agriculture in this part of the state in the last century and so there is a legacy of lack of education. It is just dramatic. But then as you move through, it changes. A college degree centers around a metropolitan area. You are exactly right; there is a lot of variation in the state. That is one of our challenges.” (Respondent)

“On one domain, you look at Atlanta and see a high proportion of people with a college degree. Likewise you can paint it as terribly impoverished educationally.” (Researcher)

“In some counties, half the population has not graduated from high school. A large population has not achieved a fifth grade education. Some counties in west Georgia are among the poorest counties with the lowest rates in the nation. That is truly a challenge. We just concluded a task force called Hispanic Task Force. We had a dramatic growth in the Latino population in Georgia in the last 5 years. Many of Latinos came in with the Olympics and some are undocumented. Most are not. But we have educational attainment challenges among that population and the high school completion rates are less than 50 percent for Latinos right now. Georgia has no history of having minorities other than African Americans, which are a very large minority population.

That is one issue we are trying to address because many students came into Georgia as underage children of undocumented workers. Concerning the law surrounding how students get into college, they are kept out of college. There was a legal movement to become documented. That amnesty law will enable them to become documented in 2006, so that leaves a number of years in which we will be losing a large number of talented students who will not be eligible to come into the university system. If a student’s name is on this list as will be documented, then they could get into the university system. We don’t know how this would work.

Many came in as workers for the Olympics in several areas of the states. In North Georgia, there are corporations that brought in a lot of workers. Some are documented. One school district had very few people to around 2,000 Hispanic students six years ago and now there are over 6,000. There are no Hispanic teachers or teachers with Spanish

as a language ten years ago in that county. A school official went to Monterrey and recruited 20 bilingual women to come to Georgia (and this is the middle of the mountains) to make a difference.” (Researcher)

“There are overlaps with issues usually associated with Texas and California. So there are similar issues regarding internationalism and multiculturalism.” (Respondent)

State Context: Higher Education Finance and the Hope Scholarship

Education is a top priority for economic growth in Georgia, given its rapid population growth and the location of large corporations, needing a skilled workforce, in the state. Described by the Georgia State Finance Commission as "leading the way in access to education," Georgia provides financial programs to assist students in attending some form of postsecondary education. The National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP) showed that "Georgia distributes more than twice as much merit-based financial aid to students seeking education beyond high school than any other state. The study also showed that Georgia has the highest percentage of undergraduate students receiving scholarship and grant aid", (Georgia State Finance Commission Annual Report, 1998). Table 1.1 shows the distribution of merit-based aid to students. Due to the distribution of state-based financial aid programs, Georgia also leads other states in the percentage of undergraduate students supported (see table 1.2).

<u>State</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Georgia	\$183.7M
Florida	\$75.1M
Ohio	\$41.8M
North Carolina	\$28.8M
Illinois	\$26M
Virginia	\$21 M
Missouri	\$12.9M
Colorado	\$11.2M
Louisiana	\$9.5M
New Jersey	\$8.5M

Table 1.1. Top Ten States in Merit-Based Aid to Students, 1996-97, source: Georgia State Finance Commission Annual Report, 1998 (drawing from National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs data).

Top Ten	
Georgia	76.6%
Vermont	50.5%
New Jersey	48.1 %
New York	47.1 %
Ohio	44.5%
Pennsylvania	39.3%
Illinois	37.1 %
Maine	35.7%
District of Columbia	35.4%
New Mexico	35.3%

Table 1.2. Percentage of Full-Time Undergraduates Receiving Scholarship and Grant Aid from State Programs, 1996-97, source: Georgia State Finance Commission Annual Report, 1998 (drawing from National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs data).

The HOPE Scholarship - "Georgia's GI Bill" (Richardson et al., 1999, p. 113).

"... We will make you this pledge—to expand the promise offered by HOPE Scholarships into hope throughout our entire school system, from kindergarten through high school as well as to those in college." (Inaugural Address, Governor Roy E. Barnes, January 11, 1999)

Former Governor Zell Miller, a product of Appalachia, believed that if a student works hard, he or she should be rewarded. At the higher education level, he initiated as that reward a scholarship that covers tuition, fees, and books. The HOPE (Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally) scholarship offers the opportunity for a college education for all the residents of Georgia provided they earn a “B” average in high school and maintain the same average throughout college. HOPE was initiated because Miller believed a college education would provide a better quality of life for those who believed that higher education lies outside the realm of possibility and as an incentive to encourage talented students to remain in the state for their postsecondary education. Funding for HOPE originated from the development and implementation of a state lottery system that would provide funds for the HOPE scholarship, pre-kindergarten education, and an educational technology initiative. The following statement from the HOPE Program Summary, demonstrates the commitment to both academic achievement and access to postsecondary education that is the promise of HOPE.

"Georgia's HOPE Scholarship Program—entirely funded by the Georgia lottery—helps provide a public, private or technical college education to hard-working Georgia students with no cost to taxpayers. The HOPE Program works in the following way:

*For students interested in attending a Georgia **Public College or University**, the HOPE Scholarship provides tuition, mandatory fees and a \$150 per semester book allowance. To be eligible, a student must be a Georgia resident, a 1993 or later high school*

graduate and have completed high school with a "B" average. Students must maintain a "B" average in college.

*Georgia's HOPE Scholarship provides eligible students wishing to attend a Georgia **Private College or University** a \$3,000 per academic school year scholarship. These students also receive a \$1,000 Georgia Tuition Equalization Grant. To be eligible, a student must be a Georgia resident, a 1996 or later high school graduate and have completed high school with a "B" average. Students must maintain a "B" average in college.*

*Students wishing to attend a Georgia **Public Technical Institute** are provided tuition, mandatory fees and a \$100 per quarter book allowance. Georgia students enrolled in diploma and certificate programs are eligible regardless of their high school graduation date or grade average. A student enrolled in a degree program must be a Georgia resident, a 1993 or later high school graduate and have completed high school with a "B" average. Students must maintain a "B" average in a degree program" (Program Summary).*

Table 1.3 indicates participation in and expenditures for the HOPE program since its inception in 1993. Clearly, the data show an upward trend in expenditures and individuals who receive the grants. What the trends do not indicate is the number of students initially awarded scholarships who are able to keep these scholarships in succeeding years.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Georgia Students</u>	<u>HOPE Scholarships</u>
1993-94	42,807	\$21.4 million
1994-95	98,439	83.8 million
1995-96	123,132	133.9 million
1996-97	128,452	153.4 million
1997-98	136,725	173.3 million

Table 1.3. Total number of students earning Georgia's HOPE Scholarship and total paid out by year. (Georgia State Finance Commission, Annual Report, 1998).

The HOPE scholarship promises a brighter economic and social future for Georgians. Georgia State Finance Commission representatives believe that the rapid in-migration experienced in Georgia is partly attributed to the HOPE scholarship. For example, some individuals work in Chattanooga, Tennessee but live across the border in northern Georgia, a type of "local in-migration" or, as described by a respondent, "false in-migration." Local residents who relocate in Georgia to take advantage of free tuition, fees, and books, however, do not represent the same cultural pressures and changes that may occur when individuals and corporations from other regions of the country relocate to participate in an economically growing metropolitan area. Governor Barnes states that "you don't have to be told that others have discovered the good life we have here, because you know about the waves of new folks moving here from other states, and from other countries. We are the third fastest growing state in the

nation for a reason, adding a million new people each decade," (from his speech to the Education Reform Study Commission, June 7, 1999).

Some Concerns About HOPE

What will it take for Georgia policy makers to reconsider the HOPE scholarship? One fundamental issue concerns the University of Georgia. UGA became "suddenly selective" prior to the system's institution of increased academic standards. It becomes more selective as high school students with stellar academic credentials remain in Georgia and as some relocate to Georgia and apply for admission at UGA. Thus, more students that might have been admitted before are now being rejected by UGA. Historical legacies, in particular, may not be perpetuated given the changes described here. Another concern is why do some students receive a HOPE Scholarship during their first year of college (based on high school grades) and lose HOPE their second year (based on college performance)? Possible reasons include the inflation of high school grades by teachers who wish to see students succeed. Another possible explanation is that high schools do not prepare students as effectively as they should to attend and succeed in college.

"Second-Chance Opportunity for Students to Regain HOPE:

HOPE is a reward for scholastic achievement and an incentive to continue working hard in school. If you fall below a 3.0 cumulative grade point average after attempting 30 semester (45 quarter) hours, you may continue your sophomore year at your own expense. Then, if you earn a 3.0 cumulative grade point average at the end of your sophomore year (60 semester or 90 quarter hours attempted), you will be given a second chance to receive a HOPE Scholarship for your junior year, with the opportunity to renew the scholarship for your senior year," (Georgia State Finance Commission, Annual Report, 1998).

An unintended consequence of HOPE described by study respondents, is that it *"decimated the junior colleges. A lot of the students who would have stayed local, worked at Burger King, saved money and gone to junior college are now going to Athens as a freshmen because it is going to be free. It redistributed the campus enrollments. Secondly, the HOPE scholarship took students from the junior colleges even without a B average, students could go to the Tech schools for free. So it took both the top ends and bottom ends of the junior colleges."*

Upon further discussion of the HOPE program with Georgia educators, another observation was made: *"One of the things if you look at the largest numbers of HOPE dollars and where they are going. It's to the University of Georgia. It has to do with size. Almost 100 percent of UGA's freshmen class will come in with HOPE and two-thirds will retain it. But if you look at where the greatest number of people are using the HOPE scholarship -- it is in the technical and adult education area."* The bottom line, according to Bugler and Henry (1998), is that *"HOPE gives Georgia students more incentive to improve their academic performance, and more students are meeting the challenge."* (p.1).

State Leadership and Governance: Educational Intersections and Linkages

A highly centralized system of governance for higher education distinguishes Georgia from most other states. Georgia's system of higher education is unified and has constitutional autonomy. The strengths include: coordinated leadership, unified board, and constitutional provisions such as: 1) the control and management of the system shall be vested in the Board of Regents and 2) all money must be given in a lump sum with the allocation left up to the Board of Regents. However, Georgia's governor maintains both "line-item veto authority" (Richardson et al., 1999, p. 108) and appointment powers. In fact, according to a respondent, "in this state, the governor is the key to everything in education. We have an elected school superintendent... The DTAE commissioner and board are appointed by the governor and Pre-K is appointed. The Governor calls the shots, does the funding."

Serving as lieutenant governor for 16 years, Zell Miller was elected to serve his first term in 1990 and re-elected in 1994. Miller's campaign platform included the promise to establish a state lottery used solely for financing education in the state. The lottery provides the funds for pre-kindergarten at-risk children, technology, and the HOPE scholarships that have become a model for other state scholarship programs. Miller hoped to increase access and participation to educational programs in Georgia. His appointments to the University System of Georgia (USG) Board of Regents and budget authority had contributed to his description as an "education governor" (Richardson et al., 1999, p. 108).

The relationship between state government, the university system of Georgia (USG) and the State Board of Education provides a unique opportunity for both researchers and policy-makers to explore the powerful dynamics that govern educational policy. The role of the system is to provide strategic planning leadership (Richardson et al., 1999). Generally, Georgia institutional presidents remain removed from the interface between the legislature and the system office enabling the Chancellor to play a crucial political role.

The synergistic relationship between former Governor Zell Miller and the USG Chancellor, Steven Portch, set the stage for the dramatic changes in postsecondary academic standards that pervade Georgia's school systems. Portch determined that the development of system-wide standards would ensure that Georgia institutions serve both the state and the students in positive ways. The approaches by both Miller and Portch rest upon the foundation of academic excellence and achievement. However, there are many ways to approach these goals.

"Let us come to the table and pool our best ideas, let us bring our best-hearted intentions, and let us steel up our best resolve to ensure for our children tomorrow a better system of public education than we find today." (Governor Roy Barnes, June 7, 1999)

The changing of the guard and policy shifts. The election of a new governor created shifts in approaches to educational reform in Georgia. Governor Roy Barnes created an educational study commission to concentrate on reforms in K-12 education. The original Quality Basic Education Act of 1985 promised a "comprehensive revision of kindergarten, primary, and secondary education in Georgia." (see www.ganet.org/governor/education/exeorder.html). Barnes' agenda

includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of this act. However, Governor Barnes' creation of the Education Commission also signals a fundamental shift from Pre-K and higher education to K-12 in educational priorities. He believes that reform requires an urgent push for educational effectiveness. A policy maker makes these observations:

"Miller was definitely an education governor. Pre-K, HOPE scholarship, teacher pay raises, 6% a year the last 4 years, and strengthening the university system. All due respect to him, he left a few problems on the table. We are here to take the next step forward. And the big problem we are confronting is that the results in K-12 are poor. The report says that 45 percent of our 4th graders cannot read at a basic level. Teacher salaries are up, though. But look at our kids who cannot read. We just instituted a graduation exam here and scored it at the ninth grade level. Thirty five percent of our kids cannot pass it after 2 years of trying. So it is difficult. We think there should be a link between spending more money and getting more results. If you look at Pre-K, we need to expand it because this anecdotal evidence shows the kids who need it the most don't go. We don't have a requirement that they have to go to a pre-K or a kindergarten, so theoretically the kids can show up in first grade never having set foot in a school. The first grade teacher has to deal with that. It is not a pretty picture. In that sense, Governor Barnes is going to pick up where Governor Miller left off."

Concern about change and about the unknown are expressed in some interviews but comments from a higher education observer, responding to such concerns, provides the perspective of opportunity: "The legislature makes the law. I would like to see our [postsecondary sector] group be instrumental in shaping this law [whatever it might be]. You need to craft it."

SAT Scores, Student achievement, Educational Effectiveness

" Today, Georgia ranks 49th in the nation in SAT scores. The professional excuse-makers say, "Oh, that's OK. That's only because so many students take the test." Well, I'm sick of excuses." (Governor Roy Barnes, June 7, 1999)

One respondent in the USG office would contradict Barnes' assertion by stating that "we had a sharp increase in persons scoring high on the SAT in 1997 in Georgia...we have far more at the upper end and far fewer at the lower end...to some degree, we attribute that to the HOPE scholarship". However, the respondent also did report that:

"when you look at our SATs we are below the national average, and historically we have been at the bottom tier, often at the bottom...The only SAT scorers that are very high are on the east coast or west coast...everyone in the midwest takes the ACT so nearly half of all students take the ACT...we have the highest proportion of high school students taking the SAT...some students who don't intend to go to college are going to take that test and bring down the average...we also require students who go to the two year colleges take the SAT...there are a lot of states who don't require junior college students to take the SAT test."

