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ANNUAL REPORT
2019–2020

GEORGIAN COURT UNIVERSITY

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The author Matshona Dhliwayo wisely observed, "You don't throw a compass overboard because the ocean is calm." And we didn't. Georgian Court University's Strategic Compass—our strategic plan through 2023—has guided our journey to "an even better tomorrow" when the higher education waters were relatively quiet. In early 2020, however, COVID-19 unleashed towering rogue waves that continue to affect not only Georgian Court University, but all U.S. higher education institutions. We're holding fast to our compass through this storm, too.

While COVID-19 continues to influence how we operate, we've never lost sight of our plan's four compass points for 2019–2020: academic excellence, the student experience, revenue growth, and resource stewardship. The pandemic required us to be creative, resourceful, and resilient to meet immediate needs, advance Georgian Court's mission, and most important, prepare our students to be change makers in whatever fields they choose.

We are navigating through this season of challenge and change with resilience, shared sacrifices, hope, and our ongoing commitment to expand possibility for all students. I am proud of our Georgian Court community and what we've accomplished together, and I invite you to discover our highlights of 2019–2020 through this annual report.

Sincerely,

Joseph R. Marbach, Ph.D.
President

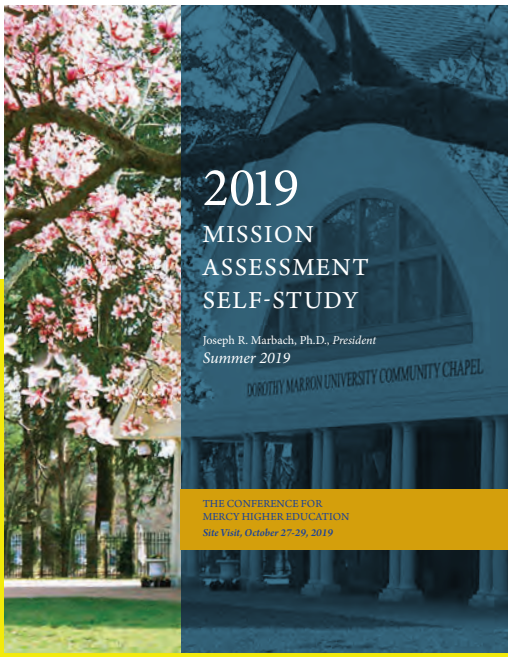
COMPASS POINT 1

MISSION FULFILLMENT THROUGH ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

In Fall 2019, Georgian Court welcomed nearly 1,800 undergraduate and 620 graduate students to our classrooms. They, along with more than 500 faculty and staff, saw opportunities to raise the bar on academic excellence, individually and as a community. We envisioned making progress toward the Strategic Compass's academic excellence milestones and have made strides in several areas.

Accreditation and Assessment

As a university, we're accountable to many educational stakeholders, including academic accreditation bodies and ourselves, for rigorous assessments.



THE ACCREDITATION TEAM COMMENDED GEORGIAN COURT FOR OUR DEDICATION TO THE MERCY MISSION.

- In October 2019, a Conference for Mercy Higher Education team visited Georgian Court as part of its peer-review process, based on a foundational self-study document completed by the Office of Mission Integration. The accreditation team commended Georgian Court for our dedication to the Mercy Mission; integration of Mercy core values in coursework; provision of service learning, leadership, and advocacy opportunities for students; and our "one-on-one care and concern for the person," among other positive criteria.
- The Office of Institutional Assessment and Accreditation supported the School of Education and school psychology programs to prepare their initial self-study documents for the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) evaluation and Spring 2021 site visit.
- All arts and sciences, business and digital media, education, and nursing academic programs updated their assessment plans for the academic years 2019–2022.

External Accolades

Georgian Court received these recognitions in 2019–2020:

- Money.com's "Best College for Your Money"
- *U.S. News and World Report*'s "Top Performer for Social Mobility" and "Best Regional Universities North"
- Phi Theta Kappa Transfer Honor Roll
- GradReports' "25 Best Online Master's in Education Degree Programs" and "25 Best Master's in Educational Leadership Programs"

New Market-Driven Programs

We introduced five new programs based on student interest and market needs:

- Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing, which can be completed in 14 months. The first cohort of students began the program in January 2021.
- M.S. in Communication and Digital Marketing, a 10-course program that balances strategic business thinking and creative marketing skills
- M.A. in Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration
- B.A. in Political Science, which includes a concentration in international relations
- B.A. in Computer Information Systems

In addition, a Teacher of Health and Physical Education certificate program with Special Education endorsement was approved by the New Jersey Department of Education. We are continuing to develop graduate-level programs in social work, nursing, and education.