Although the SAT scores are increasing in Georgia, the political perception is that students do not achieve and there is a lot of evidence to support this concern. For example, in his on June 7, 1999 speech to the Education Reform Study Commission, Governor Barnes reported that Georgia third grade students, when compared with third grade students across the nation, are in the 53rd percentile in reading comprehension on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. He went on to report several other measures by which Georgia students were lacking when compared to the rest of the nation. However, it appears that policy makers view SAT scores as a measure of K-12 effectiveness and there are valid concerns about this perception. The difficulty with the politicization of the SAT as a measure of educational effectiveness is that the rankings across the states in scores do not reflect a weighting system for the numbers of students who take the test. Thus, Georgia is compared to a state like Minnesota where only students interested in attending east or west coast schools take the test and they may already be the higher performers within the state of Minnesota. The bottom line prompting all of the present activity in educational reform is summed up by one respondent: “While support for education has doubled in twenty years, performance hasn't.”

Structure of the Governor’s Education Reform Study Commission

"I have drawn equally from the private, public and education sectors. I have intentionally steered away from those who come to the table with political agendas or preconceived notions..."

I am counting on this group to shake up the educational system as it exists today in Georgia. We have been able to put together a group of people who are both experienced with and devoted to educational issues, and I know that they will be able to develop sound ideas that will help restore public confidence in our schools.”
(Governor Roy Barnes)

The Commission is chaired by Governor Barnes and is comprised of 64 representatives throughout Georgia. Table 1.4 shows the board composition according to sector and the representation of each sector.

Sector	Number	Percentage
Governor, Chair	1	1
Business Leaders	21	33
Legislators	18	28
K-12 Administrators, teachers	13	20
Higher Education – includes chancellor, administrators, technical institutes, Board of Regents	11	17

Table 1.4. Representation of individuals on the Governor's Education Commission
[<http://www.ganet.org/governor/edreform.html>]

The Chancellor, the State Department of Education Superintendent, and the Commissioner for the Department of Technical and Adult Education (all included in the table) serve as Ex-officio members on the commission and do not have voting privileges. The commission first met in June and plans three additional meetings before the final report is due to the governor on December 1, 1999.

The commission is comprised of four committees: Accountability, Funding, School Climate, and Seamless Education. Each group is charged with answering overall questions regarding issues pertinent to that specific committee.

"Accountability: How should school systems, schools, and personnel be accountable for student achievement?"

Funding: What changes are needed in the QBE [Quality Based Education] funding formula and associated categorical grants? How can state funding components for the Department of Technical and Adult Education be defined in a formula? Is the current method of funding construction projects for the Board of Regents, Technical and Adult Education, and local school systems efficient and effective?"

School Climate: How can we make the school environment a place where teachers and students can perform and achieve at their best?"

www.ganet.org/governor/education/exeorder.html.

The final committee, Seamless Education, is examined in greater detail below because it is the focus of this report. Two essential issues drive the activities of this committee: coordination between k-12 and higher education and, as an observer noted above, cooperation between pre-kindergarten and k-12. These respondents speak about some possibilities for smoother transitions:

"...this commission will look at high schools, particularly vocational courses to mesh better with the technical schools. We are going to look at how the technical schools and the two-year colleges can better mesh. We will also look at more fully at the issue of how each of those can better mesh with four year colleges..."

For example, [one two-year college] has a certain occupational program and we have technical schools miles away offering [the same program]...The citizen needs to go where they can get the training. Why drive thirty minutes to get it over there when it is in this building right here. We need [not only] to share facilities. We need to give the green light for technical schools to get college credit. Of course that sets up a lot of problems...The tech schools have to beg for every additional faculty member. It is an archaic system. They have to make the case for it. I don't mean this as a negative but all the regents have to do is post a sign, point to their enrollment, and they get more."
(Respondent 1)

"We still have not gotten the word out enough regarding HOPE is available to anyone who wants to go to a technical school regardless of grades...If you have a heartbeat and a GED or high school diploma, that is it. It is called a HOPE grant for the technical

schools; it is called a HOPE scholarship for the colleges...One of the key issues in our area is 12th grade is kind of a wasted year especially for people who are not going to college. We have to get people tied in with the tech schools. They have to use high school to allow them to make a clear transition to that.” (Respondent 2)

When asked to list the most important issues the Seamless Education committee is dealing with, these study participants agree: “The most doable and key task in short term is the transferability of credits between the two-year colleges and technical schools...In the long term, we would like everybody to go to college and get a degree.”

Table 1.5 reports issues and subissues currently under study by the seamless education team.

<p>School System /Postsecondary Team</p>	<p>How can coordination and cooperation between high schools and postsecondary institutions be improved?</p>	<p>Subissue 1. What changes should be made to facilitate the movement of students between high schools and postsecondary institutions? Subissue 2. How can postsecondary institutions become more involved in delivering instructional services for high schools? Subissue 3. Should our high school graduation requirements be revised to allow for more options after graduation and reduce the barriers for students moving from one "track" to another? Subissue 4. How can we improve the perception of technical schools and their career opportunities, especially in comparison with college enrollment and careers? Subissue 5. How can we improve and expand the formal reporting process from the postsecondary institutions back to the high schools, school systems, and DOE regarding student achievement and/or deficiencies?</p>
<p>Technical Schools/Two-Year Colleges Team</p>	<p>How can coordination and cooperation between two-year colleges and technical institutes be improved?</p>	<p>Subissue 1. How can state resources be used more effectively and efficiently by coordinating the use of facilities and the delivery of educational programs and services jointly and cooperatively through technical institutes and two-year colleges? Subissue 2. How can the transferability of course credits between technical institutes and colleges be improved and expanded?</p>
<p>School</p>	<p>How can coordination</p>	<p>Subissue 1. How can our information</p>

System/School System Team	and cooperation among local school systems and between school systems and Pre-K be improved?	<p>systems on students, educational personnel, schools, school systems, and educational programs be improved and linked?</p> <p>Subissue 2. How can increased cooperation among schools and school districts be improved in the sharing of resources, information, facilities, and expertise?</p> <p>Subissue 3. How can the movement of students from one district to another be facilitated without students losing credits, repeating courses or being far behind as a result of the move? How can this be accomplished without lowering standards or slowing down advancement of students in the systems moving their curriculum development ahead aggressively?</p> <p>Subissue 4. How can the Pre-Kindergarten program be strengthened? How can we help to make the transition from Pre-Kindergarten to Kindergarten as seamless as possible? How can we ensure that students entering kindergarten are prepared?</p>
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Table 1.5. Issues and subissues of the Seamless Education Committee of Georgia's Education Commission (<http://www.ganet.org/governor/education/seamless.html>).

Department of Education (DOE)⁵.

The Department of Education regulates the public K-12 schools. There is notable local autonomy within the school districts. The state superintendent is elected by popular vote while the board of education is appointed by the Governor.

Georgia is currently home to a total of 1843 PK-12 schools. Of that total, 1161 are preK-elementary schools, 341 are middle schools, 331 are high schools, and 10 are “all purpose” K-12 schools. The public school system is more extensive than that in many states, in that Georgia was the first state to offer a voluntary pre-kindergarten program to all four-year olds. This Georgia initiative has been a model for a number of other states.

In spring, 1999, the state’s public PK-12 education system had a total enrollment of 1,390,231. Of that total, were 770,904 students classified as white and 526,801 students classified as African-American. Of the remaining students, 48,801 were Latino/Hispanic (3.5%), 28,070

⁵ Source for data reported: documents available at the State of Georgia’s web site (<http://www.state.ga.us/>) and the web site of the state’s Department of Education (<http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/>), plus the “Quality Counts” Report Card of Education Week, 1997.

were Asian/Pacific Islander (2.0%), and 16,375 were American Indian or classified as multi-racial (1.0%). Just over one percent of the total enrolled students were in programs providing instruction in English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Most sources suggest these percentages and numbers will continue to grow, as the state's prosperous economy attracts increasing numbers of people from other states and nations.

Georgia's initiatives in education (e.g., the Hope Scholarship, the voluntary pre-school program) have attracted substantial attention nationwide, but the state has inconsistent ratings in key indicators of educational quality. Test scores tend to be in the bottom quartile of states across all K-12 grades. For example, in 1997, only 26% of fourth graders were rated as proficient readers on the NAEP, and only 13% of eighth graders were rated as proficient in math. State leaders take some pride in the fact that Georgia's national test results, although still relatively low, have improved somewhat in the past few years. Still, more than one respondent, in telling us about state students' scores on standardized tests of ability and achievement, commented wryly, "Thank God for Alabama and Mississippi."

On the other hand, the Quality Counts Report Card of Education Week for 1997 rated Georgia well ahead of Florida, North Carolina, and the state's other southern neighbors in school climate; standards and assessment for students, schools, and teachers; quality of teaching; resource adequacy; and procedures for resource allocation. The state's procedures for providing resource equity were also rated above average relative to both other southern states and national averages.

Thus, the public educational system in Georgia presents a decidedly mixed picture. Among policy makers and educational leaders, the state is often hailed (and sometimes lambasted) as an innovator. No one could argue that education has been a low priority for recent leaders in the state. Yet progress in the educational outcomes of students is coming only slowly.

Georgia's Testing Programs

Georgia's testing programs provide a comprehensive perspective of students' educational achievement from kindergarten through high school. School law code 20-2-281, requires an assessment program that includes both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced instruments to determine educational effectiveness. As noted in the code, norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests provide different types of information about student achievement.

The administration of nationally norm-referenced assessments provides students, teachers, and parents with grade equivalencies and percentile ranks whereas criterion-referenced tests yield results about learning and mastery of the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) at the student, classroom, school, system, and state levels. With the recent adoption of Georgia's QCC by the State Board of Education in November 1997, the state's testing programs will be evaluated to ensure that they reflect important curricular changes.

The Georgia High School Graduation Tests are being revalidated to ensure alignment with the QCC and a "pass/plus" proficiency level is being created.

Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests are being developed to assess the teaching and learning of core courses taught via the QCC.

These tests will yield individual diagnostic information for students, teachers, and parents throughout the academic year. The revision of the Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Program (GKAP-R) is in progress and is aligned with the QCC. The GKAP-R will be operational in the fall of 1998, and will provide diagnostic information for the determination of first-grade readiness and Special Instructional Assistance (SIA) identification.

The full breadth of Georgia's testing programs include norm-referenced testing at grades three, five, and eight; performance-based writing assessments at grades three, five, eight, and eleven; the revised Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Program (GKAP-R); the Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGTs) at grades eleven and twelve; Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCTs) in grades four, six, and eight; and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a mandated assessment program, at grades four and eight. Incentives and provisions are also provided through state funding for the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT), and Advanced Placement (AP) exams.

Norm-Referenced Testing

Georgia's Quality Basic Education Act (QBE) requires norm-referenced testing at selected grades to determine how Georgia's students compare with performance of students in a national reference group. To ensure that Georgia's students have mastered the concepts, knowledge, and skills that are universally required of all students, the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) Complete Battery is administered. Major content areas of reading, language, mathematics, social studies, science, maps and diagrams at grades three, five, and eight are assessed.

Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT)

The Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT), published by The College Board, is a practice test for tenth and eleventh grade students planning to take the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT). This year, the practice exams will be offered at no charge to tenth graders who want to take the SAT. By enabling students to take the PSAT, the state provides information to students about courses and preparation needed for success on the SAT and in college-level coursework. Use of the PSAT Summary of Answers provides invaluable information to students, teachers, and parents in relation to identifying strengths and weaknesses to improve SAT performance. Utilization of information from the PSAT provides an opportunity to engage students in additional courses and activities that can increase their potential success on the SAT.

Advanced Placement (AP)

The state will offer, at no charge, Advanced Placement (AP) tests to measure results of Advanced Placement courses. By offering these exams free of charge, it is intended to stimulate an increase in the percentage of students taking AP courses and exams. Students taking more AP

coursework and exams will be better prepared for post-secondary scholarship and will exempt more of the first level courses in college.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) congressionally mandated program. NCES reports information about national student performance in terms of what students know and what they can do in the content areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and science at grades four, eight, and twelve. The NAEP is administered every two years. The testing sessions are limited to 1.5 to 2 hours. Students are randomly selected to participate in the testing program, and there is no reporting of individual student or school level information. This year, Georgia's NAEP testing was in February, with reading administered at grade four and reading and writing at grade eight.

Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT)

The four content area graduation tests (Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies) will continue to be administered annually to Georgia's eleventh and twelfth graders as a requirement for students seeking a Georgia high school diploma. With the recent adoption by the State Board of Education of the QCC, all content area graduation tests will undergo a revalidation to ensure curricular alignment. A student test data management system is also being considered to provide systems and schools on-line access to test results. Future plans also include the creation of proficiency levels ranging from a "basic" passing score to a "pass/plus" proficiency score.

Writing Assessment

Georgia's performance-based writing assessments are administered to students in grades three, five, eight, and eleven. Student writings are evaluated on a developmental stage scoring scale in grades three and five to provide diagnostic feedback to teachers, students, and parents about individual performance. The eighth grade and high school graduation writing assessments yield a scale score and percent passing rate. The eighth grade assessment provides predictive information to eighth graders about their future writing performance in advance of taking the high school graduation tests required to receive a diploma. A pilot of the middle grades writing assessment (grade eight) was conducted in February 1998. The pilot of the middle grades assessment will determine if nudges and pre-writing organizing activities assist students in focusing on the assessment topic and improve writing performance. All writing assessments are currently being reviewed for alignment to the QCC. There is no plan at this time to provide an on-line administration of Georgia's writing assessments.

Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Program (GKAP)

The GKAP-R revision is in progress with an operational testing program available to schools in the fall. The revised GKAP-R is a performance-based assessment that, when completed, will provide a rich source of information to teachers and parents about kindergarten performance--yielding assessment information for SIA identification and first-grade readiness.

Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT)

With the revision of the QCC, and adoption in November 1997, the need for competency tests to measure the state's curriculum is evident. Senate Bill 11 (20-2-281) states that "Following the adoption of this revised curriculum, the State Board of Education shall contract for development of criterion-referenced tests to measure the Quality Core Curriculum and such tests shall be administered to students in three grades not lower than grade three. This action shall be completed within two years." The Department of Education's testing rule further delineates the development of the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCTs) in the following: "The Georgia Department of Education shall develop criterion-referenced competency tests for the core courses required of all Georgia students. These tests shall be administered periodically as students complete units of study. The results shall be individually reported to be used for diagnostic, remedial and enrichment purposes."

Consistent with Senate Bill 11, and the philosophy underlying the Georgia High School Graduation Tests, current plans include the development of competency assessments in Mathematics, English/Language Arts and Reading, with Social Studies and Science to follow. A large repository of competency items will be developed to measure the content standards and strands of the QCC. The purpose of the CRCT program is dual and strives to: a) provide diagnostic information about individual students as well as program strengths and weaknesses in relation to the QCC; and b) provide accountability for the State in the form of aggregate data at different levels of interest (i.e., school, system, state). Based on a plethora of broad-based information from focus groups conducted across the state, assessments are planned for grades four, six, and eight. The overall design of the program will be to measure cumulative knowledge and skills spanning grades one to eight. Evidence of student mastery will be derived from assessments of content clusters that span grades one through four, five and six, and seven and eight.

The competency item banks for core subjects will be provided on the Internet and accessible to schools and teachers on an "as needed" basis. Teachers may test competencies at the end of units, chapters, etc. to assess students' knowledge and skills to provide valuable diagnostic, remedial, and enrichment information throughout the school year. Another part of the item banking system will be accessible to students for practice, remediation, and enrichment. A wide variety of item formats will be constructed for use in the classroom. The item formats will include, but are not limited to: multiple-choice, constructed-response, performance activities and tasks, and problem simulations. A third component of the competency item banking system will be a highly secure portion of the bank that will be used exclusively to create standardized, summative, end-of-year assessments for State accountability purposes. Only results from the standardized and secure portion of the bank will be reported to the State. Scores from the item bank provided in the classroom for teachers and students can be calculated and reported immediately to provide diagnostic information about student progress. Scores for State accountability will be electronically sent to the State before final release of information and reporting.

Student profiles indicating levels of mastery for strands within content areas may be generated from the computer periodically for formative information throughout the school year, and

summative and performance mastery reports (e.g., mastery, partial-mastery, non-mastery) will be provided by the State at the end of the year. The eighth grade assessment will provide predictive information to students and teachers about future success on the Georgia High School Graduation Tests as well as early identification of students in need of assistance.

The overriding goal of Georgia's testing programs is to provide the State's students, educators, and public with valid, timely, and usable information regarding student mastery of the curriculum. The major purpose of any state mandated, large-scale assessment program is to gauge the effectiveness of the instruction delivered at the student, classroom, building, system, and state levels. With the recent revision of the QCC, Georgia has developed an outstanding resource that will directly impact the instruction students receive on a daily basis. The testing programs, both operational and in development, will enhance and ensure the successful implementation of the curriculum by providing comprehensive information, spanning all grade levels, regarding student achievement. The seamless integration of Georgia's curriculum and testing programs creates a unique and beneficial opportunity for all involved in educating students.⁶

University System of Georgia

"In the Fall of 1995, the 34 institutions comprising USG [University System of Georgia] enrolled more than 206,000 students, making it the fourth largest public system of higher education in the country", (Richardson et al., 1999, p. 110).

As far as enrollment, we have increased headcount from 170,000 to over 200,000 since 1989. We have a steep increase. It was 172,190 in 1989 to 200,102 in 1998. We had semester conversion this fall 1998 so we had a slight drop in enrollment. We know that this is going to change. (Study Respondent)

The University System of Georgia (USG), created in 1931, encompasses 34 public institutions statewide under the governance of the Board of Regents. The 34 institutions include 4 universities, 2 regional universities, 13 state universities, and 15 associate degree colleges (Information Digest, 1995-1997). The Board of Regents, appointed by the Governor, elects the Chancellor as the system's chief executive officer and chief administrative officer. The University System maintains an Advisory Council that recommends educational and administrative policies and changes to the Regents. One representative per institution serves on this Council. A Student Advisory Council acts as a forum for student-related issues represents students.

The University of Georgia Undergraduate bulletin (1999-2000) describes the Regents and the system as follows: " A 16-member constitutional Board of Regents—one from each of the state's 11 Congressional Districts and five from the state-at-large—governs the University System which was established in 1931. Board members are appointed by the Governor, subject to state senate confirmation, for seven-year terms. The Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson, and

⁶ Source of information for Georgia's testing programs: <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/sla/ret/recotest.html>

other officers of the Board are elected by its membership. The Chancellor, who is not a Board member, is the chief executive officer of the Board and chief administrative officer of the University System" (1). Furthermore, "overall programs and services of the University System are offered through three major components: Instruction; Public Service/Continuing Education; Research. Board of Regents' policies for government, management and control of the University System and the Chancellor's administrative actions provide institutions a high degree of autonomy. The President is the executive head of each institution and is recommended by the Chancellor and appointed by the Board" (p.1).

Additionally, the system maintains a "University System Advisory Council, with 34 committees, engendering continual dialogue on major academic and administrative matters and makes recommendations to the Chancellor, who transmits them to the Board as appropriate, regarding academic and administrative operations in the System. The Council consists of the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor, and all Presidents as voting members. It includes other officials of institutions as nonvoting members. The Council's 21 academic and 13 administrative committees are composed of institutional representatives, typically one from each unit, and deal with matters of systemwide application" (p.2).

The institutions that operate within USG are divided into categories: research universities, regional universities, state universities and senior colleges, and two-year colleges. DeKalb College maintains the largest enrollment of the two-year institutions with 16,000 students. The regional universities were created in 1990 to accommodate those in south Georgia who demanded a full university. The two-year colleges in Georgia provide the first two years of a baccalaureate curriculum (Richardson et al., 1999).

University System of Georgia

Admissions and Placement Policies: A System View (see Figure 1)

The key differences between old and new requirements are:

- The University System of Georgia College Preparatory Curriculum is required for admission to public colleges and universities in Georgia.
- A fourth college prep unit in math has been added to bring the total number of college prep units required to 16.
- Eligibility for admission also will be determined by a Freshman Index or FI. The FI is based on a student's SAT or ACT score and high school core grade point average -- or HSGPA (the HSGPA is calculated only on the 16 college prep units required for all students.)
- There also are minimum SAT/ACT score requirements.
SAT minimum score - verbal is 430; math is 400.

ACT minimum score - English is 17; math is 17.

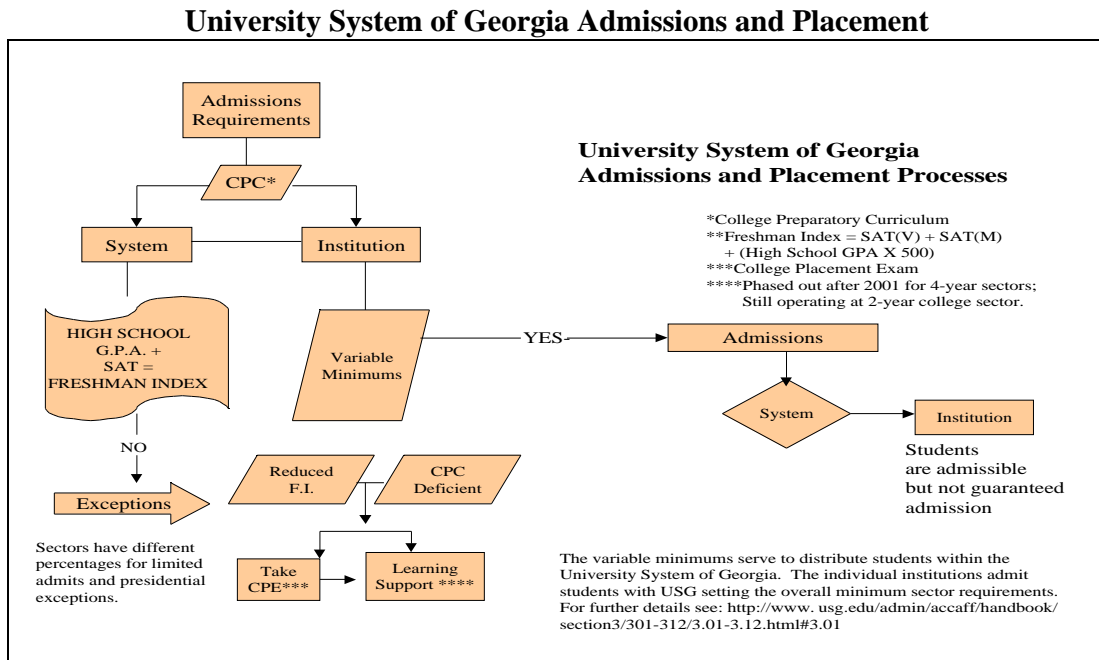


Figure 1. University System of Georgia (USG) admissions and placement policies, 1999

Chancellor Steven Portch arrived in Georgia in 1994. Respondents indicate that Chancellor Portch really wanted the University System of Georgia to become one of the top systems in the nation. “He looked at a lot of policies. It was really clear that admissions standards were not as high as they should be, a sizeable number of students were going into remedial courses, so he was quite concerned about their level of preparedness.” In a prepared speech to potential college-goers, one study respondent gives reasons for changes:

“Why raise admission standards?”

To improve student success in college by asking them to take harder courses, earn better grades, and prepare better for the SAT and ACT in high school. In return, they will be more likely to graduate from college, earn the degrees they seek, and increase the value of their USG degree.”

Another respondent puts a historical face on what prompted present admissions and placement policy changes:

“Before 1988, we had college preparatory courses but we did not have a college prep curriculum. In 1988, the state board of education and the board of regents got together and agreed upon what the college preparatory curriculum would be. And we said that all students would have to have a college preparatory curriculum to get into the university

system BUT we would have this provisional admissions category to allow students who did not have access to the college preparatory curriculum a phase in period, which was never specified, to come in. Because of that, there was no teeth in that policy, and through the years from 1988 to 1994 we continued to have large numbers of students come in (over 30%) without the college preparatory curriculum, and we could show in various studies that those students did not do as well. They were placed in remedial studies but were not retained at high rates. Even if they made up their deficiencies, they could not graduate. That became the focus of this new admissions policy. We wanted to aim for a college preparatory curriculum, and there would be very few exceptions.”

The respondent quoted above also noted that “we had fairly open admissions and really mixed up system regarding admissions. We had two year colleges with higher admissions standards than some of our state universities, and we had some state universities which were becoming more exclusive.” The system was experiencing growth, primarily due to in-migration and to the incentive provided by the HOPE scholarship for Georgia students with a good grade point average to remain in the state. The changes Chancellor Portch instituted were targeted at increased participation rates and improved standards. Portch's changes passed the Board of Regents in 1996.

In 1997, implementation of changes to the public postsecondary institution admissions process affected three areas: the Freshman Index (F.I.), Learning Support (remediation), and College Preparatory Curriculum (CPC) deficiencies. The Regents opted to phase in the new requirements in an effort to prepare future college students. All changes are being phased in and planned to be fully implemented by 2001. It should be noted, however, that not all public postsecondary institutions are similarly affected by changes in academic standards, requiring the decrease and eventual elimination of a learning support curriculum in all institutions except the two-year college. For example, prior to the implementation of educational initiatives described here, several public higher education institutions in Georgia were already very selective including the Georgia Institute of Technology, Medical College of Georgia, and the University of Georgia. Policy changes to increase postsecondary admissions standards do not affect these institutions. There are several criteria that each institution must meet. However, an institution can have higher minimum standards and other criteria, such as the school evaluation form used at UGA. Students admissible to the system may not be admitted to a particular university.

However, there is some resistance to the new policies as reflected in this comment:

“The fact we are trying to do this as a system. You have 34 institutions that do not want to be part of the system. What you hear from the campuses is ‘leave us alone.’ The Chancellor will say in reply: No, we won’t leave you alone; we want to make this one of the best systems in the country.”

The Board of Regents and the Chancellor underscore the importance of reducing the number of students admitted with CPC deficiencies each year.

“Students with CPC deficiencies will only be admissible to the two year sector...For traditional freshmen, there should be no more learning support in the four-year sectors after 2001.”

*“The key change is the USG College Preparatory Curriculum. 15 courses from English, math, science, social studies, and foreign language, used since 1988, **plus** another mathematics course beyond Algebra II = **16 courses**.*

***Plus 2 or more wild card CPC courses for regional and research universities, respectively = **18 or 20 courses**.**”*

Few exceptions to the admissions criteria are anticipated. However, exceptions have been provided as noted by one policy maker:

“We do have exceptions for non-traditional freshmen (i.e. students who have been out of high school for five years or more, international students)... we also allow presidential exceptions. That is an exception. It is not mainstream. The presidential exceptions can be granted for any reason the president deems necessary so if a president believes they show exceptional promise in some area but for whatever reason have not tested well or are missing one of more credentials.”

Other exceptions are referred to as “limited admission.” For example, universities and colleges may grant exceptions to the CPC or FI requirements if the student shows exceptional promise for success. The floors for “limited admission” are as follows: research (16 CPC, 2020 FI); regional (16 CPC, 1830 FI); state (16 CPC, 1790 FI); associate level (13 CPC, 1640 FI). All exceptions, however, must be reported to the System each term and the USG sets these maximum limits on all exceptions (per cent of new freshmen): research universities (up to 7%); regional universities (up to 15%); state universities (up to 20%); associate level colleges (up to 33%). One respondent describes the effect of rising standards this way:

“I think the technical side will grow faster because people won't be able to get into the two year schools. It's sad because the two year schools have been serving our state very well. This is a state with a lot of first generation college students. A huge amount of our population is below the poverty level. If you fly to Atlanta, you just don't see it.”