WE INTRODUCED FIVE NEW PROGRAMS BASED ON STUDENT INTEREST AND MARKET NEEDS

Virtual and Physical Campuses

Our Compass Point 1 goals include expanding Georgian Court's virtual presence—and the pandemic accelerated our progress in ways not imagined when we began our Strategic Compass.

In mid-March, most classes transitioned to online or virtual for the spring semester (a predecessor to our Fall 2020 HyFlex model). Faculty, students, and staff—especially IT colleagues—quickly rose to the challenge, with such innovative approaches as giving Health and Weight Management students a video glimpse into their professor's refrigerator and "flipping" instruction by introducing course materials before class and using in-person sessions for discussion.

In May, we surveyed undergraduate and graduate students about their spring online learning experiences. Overwhelmingly, they reported having the technology and reliable access to WiFi and communications they needed to do their work. A 24/7 Help Desk remains available for students who need tech support. A partnership with Blackboard supported our off-hours Help Desk.

While much of the focus was on our virtual campus, we've made progress on renovation plans for our Lakewood campus. A contract with Aramark set into motion our campus maintenance planning. In addition, working groups from the Division of Academic and Student Affairs provided input to architects Kimmel Bogrette on the planned nursing, health, and wellness building and Casino renovations and reviewed initial designs.

CENTER FOR NURSING, HEALTH, AND WELLNESS RENDERING

COMPASS POINT 2

MISSION FULFILLMENT THROUGH EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Georgian Court students' experiences outside the classroom are as important as what they learn within it: campus traditions, how students explore and practice their faith, opportunities for servant leadership, residential life, athletics, and more. In 2019–2020, some experiences changed, were put on hold, or canceled because of the pandemic, but it's encouraging to see what has been accomplished.

The formation of Georgian Court's Council on Diversity and Inclusion, and hiring of two chief diversity officers, underscores our longstanding commitment to social justice. It has 40 student, staff, and faculty members and focuses on four areas that will influence the student experience: programming, retention and recruitment, leadership advisement, and assessment. In this essential area:

- Faculty are discussing potential changes to curriculum content and program requirements.
- Student-athletes, although sidelined in the spring semester because of COVID-19 restrictions, adopted Central Atlantic Collegiate Conference diversity and inclusion programming and formed a task force to discuss, share, and act on important issues.
- The council laid the foundation for Georgian Court's response to the death of George Floyd and other crises in social justice.

The student experience at Georgian Court during 2019–2020 continued to nourish the body, mind, and spirit:

- The campus food pantry served 129 students—37 in the fall semester and 92 in the spring, reflecting the increase in need because of COVID-19. The food pantry also assisted students enrolled in GCU academic programs that investigate food insecurity among college students and offered opportunities for service projects, such as food drives.

- On a spiritual level, more than 300 people attended the Mass of the Holy Spirit
- Seven students completed Catholic Relief Services Student Ambassador training—another opportunity to engage in social justice issues. The ambassadors presented five well-attended Salt & Light events, and two members joined New Jersey State Senate staff in efforts to restore federal budget funding for foreign humanitarian aid.
- Georgian Court students' volunteer spirit was strong, contributing thousands of hours to community/social service programs.
- Interdisciplinary faculty-led study abroad programs continued during AY 2019–2020, with the spring break trips completed before the pandemic lockdown. In addition, over the past two years, nine COIL (collaborative online international learning) connections have been established, connecting GCU professors with professors or partner organizations abroad. These efforts contribute to integrate global perspectives and international collaboration into our classrooms.

Additionally, the Office of the Provost, which develops and supports many initiatives related to the student experience, adopted a new name and a new mission. The Division of Academic and Student Affairs (ASA), as it is now known, better reflects the full complement of people who provide academic programs, student services, and student experiences, as well as the scope of their work. ASA's mission aims to cultivate an inclusive environment that engages the whole student, gives them the opportunity to develop lasting relationships, and prepares them to take action. Its many initiatives include the Internship and Experiential Learning Fair and Pathways to Career Success student mentoring.