Other institutions differently affected by these reform efforts are Georgia's historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Their historical mission includes service to students who may need learning support to succeed in college. One educator expresses concern over the ability of the two year college to take on this role for students presently attending the public historically black colleges and universities, commenting that many “two-year colleges have not, in the past, served minority students well.” In addition, the need to travel beyond the HBCU service areas to obtain learning support coursework may provide what might be insurmountable barriers, such as lack of transportation, for these students. In any case, in the words of one policy analyst, public HBCUs are “being given a longer leash, an extension beyond the year 2001,” than other colleges and universities to comply with the new standards. It is interesting, however, that in talking with representatives from the HBCUs that they do not mention an extension for them: “We do monitor the number of students who meet the freshman index. We are under state mandate to use it for admission by the year 2001.” They also refer to the target date as the year 2001. Georgia's two-year colleges will be greatly affected as they, and the Department of Technical and Adult Education, will need to provide educational avenues for those denied

admission to public four-year colleges and universities as well as meeting the needs of their present student population.

The Freshman Index provides a means to assess student academic performance based on high school grade point average (G.P.A.) and SAT scores. Drawing on research that identified high school G.P.A. as a better predictor of college G.P.A. than SAT scores, the index weights high school G.P.A. by multiplying it by 500. “A decision was made in creating an index to give more weight to HS GPA for political reasons. We wanted to say that what you do is important, and we also wanted to say that when you do good work, that counts. On the other hand, theoretically you could come in with a 1600 SAT and a 1.0 HS GPA and qualify for admission. It has to balance.” The FI high school GPA is calculated only on the 16 CPC units required for all students. Some system colleges, like UGA and Georgia Tech, will use other GPA and academic index statistics as part of their admissions process. The complete equation for freshman index is illustrated in Table 2.1.

**University System of Georgia Timetable for Implementation of Revised Admission Standards
By Associate, State College and University, Regional, and Research Institution**

Requirement:	Raise SAT I requirements- Minimum	Limit CPC Course Deficiencies	Required Freshman Index	Limited Admissions Allowed	SAT Subject Exams****
Summer 1997					
Assoc	330v or 310m or 1.8 gpa	4			
SCU	1.	4			
Reg		4			
Res		0			
Summer 1998					
Assoc	330 v or 310m or 1.8 gpa	4			
SCU	2.	3			
Reg		3			
Res		0			
Summer 1999					
Assoc	330v and 310m and 1.8 gpa	4			
SCU	3.	2			
Reg		2			
Res		0			
Summer 2000					
Assoc	330v and 310m and 1.8 gpa	4			
SCU	4	1			
Reg		1			
Res		0			
Summer 2001					
Assoc.	330v and 310m and FI 1830	0*	1830	33%	
SCU	5.	0**	1940	10%	
Reg		0**	2040	4%	
Res		0***	2500	1%	

Table 2.1. Timeline of implementation for admissions changes.(Table compiled by Dr. Karen Hill, Bainbridge College, July 25, 1997).

Notes.

1. – 4. Must increase each year with 430v/400m required by 2001 in addition to required Freshman Index.

5. 430v and 400m and required Freshman Index.

V = verbal portion of the SAT; M= mathematical portion of the SAT; FI=Freshman Index which equals SATM + SATM + (high school gpa x 500); CPC= College Preparatory Curriculum.

* Regular admissions = 0 deficiencies, limited = 3 deficiencies allowed

** Regular admission = 0 deficiencies plus 2 additional academic units; limited = 16 CPC and a fourth math

***Regular admission = 0 deficiencies plus 4 additional academic units; limited = 16 CPC plus a fourth math

****Required for applicants from non-recognized high schools. This provision includes home schooled applicants who are not using a regionally accredited independent study program. Subject tests are required for each area in which CPC has not been completed.

The USG is divided into 4 separate sectors designed to serve the multiple needs of Georgia's citizens. Table 2.2 illustrates the sectors and Table 2.3 shows important differences that occur across sectors.

Institutional Sector	Institution
Research universities	Georgia State Georgia Tech Medical College of GA University of GA
Regional universities	Georgia Southern Valdosta State
State universities and colleges	Albany State, Augusta State, Armstrong Atlantic, Columbus State, Fort Valley, Clayton, Georgia Southwestern, Georgia College, Kennesaw State, North Georgia, Southern Polytechnic, West Georgia
State and 2 year colleges	Dalton State, Floyd, Gainesville, Atlanta Metro, Georgia Perimeter, Gordon, Macon State, Middle Georgia, East Georgia, Coastal Georgia, South Georgia, Waycross, Darton, Bainbridge, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College

Table 2.2. Institutional sectors and institutions provided by the University System of Georgia Regent's office.

	Associate	State Colleges & Universities	Regional	Research
SAT Requirements	330v 310m	430v 400m	430v 400m	430v 400m
CPC Units	13 CPC (3 deficient)	Minimum +2 academic units	Minimum +2 academic units	Minimum +4 academic units
Required F.I.	1830	1940	2040	2500
Limited Admission Allowance	33%	20%	15%	7%

Table 2.3. Sector differences in admissions eligibility requirements (provided by the USG office).

The College Preparatory Curriculum (CPC) consists of academic units necessary to succeed in college (see table 2.4). The CPC acts as a fundamental cornerstone to USG requirements. A minimum number of CPC units are used to determine eligibility for postsecondary admissions. However, sectors differ in the minimum number of CPC units required for admissions.

Courses	Course Descriptions
4 years English	Grammar & usage; American, English and World Literature; Advanced Composition Skills
4 years Math	Algebra I & II; Geometry; 4 th year – advanced algebra and trigonometry, algebra 3, pre-calculus, discrete mathematics, calculus, AP calculus, statistics, IB mathematics, analysis
3 years Science	Including one lab course from life sciences and one from physical sciences
3 years Social Science	Including US history and world history

2 years same Foreign Language	Emphasis on speaking, listening, reading, and writing
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Table 2.4. College Preparatory Curriculum requirements and descriptions (provided by USG)

Each sector has a different floor for the Freshman Index. One respondent makes these comments on the changes:

“The FI is truly representative of what we believe students have to have a minimum capability to succeed in different sectors. The other aspect is CPC and trying to reduce CPC course deficiencies. At the research universities, they are not supposed to allow anyone in with these deficiencies. We still allow 2-year colleges to have up to three CPC deficiencies up ‘til the year 2002 for courses; so, even with 3 courses deficient, a student can still get into a 2-year college. And that again shows that we are still trying to provide an entry point for HS graduates or GED students into the university system and that is at the 2-year college level.”

We have a 4th year math requirement by 2001; right now it is just a 3 year requirement. That is interesting in terms of what is going to count as far as 4th year math. I don’t know if they discussed that or not but there are all kinds of different variations. Because students take algebra in middle school, some students take it 10th or 11th or 12th grade, so to get 4 years of math in might be very difficult. They are creating courses. As far as learning support goes, we are trying to phase out Learning Support (or remediation) at the four year college level.”

One of the reasons for the differences relates to access issues. Under a policy that the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia approved in 1996, public colleges must reduce the number of freshmen remedial students by 5 per cent annually. At the same time, higher SAT scores and grade point averages will be required for admission. According to the planned reform, learning support programs to remediate deficiencies for students entering from high school, will be phased out by 2001 in public four-year institutions. Higher admissions standards will be phased in. Students needing learning support will not be admitted to these colleges and universities. However, the two-year colleges will still allow individuals with 3 CPC deficiencies entry. Thus, the two-year colleges, along with private institutions, will assume the burden for providing academically deficient students with the requisite courses for entry into the public four-year institution. One problem with this situation is that some areas across the state are not supported by two-year institutions and will rely on state universities to provide regional service offering Georgians an alternative access point.

Placement and admissions changes are phased in over several years with the thought of providing students enough time to prepare to meet the higher standards. Many support the direction the USG is taking. They ask, why should taxpayers pay twice for high school education? However, others are concerned that such changes will create a dual socio-economic track in public higher education, with low-income students enrolling even more disproportionately in the two-year colleges. Similar to concerns for their students voiced by some respondents from Georgia HBCUs, an education article notes the following:

“black students earn degrees from community colleges at a far lower rate—10 per cent than they do at four-year colleges, where their completion rate is 40 per cent.” (Hebel, 1999)

One HBCU representative speaks about the change not as “raising the bar” but in terms of “narrowing the pathway”: *“each year the score for placement and learning support is adjusted and so we are narrowing the pathway each year...It gets more and more difficult each year to maintain your enrollment. You have to come up with new ways of recruiting. This year we instituted an application fee with the thought that because potential students send in an application fee, we will get a higher rate of return. We are also trying to generate new scholarships as one way to attract the traditional student... We have recently instituted a weekend college program to attract non-traditional as well as working students.”*

Some students routed through the two-year colleges in order to transfer to a four-year college will face a transportation problem as two-year colleges are not located in all communities. Even if they are only thirty minutes away, these colleges are not residential campuses and if students have to provide their own transportation, given the “socio-economic area we live in, that would be a big challenge for many of the students.” One respondent elaborates on this issue and points to the understanding of necessary institutional flexibility within the parameters set forth by the USG Board of Regents:

“The problem is we have certain areas of the state where students do not have access to learning support, so we have created pilot programs in Savannah, Augusta, and Columbus. Some institutions in those areas and a couple of other pilots say that students are deemed place bound but who are not qualified for the university or regional university in their area can still have access to learning support or core courses with potential for transfer to another institution. So it is a phase out of learning support but it is not quite as severe in that sense. We also requested that institutions find their own path to phase in the other elements of the admissions policy leaving room for a lot of institutional flexibility but creating a structure so that they have to meet certain goals every year.”

Institutional Case: University of Georgia Admission and Placement Policies

“Nationally, Georgia ranks sixth as a public value. Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine scored the 51 largest, most competitive public universities on four criteria: affordability, admissions, access to faculty, and graduation record. Other rankings: a best value of educational quality and low cost (1997 U.S. News & World Report); one of the eight best collegiate honors programs and the 100 best buys (Money); one of the nation's top public universities (Fiske). U.S. News & World Report cites many of our programs, including graduate and professional schools that enhance the resources

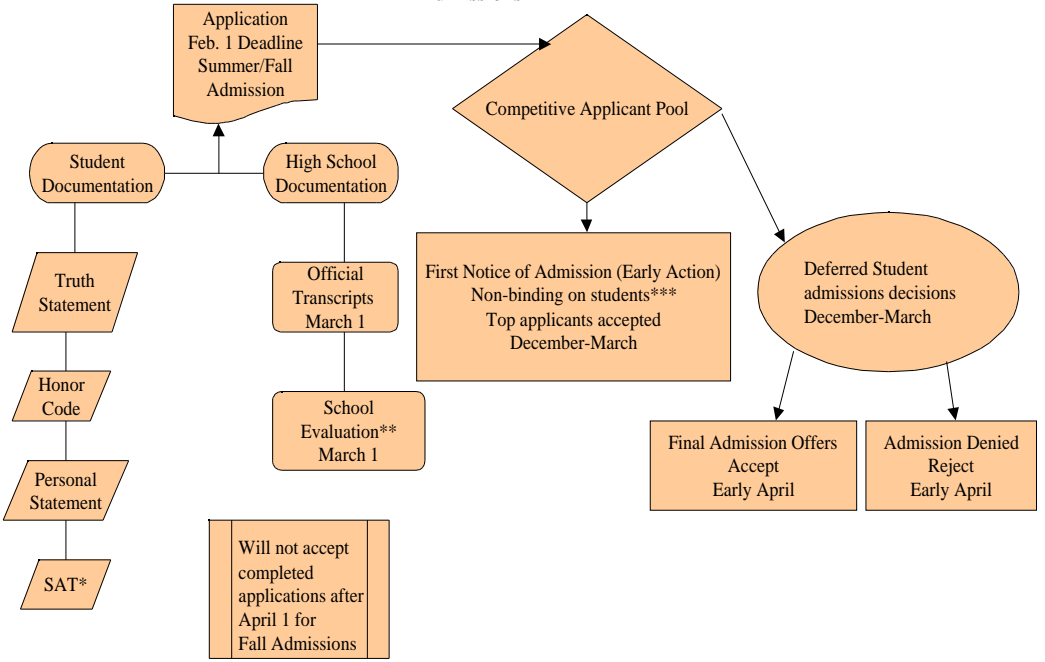
available to you as an undergraduate..." (University of Georgia brochure for prospective students).

"A lot of the programs at UGA are ranked; it is a strong regional institution. There are strong programs. Some of their programs are getting to be top ranked like University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, University of Michigan, and others. They are looking to be a leading state research university, and they are becoming much more selective. They are on that track. In part they are selective because of the HOPE scholarship and the new admissions standards. I think primarily because of the HOPE scholarship because persons who would have normally gone out of state are staying in Georgia, and now the University of Georgia has a larger pool. They can be more selective now. They look at HS GPA and SAT scores. It is an interesting phenomenon down here with the HOPE scholarship and the new admissions standards and then with the economy and population growth rate and patterns." (Study Respondent)

The University of Georgia (UGA) serves as one of four major research universities in Georgia. Because their criteria for admission is already high, current changes in admission and placement standards do not affect UGA. A highly selective state institution, UGA receives approximately 13,000 applications per year. The incoming freshman class for Fall 1998 numbered 4200, 90% of which are from Georgia. The large number of in-state students are attributed to the success of the HOPE scholarship which rewards academic excellence with full coverage of tuition, fees, and books at public institutions. Over 90% of all Georgia resident UGA freshmen receive these non-need-based grants. The top one-third of college-bound students in Georgia are at the top 25% of their class. Average total SAT is 1191 while the unweighted G.P.A. in academic classes is 3.6. Students who attend UGA are predicted to earn 2.95 by the end of their freshman year. "Suddenly selective" and "public ivy league in the sun belt" are phrases used by some to describe the changing organizational culture of the university.

The admissions and placement process. See Figure 2.

University of Georgia Admissions



*Test scores come directly from the testing agency- Educational Testing Service (ETS).
 **Completed form comes from the high school.
 ***Not need a commitment deposit to guarantee their place in class.

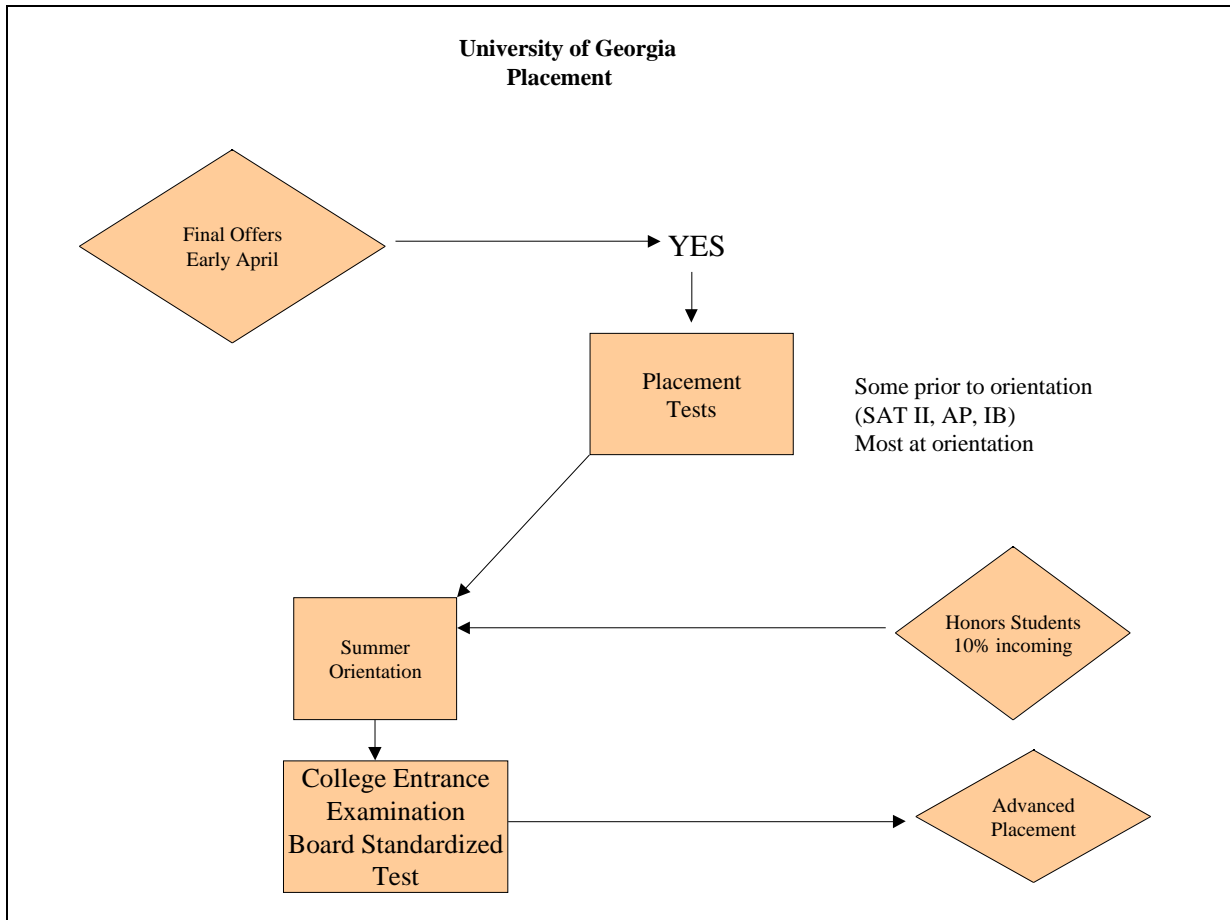


Figure 2. University of Georgia admissions and placement processes.

Students are admitted right out of high school three times a year: fall, spring, and summer with the vast majority starting in the fall. Applicants typically submit high school transcripts, have test scores sent to UGA, and respective high schools must submit a completed school evaluation form. The school evaluation form was designed by UGA

“to get more information about the curriculum that was chosen, how rigorous it was for the curricula available in that high school, for us to know if that high school is accredited and by whom, and some general information -- some of which is relevant in our admissions process; some is not. We collect information that we can make use of later. We have been using it for three years now.

This is to help the University of Georgia make better decisions regarding admissions. It is not to meet system requirements nor is it to evaluate each school. We are asking the school to help us evaluate the students... We do have an advisory council of high school counselors, and we did talk with them about filling the form out.”

The admissions office at UGA enters pertinent student data into a computer to calculate whether or not an individual should attend the university. The high school G.P.A. is re-calculated from college preparatory courses. The regression formula - $GPA (unweighted) \times .70 + Verbal SAT (.0015) = math SAT (.0010) - .93$ - equals the predicted freshman G.P.A. Approximately 80% of admissions decisions are based on the outcome of this formula. As noted earlier, the admissions policy changes instituted by the system do not affect UGA as they are designed to eliminate open enrollment and institute minimal admissions criteria at public colleges and universities. "We are well beyond that [although] we will always have a handful of remedial students." UGA does not admit students with CPC deficiencies.

The Freshman Index is described as "an advising tool" by UGA admissions officials. It serves as a tool to enable families to identify the colleges and universities in which the student has a reasonable chance of academic success. UGA views the Freshman Index as providing two-year colleges with minimum standards for admissions. State colleges and universities will use the F.I. as a regression equation which UGA representatives identify as a good starting point for making admissions decisions. UGA does not consider the F.I. in the acceptance or rejection of applicants. The following provides an example of the information given to students by UGA about the admissions process.

HOW TO APPLY FOR ADMISSION

Applications for undergraduate admission may be obtained electronically from our Web site at <http://www.admissions.uga.edu> or from the UGA Office of Undergraduate Admissions, 212 Terrell Hall, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602-1633. Completion of all forms and submission of all requirements by the appropriate deadlines are mandatory before the applicant's request for admission can be considered. Applicants to the University must enclose a non-refundable application fee to cover the expense of processing the application. Once the application for admission, appropriate test scores, and other required records of the applicant are found to be complete and in proper order, an evaluation will be made in terms of academic record, the probability of completing the requirements for the desired degree, and the competitiveness within the applicant pool. The University reserves the right to terminate acceptance of application forms when enrollment limits are reached or when credentials are deemed incomplete or unsatisfactory. Acceptance of each applicant will be determined by the Faculty Admissions Committee subject to the right of appeal as provided in the University System. Specific information concerning housing, orientation, pre-registration and transferred courses is sent to the student following the official acceptance," (University of Georgia, Undergraduate Bulletin, 1999-2000).

In responding to a question on who makes the final admissions decisions, this respondent says:

"Some people would say the computer does. It goes to a team of para-professionals who evaluate the transcripts. They then code in the GPA and the curriculum. They get the resulting

index, and then overnight they can be accepted that fast. The policy is a 2.87 predicted average and a 400 math and a 430 verbal and no problem with the college prep curriculum and 1000 on total SAT, you are in. Who needs a person to look at that? Rolling admission is based on those credentials. When you are in, you are in. It produces the acceptance letters and we send those out.

Other students we have to look at residency and first generation parents and extracurricular activities. We will read 600-1,000 folders, and each folder will get read by two different counselors. We do a holistic grading on that. That is the "edge" read. These are people on the edge between being admitted or denied. We use the holistic grading method for grading. We rate them as if we were rating them for scholarships. We look at everything in context. I would admit this student. I hate this kid. Look at what the teacher said about the kid. It may go to a third read. It works very well...That all happens in the month of March."

Although the University of Georgia may not be directly affected by the enhanced admission standards, what the system communicates to parents and prospective students promotes some confusion about UGA's system of selectivity. The admissions process is both competitive and complex. The system's desire to raise admission standards and communicate these changes to their constituents in a simple fashion may serve to create misunderstandings that cause pressures on UGA. UGA officials express frustration about the inadequate communication of the meaning of F.I. to parents and prospective students.

Many constituents believe that if their F.I. meets the minimum standards for a specific institutional sector, they are guaranteed admission to one of those institutions. However, admissibility does not mean admission. "It is a PR problem right now." To further complicate matters, the system changes such as the F.I. occurred at the same time UGA declined admissions for some Georgia residents who were referred to as "legacies." These rejected students had parents/siblings who had attended and graduated from UGA. "In the last ten years, it has become much harder to get in to Georgia. You have families who attended the University of Georgia and then suddenly the admissions standards change. And Johnny is not getting in."

To add fuel to the fire, the HOPE scholarship has driven up the demand for entry into state institutions such as UGA that already operates at full capacity. HOPE accelerated the growth of high-performing students at UGA. According to UGA officials, many UGA students initially chose to attend Rice, Vanderbilt, or University of Georgia. However, the HOPE scholarship has provided a financial incentive – free tuition, books, and fees – for Georgia's best high school graduates to remain in the state. Thus, the academic characteristics (GPA and SAT scores) of incoming UGA classes continue to rise.

"For the class entering in fall 1997, the average SAT was 1181. The middle half of the class had SAT scores between 1110 and 1290, and GPAs between 3.1 and 3.8. Students enjoy it here: 87 percent return after the freshman year, and 92.1 percent of the respondents to a spring 1996 survey say they are satisfied with their experience at Georgia," (Georgia Fact Book, 1998).

Another pressure on UGA is the continued growth of the Georgia population – especially in the Atlanta area. State leaders anticipate that 33% more high school seniors will graduate in

Georgia by 2008. However, UGA will not add more spaces to accommodate the rise in graduating seniors. Instead, officials believe that the in-migration to Georgia, coupled with the availability of HOPE, will encourage students to complete high school and attend a technical school. The graduates from technical institutions remain in-state and support the local economy as well as provide an infrastructure for local companies.

When asked about their contact with the community-at-large:

“[State university] really can reflect and interact with its community because it is [state university]. At University of Georgia, our community is statewide. We have a counselor's council. The high school and college counselors from ten counties; We meet with them a couple times a year, and we have a counselor's council representing the entire state and other states. We meet with them. Community members? I don't know what good that would do. It would look nice, but what would a hardware store owner tell me that I did not already know? I would rather do surveys...”

Financial aid remains separate from the admissions process. UGA does not recruit according to need-based criteria. The completion of the FAFSA is required for HOPE and that has enabled Georgia to identify individuals who are also eligible for Pell Grants. Approximately 8% of UGA students qualify for Pell Grants compared to 14% of most research institutions. Financial aid affects a small percentage of UGA students but they are disproportionately African American which accounts for 6-7% of the undergraduate population and 21% of Pell recipients.

The admission criteria remain consistent across academic departments with the exception of **business**. If a student is rejected by the business school, s/he is immediately considered for Arts and Sciences. Although UGA will deny students as freshman, they may accept them at a later date as transfer students. However, transfer students remain "a growth threat and the pressure of access on the school" according to University representatives.

Since UGA evaluates applications on the current pool of candidates, one can assume the quality of that pool will continue to rise as better prepared students continue to remain/relocate to Georgia schools. One respondent states that, unfortunately, many native Georgia seniors who choose to remain in Georgia may lack the academic preparation to compete effectively with outsiders and find themselves rejected in the UGA admissions process. According to University of Georgia officials, oftentimes, the individual comes from a family whose history includes undergraduate education at UGA. How many denials of legacies will it take before Georgians clamor for a reduction in academic standards? Some who receive the HOPE scholarship and maintain the minimum Freshman Index for admission into UGA are still denied admission. The reason this occurs is because the Freshman Index simply stipulates whether or not an individual is admissible but does not guarantee admission. How long will it take for Georgians to react cynically to the promise of HOPE and seek to repeal the amendment that promises lottery funds will support education? Institutions operate in tandem with the environments in which they are located. The Georgia environment remains dynamic.

In response to the following researcher observation and question, one Georgia policy maker describes the need to ‘close back doors’:

“My sense from the University of Georgia is a lot of students came in the transfer route because they did not initially meet the admission standards of the freshmen level. So if you simply said the University of Georgia averages 1150 on the SATs, you would be portraying it as an institution in a way that was not entirely correct -- that there were a lot of students who came in with 900 or 1,000 or whatever after a year at a Georgia State or a two-year college. Is that something that was a concern?” (Researcher)

“That was a concern -- that we had many back doors and few regulations/requirements. We have closed the back doors as much as we can. It is very controversial. Everybody wants his/her child to go to the University of Georgia. Now, though, a student is either admissible to University of Georgia up front or they spend at least the equivalent at a 2 year college -- so, that will change things.”(Respondent)

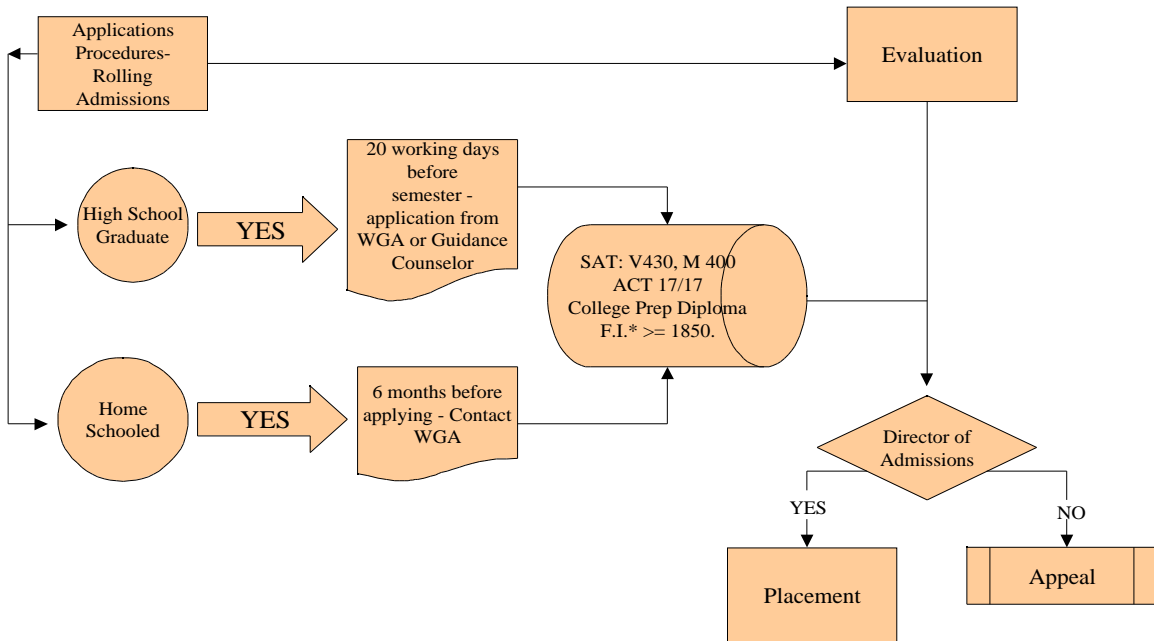
Projected Growth

The University of Georgia has an enrollment cap at the end of 2001 at 35,000. According to the Board of Regents, UGA will not grow into an institution of 50,000 students. It will remain an institution of about the size it is now. One planner makes these statements regarding projected growth in the state university system: “Each of the other system institutions have enrollment targets. For some, they have enrollment planning, admissions processes and marketing. For others, it means they become more selective. We could grow somewhat. We are right at 200,000 now. The 2003 projection is 230,000.”