SOUTH AFRICA

L-R: PERU, SWITZERLAND

COMPASS POINT 3

MISSION FULFILLMENT THROUGH REVENUE GENERATION AND DIVERSIFICATION

In any good novel, there's a point where the protagonist faces a challenge seemingly too great to overcome. That's not the time to put down the book.

COVID-19 is that challenge for Georgian Court University—and all of U.S. higher education. Our overall Fall 2020 enrollment—undergraduate and graduate—decreased by about 7%, which affects a variety of revenue sources, from tuition to concerts and other events open to the public to parking.

In response, the university approved a deficit of $4 million, yet because of our commitment to shared sacrifices and other factors, we believe operations will not be affected. Because of progress made toward Compass Point 3 milestones, we're positioned for long-term success. One indicator: GCU ranked among the top 51% of colleges and universities nationally in the *College Stress Test*, which analyzed the market viability of 2,800+ undergraduate institutions.

LONG-TERM SUCCESS INDICATOR:

TOP 51%

GCU'S RANK AMONG COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES NATIONALLY IN THE *COLLEGE STRESS TEST*.

One bright spot of 2019–2020—fund-raising reached a five-year high in three key areas:

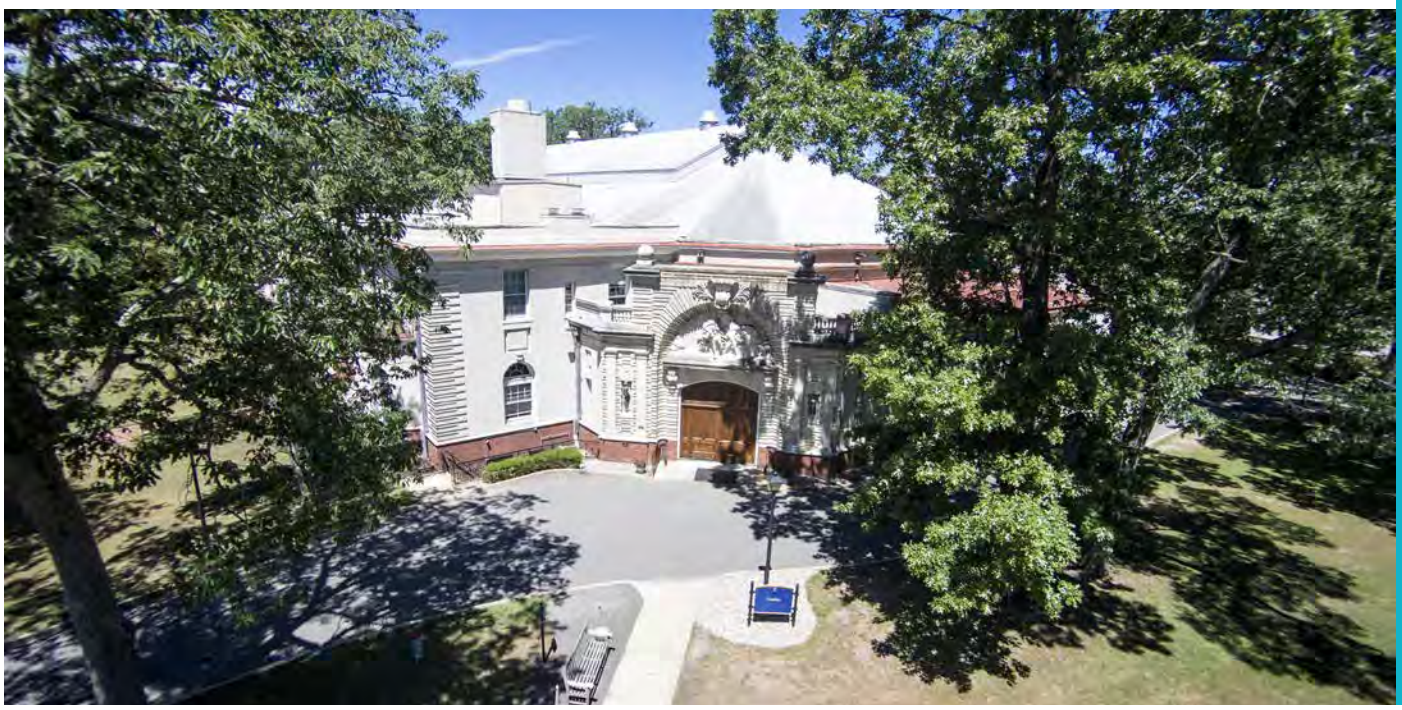
- **OVERALL PEAK ATTAINMENT OF NEARLY $1.7 MILLION,**
- **CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION FUNDING, AND**
- **MAJOR GIFTS.**

With development of a planned giving program and doubling our fund-raising staff to four members, GCU has a strong foundation for growth.