Institutional Case: State University of West Georgia Admissions and Placement Policies

The State University of West Georgia (WGA) sits on the western edge of Georgia close to the Alabama border in Carrollton. WGA enrolls approximately 8500 students and serves the western section of the state north to the Tennessee border. The system changes scheduled for Fall, 2001 profoundly affect WGA admissions and placement policies (see Figure 3).

State University of West Georgia Admissions Process



*Freshman Index (FI) = 500 x (HSGPA) + SAT I Verbal + SAT I Math

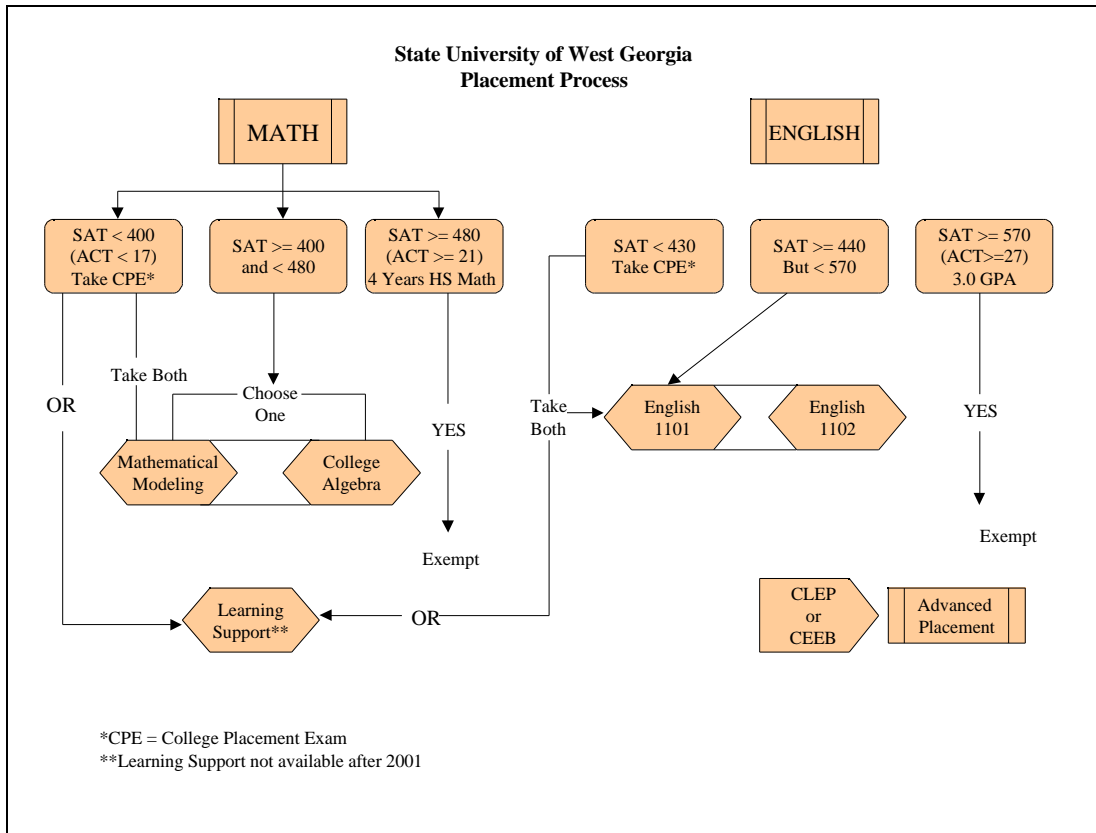


Figure 3. State University of West Georgia Admissions and Placement policies.

Admissions occur on a rolling admissions process that translates to a revolving, continuous schedule of application process and student acceptance. When students complete their admissions files, the application is evaluated and students are informed of the acceptance or rejection. Approximately 550 of the 4300 applications received will remain incomplete. As many other previously open access four-year institutions, WGA does not close their admissions application date prior to the deadline. One person indicates that they have never had more applications than can be handled.

Present postsecondary educational reform in Georgia rests on the assumption that if you raise the bar students will meet the higher standards. WGA bases its admissions decisions on the Freshman Index developed by the system office (Board of Regents). Due to educational policy changes, WGA must begin decreasing learning support to incoming freshman with CPC and G.P.A. deficiencies by 5% annually. However, the goal was not met as the incoming class of students needing learning support ballooned this past year. The pressure for most public higher education institutions lies in meeting enrollment targets while maintaining the new academic standards. WGA administrators project the number of learning support students based on both history and enrollment projections. Table 2.5 shows the enrollment figures for Fall, 1998.

Total Freshman	1685	
Georgia Residents Admitted	95%	
Ethnic/Racial Breakdown		
Caucasian	1140	68%
African American	469	28%
Hispanic	30	2
Asian-American	24	1%
Multiracial	19	1%
Native American	3	.02%
Freshman in Learning Support	665	39%

Table 2.5. State University of West enrollment figures, Fall,1998 (provided by WGA admissions office).

As of May 1, 1999, State University of West Georgia projects 2517 of 3637 applications for first year students will be accepted with 500 requiring College Placement Exam (CPE) screening. The College Placement Exam (CPE) developed by ACT identifies student deficiencies and is used for placement into learning support programs. The test covers reading, English, and Math with cutoff scores in the 77 range. The system cutoff scores rest at 75. If you score below, you are placed in learning support. The new standards will require admission denials for individuals who score below the score. Administrators expect 190 of total accepted first-year students will require placement in learning support. The learning support issue creates pressures on institutions that previously offered open access to students. One exception to these requirements is the non-traditional student, defined as “students who have been out of high school for at least five years.” If these students require learning support, they can be admitted and they will not count against the institution.

WGA serves as a pilot postsecondary institution for the Postsecondary Readiness Enrichment Program (PREP) targeted at middle grade students deemed at-risk using the government definition. PREP relies on the postsecondary institutions to inform students about what happens in a university. WGA's site has professors who demonstrate how physics can be fun for students and art teachers who teach students how to tie-dye t-shirts. Such demonstrations are designed to show students that the classroom experience can be a fun, learning environment. Overall, the goal is to help students gain insight into the intrinsic value of learning.

The students who participate in PREP usually are those who don't consider college or may even opt to drop out when they are in high school. Dr. Bobby Powell, PREP coordinator at WGA, constructed the STARR program – Science, Technology, Art, 'Ritin' and 'Rithmetic to encourage students to attend college.

Department of Technical and Adult Education: Admissions and Placement Policies

The Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE) and is an important postsecondary option for Georgia residents. Thirty-four technical institutes comprise The Department of

Technical and Adult Education (DTAE). These institutions provide adult literacy training, continuing education, customized training for business and industry, and technical education to the associate's degree level. The DTAE is governed by a 16 member board appointed by the Governor. (Richardson et al, 1999). It operates as a separate sector and is not part of the University System of Georgia. A recent article appeared in Georgia Trend which provided a call-to-arms for prospective students to consider a technical career.

"Enrollment is soaring at state's 33 technical institutes. In the industry-friendly Quick Start program alone, the number of trainees jumped from 9,400 in 1990 to 31,345 last year. From 1992 to 1997, overall enrollment grew to 50,685, almost a 50% increase. Add to that the 50,000 trainees who come to technical schools for specific training requested by a company and the importance of these institutions looms large.

Enrollment has been fueled by many factors, including advances in technology and the growing number of industries that place a greater premium on technical training than a college degree. In fact, some experts believe that only 20% of all new jobs this year will demand a four-year college education. Most of the other 80% will require a high school diploma and specific, often high-skilled, training.

The high-paying jobs created by industrial technology today are being eagerly sought by students leaving high school who are hungry for fat paychecks.

But technical schools like South Georgia Tech mean more to communities than just education. They are an important economic development tool, and are becoming a first line of action when crisis hits a county." (April, 1999).

According to respondent comments, the underlying philosophy that governs the activities of the DTAE is the relationship it maintains with local industry in some fundamental areas. First, it is the business community that sets standards to determine the curriculum taught at the state's technical schools. Second, the customer (e.g., the business community) sets the justification for how the (DTAE) does the specific training processes. Finally, employers set the competencies required of those who earn a DTAE certificate. The same curriculum crosses institutions throughout the state.

Each DTAE institution has a Board of Directors drawn from the business community. The DTAE was given statutory authority to delegate individuals to the board. This increases the potential to establish new program initiatives with the local business community and the boards which may have dual representation. This allows for a quick turnaround on the development and implementation of new initiatives.

Recently, DTAE and the USG formed an alliance that would facilitate an efficient transfer between technical and system institutions. The pact "addresses animosity and competition between the two-year college and technical institutes by suggesting that students be able to move between systems, with USG concentrating on general education and DTAE focusing on job-entry occupational instruction," (Richardson et al., 1999, p. 121). A technical

institute representative participating in a P-16 council focus group describes recent successes with such agreements:

The P-16 council assisted with the transfer of credit from our institution to the University of Georgia. It has had a huge impact for citizens in this region, for students, parents, teachers, counselors. It facilitated transferring credits from the vocational institute to the university. This effort is specific to this council because -- there are two other technical institutes who can now transfer credit to the University of Georgia. They followed our efforts. This was a groundbreaking effort.

The admissions procedures to DTAE institutions are fairly straightforward with one caveat – students enroll in programs rather than institutions (see Figure 4). Specific programs have definite requirements related to math or verbal skills. Essentially, how well an individual reads, writes, and/or computes determines whether or not that student will gain admission into one of DTAE's many programs. Programmatic curricula are not based on high school preparation. Thus, if a student is deficient in reading, math, or verbal skills, DTAE provides developmental courses for students to increase their performance.

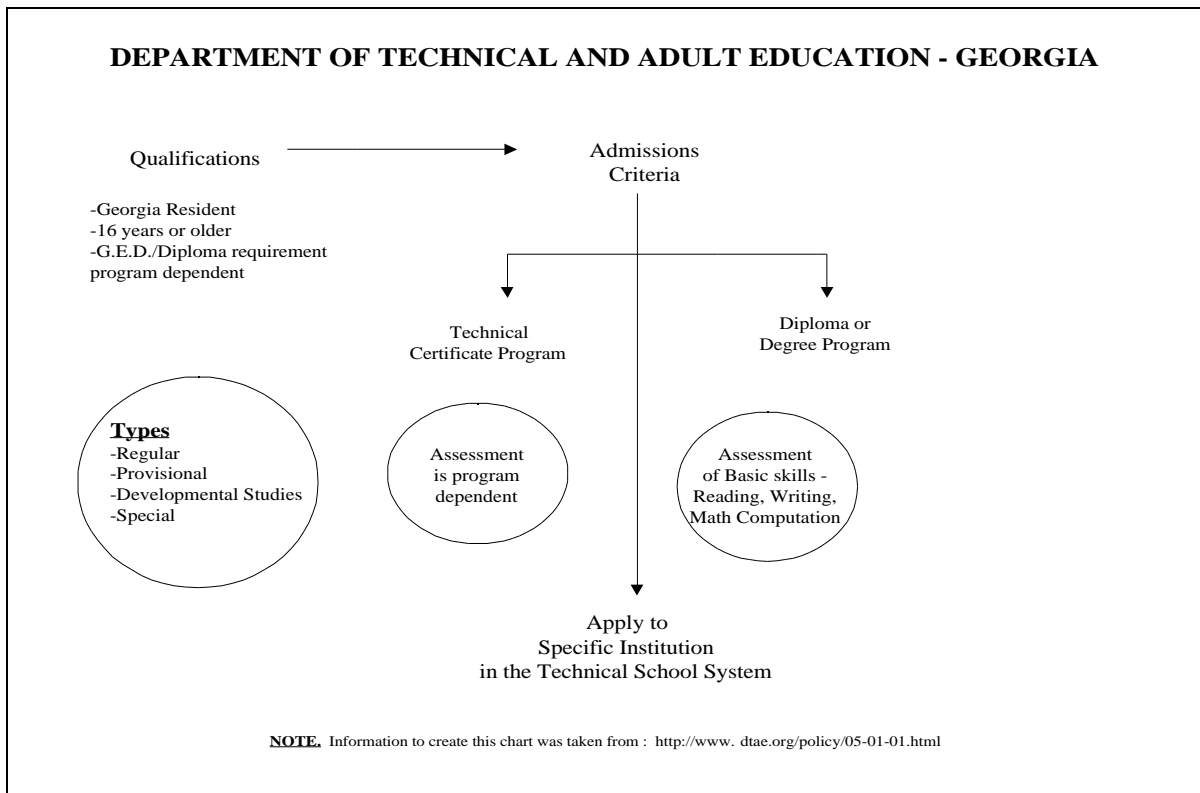


Figure 4. Department of Technical and Adult Education Admissions and Placement

The new standards developed by the University System of Georgia have the potential to increase interest in the DTAE institutions. Essentially, students who fail to meet minimum admission requirements have options to pick another college or re-evaluate their career options (such as a technical certification program). Certainly, the state Governor's office supports the emphasis on DTAE. "One of the key issues in our area is 12th grade is kind of a waste especially for people who are not going to college. We have to get people tied in with the technical schools. They have to use high school to allow them to make a clear transition to that".

Although DTAE is a member of the state P-16 Council, it maintains other collaborative programs with high schools across the state. For example, there is the Middle Georgia Aerospace Apprentice Program that includes McDonnell-Douglas, Boeing, Robbins Air Force Base, Macon Tech, Bib City and the public school system. Juniors and seniors compete for entry into the program that instructs them in aircraft structural techniques. Students participate in an internship program and by the end of the senior year they are ready for industry and qualified for the program. Students have four options with this program: a certificate in aircraft structure; a diploma in aircraft structure; an associate degree; or, a four-year Applied Science degree.

DTAE also collaborates with the University System. Students in any program can earn an associate degree or connect to a joint program in a two-year college with DTAE and USG approval. They could also transfer to other schools and earn a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Applied Science degree. The agreement was reached with Chancellor Steven Portch (USG) and Commissioner Kenneth H. Breeden (DATE) in 1994.

The operating costs for the DTAE is at \$300 million and is provided by state tax dollars. However, the system also generates revenue from acting as a trainer for local businesses. Currently, the customized training program is self-supporting. Additionally, DTAE offers continuing education courses that are also self-supporting.

FINDINGS

K-12 and Higher Education Alignment: Policy Issues

1) No Single College Preparatory Curriculum

One respondent describes this situation in the following way:

"...there are still some difficulties. One is that we had a committee look at CPC between state department of education and the university system, but right now it is occurring at the committee level. And we know there are different definitions [of what constitutes a college preparatory course] and that is a problem. We are still in negotiation. There is not one single college prep curriculum, and that will be an issue by the time we get to fall 2001."

Other respondents further explain the challenge created by a lack of a single college prep curriculum:

"Just because I take courses towards a college prep diploma (with a college prep seal) does not mean I will get into college. There are courses that count in K-12 schools for

the college prep seal but are not acceptable for admissions to the university system...Some students can take a program in a high school and take courses and it sounds like it will satisfy courses and it really will not. There is a difference between college prep courses and college prep courses that will count for admission...the courses are preparatory, students are not in college yet.”

In this May 20, 1999 state level P-16 subcommittee meeting, participants agree that “this does not make any sense” and decide that parents must be informed that these differences do exist and encouraged to work with their school counselor. Individuals attending the meeting are attempting to come up with a list of courses that will be accepted for college admission. Discussion centers on what to include in a brochure to clarify the situation so that counselors can understand it and relay the information to the student and the parent. One participant states: “Part of what we are trying to do is to work with counselors and getting them to be more adept at helping students.” The following quotes provide insight into the complexity of the task. Participants are reviewing a draft of the brochure:

On the foreign language requirement, page 11, Workplace Spanish is comparable to Spanish I but it is more to do with talking to employees.

Going back to English, the last [course listed] says International Baccalaureate Communication. What does that mean?

On the opposite column for math, we see IB Mathematics. IB English 11. IB Communication. Do counselors know what IB is?

Question on foreign language (FL): Do we accept American Sign Language (ASL) as meeting the FL requirement? [answer] *ASL is accepted as a foreign language for students who are hearing impaired; otherwise it is an elective.*

I have real problems with the social studies area. You worked hard on putting it together; fifteen percent of my freshman come from places where social studies is different. Instate and out of state...I hate to bring up problems and not have solutions.

Am I going over the line by pointing this out. We don't want to let people have lots of loopholes. Social studies is not the issue for preparing students for college; let us define that fourth math and English and physical science. But which social studies beyond American history and world history are included? I wish there were a way of making it easy. A lot of people are focused on the name of the course. Everybody has different versions.

2) No single definition of a math/English class.

One meeting participant describes such concerns as systemic in nature: “*The other issue which I think is more systemic to this is: What is the definition of a math class? An English class? The definition of a transcript? We have accrediting associations. Those are under fire.*”

3) Advising and Teaching Difficulties in Preparing Students for 2001

Lack of consistency poses grave problems for advising and preparing students to meet the admissions and placement standards for the year 2001. Here are some well articulated points:

“People have been screaming: When will someone tell us what courses will count? The class of 2001 is this year's sophomores. They needed that information a few years ago. A big discussion of this crowd was to define what 4 maths would be counted? Four years of math. It was easy to define algebra, geometry, trigonometry. Then we wanted a fourth math. Half the kids in...County who take Algebra I in the 9th grade fail it. If they fail Algebra I in the 10th grade, they will never get 4 years of math by the time they graduate. So they won't get to college.

There is something called Algebra IA and Algebra IB. It's two years of Algebra. Take four years of math. If two of those years are Algebra I, that is all right. The next thing we discovered is a lot of schools teach Senior Math. A lot of math teachers know they never finish the book. Senior Math finishes the Geometry and Algebra books. Some kids are smart, and they take Algebra I in the 9th grade, and that's good. If they are going to be an Art major, do we force them into calculus? We cannot afford a lot of calculus teachers in Georgia. I've watched the evolution of the policies. What do we do with the class of 2001: We will be sued for having advised them wrong.

The next thing that has been an issue for me in particular is ten percent of our students are out of state. About fifteen percent are coming in from good college prep private schools. They don't define their course requirements the same way as we do. There comes a point where you say: We don't need that named course. Social studies. What is it? I've fought hard to be flexible.”

4) Different High School Grading Scales in Use

“College admissions officers take a course if a student made a 94, then they look for the scale the high school uses for grading. If that's an A, then they look at it as a 4.0. If it is a B, it is a 3.0. It is a standard practice. The problem is we have 18 different grading scales in use. Some systems do not have a D. Some have Fs set at 50; some have Fs set at 60. Some have a 0-100 scale. Some have 60-100 scale. There are many different scales. A student with a 3.0 can get HOPE. They have translated it so that a student with an 80 can get the HOPE scholarship. And that in some school systems, C students are eligible for HOPE.”

5) Grade and Course Title Inflation: No Standard Definition of Honors

Grade inflation is a concern expressed by postsecondary representatives. In striving to qualify for the HOPE scholarship and for entry into the more elite public universities in Georgia, some schools and teachers may give a student better grades and also may promote course title inflation as well. One respondent describes the situation this way:

“Grade inflation and course title inflation too. There are some courses in high school that are branded “honors.” About 20 years ago word got out the University of Georgia would give extra weight to the GPA if honors courses were taken. At that point, one school system changed all its courses to honors courses. There is nothing to keep a school from doing that; there is no standardized definition of honors. There is no standard definition or control over grades assigned to honors classes.”

Some say that classroom teachers and school administrators may be pressured to provide a “fair advantage” for students, translating into a pressure for higher grades.

5) Variety of Secondary Institutions and Transcripts: No single definition of a transcript. One admissions officer makes the following observations:

“We have a huge variety of educational systems in the state of Georgia. Some high schools have electronic transcripts. They do not all have the same information -- no common information on the transcript. They do not have the definition of a class. It's hard for us to tell if it is accredited, if it is a public school. Centennial High School -- we did not know it was a new public school. There is no common listing we can go to in the state...My favorite is...Academy. Beautiful desk top transcript. Student was president of the student body. Pretty soon you realize it was a home school student...The state and system and individual school all have different issues of what counts [for admission].”

6) Continued Policy Development: International and Home School Students

“There are a few areas where we have not completely worked out a policy, and one area is with international student admissions. In the past, admissions policies for international students were left up to the institution. For example, we had most institutions using TOEFL. We had no system score required on that. We have no set of standards for how we test proficiency in other languages and we are trying to work out some system guidelines for those requirements. There are a couple of other areas where we are still exploring alternatives to admissions, and one is we have had a vocal home school group in Georgia. The CPC is the foundation of this admissions policy. It is not appropriate to use SAT scores to be a proxy for curriculum. What we would like is standards. We have gone through all kinds of things to create curriculum equivalent tests. There are areas of the CPC in English, math, social studies, science, and foreign language. Right now, the plan is to use SAT II's, but that is not perceived as fair by the home school people.”

7) Accreditation Issues

Another issue that concerns us is whether the high school is recognized or accredited or not. Now it is left up to the individual institution. There were sometimes problems because a university in Georgia might say we have a history with this particular high school, and we will admit students from this one. Another institution in Georgia would not admit students. We have an unequal admissions problem. We have worked on

getting a single list. Originally we wanted accredited high schools, but not all high schools are accredited by SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools). We have a Georgia accrediting body and a Georgia accrediting commission. The Georgia association of Christian schools and other groups wanted us to allow students to be part of this group of accredited schools so we moved into the concept of accepting students from “recognized” high schools. I think that issue is still not resolved.”

Tackling such sticky issues is not easy. Georgia is making progress through such discussions as they attempt to come up with some guidelines to help school counselor and, in the end, parents and students understand the maze toward college admission and placement.

Addressing Alignment Issues

Focus on Communication

Communication is critical in this changing policy environment. A number of University System of Georgia staff communicate admission standards to students. Communication strategies include the development of informational electronic web sites, the publication and distribution of descriptive brochures, as well as personal presentations to and visits with various communities throughout the state. Several regional and state level initiatives are also designed to play key functions in addressing alignment issues in educational reform.

1) Georgia Easy (GAEASY) provides front-end admissions information with major links to information for students in the college-search selection process. Currently, the electronic application process was tested this spring in a small selection of public schools. The web-site will be released statewide in September. The system office developed a career information service (GACIS) with multiple links to important sites that contain job and career projections. GACIS serves as a comprehensive electronic guidance counselor for students. One added benefit to the electronic services allows students to 'self-advise' on admissions issues. The sites provide profiles of the previous year's entering class that enables students to compare their individual characteristics with those of the previous class. Officials believe this site will afford students with a greater ability to select college based on their own credentials.

2) P-16 State and Local Councils, PREP, and PACTS

In order to further inform students and all organizational actors affected by rising admission and placement standards, Chancellor Portch and the Board of Regents created and approved initiatives that serve to improve communication between the DOE, USG, and DTAE. These are the P-16 Councils and the Postsecondary Readiness and Enrichment Program (PREP). Given the complexity of the admissions and placement issues described previously under the heading of K-12 and Higher Education Alignment: Policy Issues, Georgia's regional and state P-16 Initiative provides a viable avenue to address such concerns. P-16 meetings provide a context for bringing representatives from both perspectives, public schools and postsecondary institutions, to the same table. Such opportunities for interchange serve to promote understanding among public education policy makers. These discussions can lead to thoughtful and collaborative solutions. In

this mix of initiatives is one funded by The PEW Charitable Trust. This is a pilot project concerning grade 12 and grade 14 transition points. This project is managed through the P-16 Councils and is referred to as PACTS (Performance Assessment for Colleges and Technical Schools). Descriptions of these initiatives designed to improve communication as well as transitions among and across educational actors are presented below. Strengths and challenges for each initiative are also discussed.

Georgia P-16 councils

“Pursuing Higher Standards: Georgia programs seek to align instruction with higher education. Across the country, the gulf that has existed between higher education and K-12 schools seems to be narrowing...there are new K-16 collaborations.”
(Cumming,1999)

One of the critical methods used to communicate between pre-k -12 and higher education are the 47-member state and 15 regional P-16 councils. The Councils, developed after Steven Portch became USG Chancellor, serve as a vehicle to address college transition issues and teacher preparation. The mission of the P-16 councils is to promote student success, pre-school through postsecondary education.

According to a respondent, “the successful student has meet high standards and demonstrated achievement at each level, and is ready to advance to the next level of: work, occupational training, and/or education; resulting in productive employment and responsible citizenship.” Another respondent states “it has to do with preparing all students to be competitive for college...for transitioning to vocational school or to the workplace.”

Table 3.1 below shows the long term goals and measurable objectives of Georgia's P-16 initiative. Three activity strands comprise the P-16 councils: alignment of educational systems (preschool through college; standards expected of students at each level); teacher quality (involving both teacher preparation and professional development); and with an elevation of educational standards, an alignment of expectations for students to move smoothly from P through16. The initiative sought to promote active and productive school (local level) and university relationships lacking in the past. The state council, housed in the system office, serves as an oversight unit with the local councils acting to communicate and implement policy changes.

Table 3.1 Georgia P-16 Council Goals and Measurable Objectives

Long Term Goals

1. To promote the achievement of Georgia's students at all levels of education, pre-school through post-secondary.
2. To help students move more smoothly from one educational sector to the next.
3. To ensure that all students who enter post-secondary institutions are prepared to succeed, and to increase the success rate of those who enter.
4. To close the gaps in access to post-secondary education between students from majority and minority groups and between students from high and low income groups.
5. To focus the co-reform of schools and teacher education on practices that bring P-12 students from diverse groups to high levels of achievement.
6. To help students become more responsible in their citizenship.
7. To have a qualified teacher in every classroom.

Introduction

P-16 is a collaborative of pre-kindergarten through high schools, technical institutes, colleges and universities, and the broader community. The collaborative serves as a catalyst at both the state and local levels for achieving the goals of the Georgia P-16 Initiative. P-16 councils refer all recommendations to appropriate governing authorities. While each partner in the P-16 Initiative sets individual goals and objectives, the objectives that follow represent cooperative efforts across two or more partners in the Georgia P-16 Council.

Measurable Objectives

1. To increase student performance in reading by end of third grade.
2. To increase the number of high school students successfully completing the gateway courses of algebra and geometry by the end of the tenth grade.
3. To increase graduation rates in high school, technical institutes, and college.
4. To close the gaps between the expectations set for students to graduate from high school and those set to enter technical institute, college, and work.
5. To have a qualified teacher in every classroom by the year 2003.
6. To enhance learning environments in schools in ways that support the success of students from diverse ethnic, cultural, socio-economic, and international groups.

NOTE: Information taken from The Georgia P-16 Initiative Work Plan 1998-2003 – approved by the Georgia P-16 Council, December 16, 1998.

Currently, 15 councils exist across the state and act, among other things, as a mechanism to pilot new programs and procedures developed by the system office. “There could be a maximum of 15 regional P-16 councils in the state. In each case, one of the partners had to be one of the 15 public universities that prepares teachers.” The chancellor provided \$150,000 in money to jump-start the P-16 councils, providing \$10,000 to fund proposals for local P-16 planning grants. “Because it was university system money, the university had to serve as the fiscal agent.”