Telling the Georgian Court Story

One avenue through which Georgian Court can attract both students and donors is a clear, compelling, and consistent explanation of who we are and the education value we offer. In other words, by increasing visibility of our brand.

In 2019–2020, the Office of Marketing and Communications completed robust internal and external reviews of the GCU brand and developed new tactics for strengthening our institutional reputation. We now have in place a matrix for brand messaging, digital media, story creation, and marketing activities, with strong calls to action in all our web materials. Together with admissions marketing and communications, we've implemented Google Analytics to better track activity on admissions web pages and campaign landing pages so we can engage more fully with interested high school and transfer students.

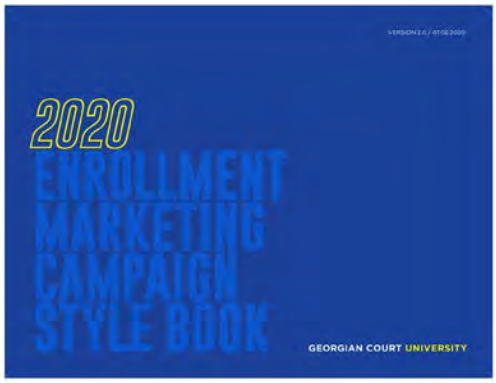


COMPASS POINT 4

MISSION FULFILLMENT THROUGH OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

There's the easy way and the better way. It would have been simpler to temporarily set aside long-term efficiency goals at the pandemic's onset and focus on managing multiple immediate challenges. Georgian Court took the wiser approach and addressed both in 2019–2020.

One major accomplishment was implementation of the AEFIS (Assessment, Evaluation, Feedback & Intervention System) software for student assessment of courses. Many faculty and staff are now trained to use the system, which includes such data as academic program goals, outcomes, and course mappings. Many staff and faculty members contributed to the successful use of AEFIS for spring course evaluations. Why is AEFIS important? We'll use the information AEFIS collects to assess teaching practices and provide a foundation to improve programs and reach accreditation benchmarks.



GCU STYLE GUIDE

We advanced several other initiatives essential to Georgian Court operations, such as:

- finalizing our contract with a new dining and facilities vendor and transitioning to a new insurance broker;
- creating a budget advisory committee;
- beginning a process to review non-academic units, including development of a review template and calendar;
- updating admissions' style guide and viewbook; and
- redesigning certain technology-related systems and processes.

University Enrollment

We believe Georgian Court, as a provider of a comprehensive liberal arts education in the Roman Catholic tradition, has much to offer undergraduate and graduate students. Some of our Compass Point 4 milestones in 2019–2020 directly relate to increasing student enrollment and acceptance rates. To reach these goals and operate efficiently, we need the right people and skills. In 2019–2020, the Office of Admissions provided training on transfer credits and thoroughly analyzed our use of the Slate admissions and enrollment system, while the Office of the Registrar focused on training in best practices and the PowerCampus software.

Spring 2020 brought tremendous uncertainty for all high school seniors because of COVID-19. It was especially difficult for those who would be the first in their families to attend college (about one-third of Georgian Court undergraduates). While applications for Fall 2020 admissions decreased, we were very pleased that our undergraduate acceptance rate was up 8.5% from Fall 2019.

We have additional reasons to look forward to continued growth, based on student surveys conducted in 2019–2020:

516

UNDERGRADUATES INDICATED TWO OF GEORGIAN COURT'S TOP THREE STRENGTHS RELATE TO STRONG ACADEMIC PROGRAMS (KNOWLEDGEABLE ACADEMIC ADVISORS AND ACCESSIBLE FACULTY).

82%

IN A GRADUATE STUDENT SURVEY SAID TEACHING IN THEIR PROGRAM WAS VERY OR EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE, AND

94%

SAID THEIR LEARNING EXPERIENCE MET OR EXCEEDED THEIR EXPECTATIONS.

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