Interview Findings: Perspectives on the P-16 Initiative

Focus groups were conducted with two local councils. Individual interviews were conducted with others involved in P-16 activities. When asked what is the most important role/function of the P-16 council, respondents described the following:

The most important function of the P-16 Council is to "engage in conversation with people about educational issues...to give institutions, public schools, two and four year institutions, colleges of arts and sciences and schools of education, a notion that there ought to be a seamlessness to participate in the learning process of our students...[it] never existed for a whole range of political and historic reasons."

"The fact that it fosters communication and discussion is just incredibly important...it gives you an opportunity to connect with others and see their perspectives, that is very valuable."

"We have been able to bring otherwise disparate entities to a common table to discuss common interests and try to improve educational opportunities for all students."

"It facilitated transferring credits from the vocational institute to the university... There are two other technical institutes that can now transfer credits. This was a groundbreaking effort."

"P-16 has really helped in this area to focus on [academic] standards for both university and school district. This is a chapter that is not yet complete"

"From a business perspective or as an employer, it is nice to be very welcome at the table."

"We are reaching educators and teaching them skills along the way. For example, we had an elementary school submit a (winning)proposal for a mini-grant. They had never done this before...university and school district people are being written into the same grants."

Other respondents see the teacher education component of the P-16 council as one of the most important functions of the Council:

"We are constantly talking about teacher qualifications...we are proposing the creation of a teacher's center. This is a very challenging initiative. We have teachers teaching content who are not qualified to but they are certified by the state. They get a certification to teach elementary grades and assign someone to teach science, he/she may have had only one course in science. So, they may only rely on one textbook or one workbook. Think about teachers who teach in areas they are not certified to teach in. They rely on other resources to perform."

“The dialogue with the public school sector and teacher preparation issues have been more at the forefront.”

One postsecondary respondent comment underscored the level of understanding that has resulted from interactions stimulated by participation in the P-16 council:

“We think that all of a sudden we in higher education are dealing with adults. Three months ago, your were dealing with kids.”

Some P-16 Criticisms

While the P-16 initiative is generally applauded, there are some criticisms. First, there is variation in the capacities of local councils for meet objectives set at the state level. Some councils are impeded by geographical distance among participants and lack of finances or leadership to address the issues.

Another criticism of statewide K-16 systems in Georgia, according to Wallhaus (1997), is that there are many “overlaps and discontinuities served by different programs are not conducive to effective communications and coordination and may disadvantage Georgia’s efforts to sustain well-conceptualized policy linkages and effective communications in the long run” (p.18). Some confusion is reflected in the following comments by local P-16 council members:

“Was that P-16 or was this P-16? We have had so many collaborative efforts with the college of education that I am not sure where one starts and the other ends.”

“The goals of the statewide council are a moving target; the direction of the target is never announced until after the new target comes to be reality...some are rather understandable because in any state system, targeting is largely controlled by political realities as well as the realities of how kids ought to learn...It has been a source of frustration for a number of us involved in regional councils.”

“We struggled for a year. We are an ever changing group. Different people would show up each week. We always played catch up.”

Furthermore, uneven state level leadership is noted as a deterrent to full participation by representatives from the K-12 system. Turf issues continue to challenge the process. Respondents make the following comments:

“Turf guarding has not reached the level of enlightenment that has been referenced around the table...most of the leadership is out of the Board of Regent’s and there has not been that reciprocity in the State Department of Education.”

“There were any number of superintendents who had not heard of the state department of education’s involvement in P-16 until I was in their office talking to them...We had to educate the superintendents.”

“I think what has happened is that there is a feeling among K-12 people is that this is just another way for universities to fund themselves.”

“P-16 is not really an issue for DTAE. It is a university system baby.”

Lastly, while a primary goal of the P-16 Initiative is the alignment of K-12 academic standards and performance with what is expected by postsecondary education, little was said in one focus group about collaborative work on higher education placement and admissions issues. The primary emphasis of this local P-16 council appears to be work on teacher preparation issues, another primary goal of the initiative. This focus is understandable as it dovetails nicely with other on-going teacher preparation initiatives (STEP) and with the adoption of the Principals for the Preparation of Educators for the Schools adopted by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia approved April 8, 1998. A second local P-16 council was more involved with transition issues. In addition to subcommittee work on cross sector course transfer, they have a web site that provides a review of academic standards for what students should know and be able to do as they prepare themselves for college and work.

PACTS: Performance Assessment for Colleges and Technical Schools

As part of this study, researchers attended one State level P-16 council subcommittee (school-college transition) meeting. As described above, the entire focus of this meeting was on communicating policy “signals” across systems and across constituencies. The meeting primarily dealt with a discussion of a draft booklet written jointly by the department of education and the university system for school counselors describing college preparatory requirements. Also, an individual respondent, not part of a focus group, who is a member of a third local P-16 council states:

“Another outcome is we actually did produce standards. We produced even though one of the largest counties did not participate. Our work on standards became very critical. What are the minimal standards we wanted all children to be able to attain? Initially, we could not even use the word standards, we were saying frameworks for excellence, but then we were able to come around and use the word.”

The above mentioned P-16 council is working on the development of standards of student performance across different grade levels, especially at key transition points of grades 3,5,8,12,14, and 16. The PEW Charitable Trust funded pilot project dealing with level 12 and 14 transition points is referred to as PACTS (Performance Assessment for Colleges and Technical Schools). PACTS is described in this way:

As part of the Georgia P-16 Initiative, the University System of Georgia. The Department of Technical and Adult Education, selected high schools, and representative employers are collaborating in the development and pilot testing of an alternative system for admission into colleges and universities, technical institutes and the world of work...PACTS seeks to close the gaps between the knowledge and skills needed to exit high school and to enter the post-secondary world... Level 14 Standards for Exit and Transfer is a companion to PACTS, within the University system. It is intended to be a standards-based assessment system designed to assess college student readiness to move

from lower to upper division work, or to transfer to another university system, after completion of the Core Curriculum and lower division general education curriculum... Teachers will be invited to participate in the development process as well as in the pilot testing... Lessons learned will make it possible to determine the viability of a proficiency-based system as an alternative to traditional measures for admission into technical institute or college, or for entry into the workforce. (PACTS Memo)

Support for this project is based on this reasoning:

The current admission system in post-secondary institutions, which includes a high school diploma, type of high school curriculum (college preparatory vs. vocational/technical), grade point average, and high school testing does not ensure adequate preparation for post-secondary education or entry into the workforce. This generalization is supported by the high number of students needing remediation in college, the number of students who do not pass the ASSET test required for admission into DTAE institutions, and the number of high school graduates that employers report fail the basic skills tests required for entry into the work place. (PACTS Memo)

Although the project steering committee has prominent representation from K-12, DTAE, and USG, the primary issue facing progress is “how to integrate the QCC (K-12 Quality Core Curriculum) with the standards movement and gaining the acceptance and trust of the pre-college community to work with us and embrace those standards.” Even if projects such as PACTS are successful, these respondents have concerns about transferability:

“This approach is a very sound one. Have local groups talk about how to articulate standards, but then it is the whole question of decentralization versus centralization. How do you pull that into a state policy and get everyone on board? We very much want this to work in these pilots but then how do you translate this into a system or a state policy?”

“I wonder how much influence higher education can have on K-12 in policymaking. They are totally separate governing body, and we try to work with them. I am not really sure how to better coordinate them. What do you really say to another state to get them to work better. It is one thing to gather data and that is great and profile and do case studies but will it work in South Carolina? Alabama? That is what I wonder openly is when I see these state to state comparison studies. What good is going to be achieved?”

PREP: Postsecondary Readiness and Enrichment Program

The P-16 and PREP programs were to “spread the news of the requirements, increase students’ ability to do college work, and foster collaboration among middle schools, high schools, and colleges.” One partner institution in an active P-16 council was deeply involved with organizing Postsecondary Readiness and Enrichment Program (PREP) program on the campus and spent a lot of time talking about this initiative which is seen as an offshoot of the P-16 initiative. This is where direct interaction with parents and potential postsecondary students take place, not on the

P-16 council itself. PREP is described as a “supplemental program,” as a “safety net for children,” and as the “direct service arm of educational policy in the state of Georgia.”

The history of PREP rests with the state P-16 Council as a means to ensure that low-SES and minority students have opportunities to participate in postsecondary education. According to university officials, a Pre-College Task Force Report indicated that Georgia needed to join representatives from local communities to form a program targeted at at-risk 7th and 8th graders in Georgia schools. Approximately 40,000 Georgia public school children are considered in at-risk situations. The committee believes that at least one-third of these students would be served by PREP.

The thrust of PREP is community involvement – communicating to guidance counselors, community leaders, and alumni across Georgia's counties. The 3.5 million dollar program allows communities to participate through private donations such as the \$7 million generated from Georgia Power, Bell South, the Coca Cola Foundation, and the Woodruff Foundation. Former students return to their institutions and talk to the PREP students about the value of postsecondary education. PREP leaders anticipate that 7000 students will be served by the program this year.

The structure of PREP remains fairly simple. Each campus has a PREP coordinator that works with schools. The coordinators visit middle schools to create awareness of the program by asking students “what is it that we can do for you?” Middle school students then visit campuses and become exposed to what a college or university campus looks and feels like. In addition to providing opportunities for students to visit college campuses, PREP also provides resources for tutoring and participation in academic enrichment programs as well as counseling assistance. PREP is implemented within the context of the local culture, e.g., in urban areas, black males are recruited to be tutors; in rural south Georgia, a home person may make a difference as a mentor to a child.

PREP is designed to provide programs for students in 7th through 9th grades who are identified by their teachers as having academic potential but who are in “at risk” situations. PREP’s focus is on students in the middle grades, although service is provided for K-12 students. The idea is to begin with at risk students presently in the 7th grade and prepare them for college admission given the rising standards. In order to inform young people of the new admissions policies, the USG embarked on creating and airing 30-second rap public service radio announcements. Funding for these initiatives comes primarily from businesses, foundations, and individuals in addition to state funding. These initiatives have resulted in an agreement to develop a mutually agreed upon data base to track student progress, a voluntary math assessment for high school juniors, and a guarantee from public universities that they will graduate effective teachers. Critics say that, while thousands of middle grade students participate in PREP campus visits, measurable impact on student learning has not been achieved. Many eligible students cannot participate due to their need to work or care for family members or lack of transportation.

One respondent notes that:

“PREP does not have a focused curriculum [to overcome CPC deficiencies and improve standardized test scores]...People are bringing students to campus, giving them a tour,

taking them on field trips, engaging them in mentoring relationships, and each year you have a different set of PREP kids. PREP has done a very effective job of reorienting a generation to the values of a college experience...It is a great cultural and socialization experience, but I don't think that it is academically rigorous enough to prepare students for 21st Century education."

In addition, PREP is a parallel structure with 9 collaboratives in the state. One state level education policy maker states that: "We are trying now to pull these initiatives together and in all honesty they are not as tightly coupled as they should be." Many involved educators state that they do not see clear boundaries between many overlapping programs. Some of these educators contend that there is so much confusion that the general public would know very little, if anything, about the P-16, PACTS, and PREP initiatives.

As we can see, the P-16, PACTS and PREP efforts have accomplished a great deal and have not accomplished enough. All education actors agree that there is a long way to go to improve the communication and collaboration leading to policy alignment across education sectors. At the same time, the excitement of many who feel they are making a difference, within each sector and within their sphere of influence, is uplifting. This excitement is noted in the following quotes:

I was involved at the PREP program at our college, and I was amazed how much of a difference it makes to an at risk child. And I think about so many children who do not have this opportunity. I think PREP is an excellent program. P-16 Council Member

Well over 2,000 7th graders came to our campus. We had overall information, and our president came to speak to them. We gave them sample demonstrations, lectures, tours of the campus... we want to break down the walls that presumably surround the ivory towers...there are students who walked on this campus who had never set foot on any campus. We want them to see themselves as successful, and we want them to visualize themselves being a student here. P-16 Council Member

There has been excitement in the air when you think about it related to Georgia. We have been listed in some places 48th among education and going onto college...then we were launched into this major change -- the whole PREP program, the P-16 initiative, and others. We are making a difference. University of Georgia System Representative

Conclusion

As with any policy arena, educational reform efforts in Georgia are filled with many complexities. There is a wide divide between policy making and policy implementation as demonstrated in the discussion of examples provided in this report. There are unintended and unpredictable consequences as a result of policy implementation and, depending on the perspective of a study respondent, divergent interpretations of the meaning and potential benefit of any state or institutional level initiative (see examples of perspectives on the Georgia HOPE scholarship and P-16 Councils). Nonetheless, most study participants agree that educational reform is needed in Georgia and, in theory, support the reforms taking place in the state. One respondent describes such a changing policy landscape as a "moving target." This is certainly the case for Georgia as, on the completion of this part of our study, no doubt further modifications and changes are already in place. This study was conducted from May-June, 1999

and portrays Georgia's educational reform efforts at that point in time. Whatever changes occur, this report, may provide some context to inform future policy studies.

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Notes

1. The information used to develop the admissions and placement flowcharts was drawn from system-wide and institutional web documents. All flowcharts were presented to USG and institution representatives for verification and modification.

Appendix 1. Focus Group Protocol

Bridge Project P-16 Focus Group Protocol

Thanks for agreeing to participate in this focus group. (Introduction of focus group facilitators.) We want to find out about the educational role of the local P-16 Councils in Georgia from your perspectives as council members. Your responses and individual perspectives are all very important. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions being posed to you. The information you provide will help us to understand the P-16 Council experience from the points of view of those directly involved in their function. All of you here today.

- 1) I'd like to begin by asking each of you to introduce yourself and briefly describe your involvement in this P-16 council.
- 2) From your experience, what is the most important function/role of this P-16 council?
- 3) Please describe for me the primary issue(s) facing the council?
- 4) Think back over the time you have participated on this council. What went particularly well? What needs improvement? (What are the main challenges facing the council in doing its' job?)
- 5) Describe how the council interacts with the following constituencies:
With state officials? (Board of Regents and Department of Education)
With local postsecondary institutions?
With the local community? (parents, students, business people)
With the local school system (school administrators, teachers, counselors)
- 6) Suppose you were in charge and could make one change that could make the program better, what would you do?
- 7) What do you see as the future of this P-16 council?