Self-Study

Prepared for MSCHE Reaffirmation of Accreditation

GEORGIAN COURT UNIVERSITY
THE MERCY UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

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Fall 2018

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INTRODUCTION TO GEORGIAN COURT UNIVERSITY'S MSCHE SELF-STUDY

… resolve to be good today, but better tomorrow.

This quote from a letter written by the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, the Venerable Mother Catherine McAuley, to DeSales White (1841) best reflects Georgian Court University (GCU) in its current state. Using the data from the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) for 2016 and 2018, this university in the Catholic Mercy tradition, showed improvement in all areas important to its current student body. The most recent survey showed that the university had more strengths than challenges. The 2018 survey also showed higher student satisfaction and higher importance in 14 areas designated for this survey (see Appendix A). The GCU Strategic Compass, approved by the Board of Trustees on October 12, 2018, has its focus on the *Student Experience* and *Mission Fulfillment* (see Appendix B1). The self-study, completed in Spring 2018, informed the work of the GCU Strategic Compass with parallel development and related synergy. Through this self-study for the reaffirmation of Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) accreditation, the GCU community sees itself facing its challenges, acknowledging the current reality, and preparing for a preferred future (See Appendix C).

Institutional Overview

Founded in 1908 and currently sponsored by the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Georgian Court University is located in Lakewood, New Jersey. Set on a magnificent 156-acre estate formerly belonging to financier George Jay Gould, the entire campus is a

National Historic Landmark (1985) that includes an accredited arboretum. In 2004, the

institution was granted university status. Georgian Court University provides a comprehensive

liberal arts education in the Roman Catholic tradition while maintaining its historic special

concern for women. GCU became fully coeducational in 2013, after a long tradition as a college

with a day program for women only, having had evening and graduate programs open to both

men and women since 1979 and 1976, respectively (Georgian Court University, 2017r, pp. 2-3).

The mission statement of Georgian Court University follows.

> Georgian Court University, founded by the Sisters of Mercy of New Jersey in
>
> 1908 and sponsored by the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas since
>
> January 2007, provides a comprehensive liberal arts education in the Roman
>
> Catholic tradition. The university has a special concern for women and is a
>
> dynamic community committed to the core values of justice, respect, integrity,
>
> service, and compassion, locally and globally. Georgian Court University provides
>
> students with:
>
> - a curriculum broad enough to be truly liberal, yet specialized enough
>   to support further study and future careers;
> - an environment for the entire university community to grow
>   through shared educational, cultural, social, and spiritual
>   experiences; and
> - the will to translate concern for social justice into action.

Fall 2017 enrollment data shows 1,613 undergraduates and 777 graduate students, with

1,452 FTE for undergraduates and 519 FTE for graduate students. Forty-six percent of GCU's

undergraduates are Pell eligible, 43% are first-generation college students, and 40% come from underrepresented groups (Georgian Court University Fact Book, 2018, pp. A-2, G-7, G-8).

Actions Related to the 2009 GCU Self-Study

A new vision for the university was developed in 2011–2012, along with a new strategic plan for the period 2012–2017. The plan included four strategic initiatives: rebranding to promote mission; promotion of transformative education; optimizing enrollment; and strengthening leadership, planning, technology, and governance. A key strategy for achieving the plan's goals was the transformation to full coeducation, effective Fall 2013. An update on the completion of the GCU Strategic Plan 2012–2017 (Georgian Court University, 2018a) can be found on its website at https://georgian.edu/wp-content/uploads/Closing-the-2012-2017-Strategic-Plan.pdf.

Noted in the Periodic Review Report (PRR) of 2014 was the planning for and actualization of the decision to become a fully coeducational institution; the review and development of consistent and systematic planning and assessment processes based on the Strategic Plan 2012–2017; and the planned recovery of the institution from the effects of Superstorm Sandy and enrollment decreases that produced budget deficits for FY2014 and 2015.

Recommendations from the review of the PRR included the following: consistent and sustainable assessment processes that include use of direct measures for academic, student life, and general education programs as well as explicit linkages to the Institutional Learning Goals; a systematic approach to resource management, efficiencies, and new revenue procurement; and institutional planning for retention. The university responded to the recommendations related to Assessment of Student Learning in two follow-up reports submitted in April 2016 and

September 2017. The university has implemented strategic retention practices (Chart the Course and Chart Your Course) and tracking of student retention through an enhanced Office of Student Success and Retention under the direction of the assistant provost, and the receiving of a Federal Title III grant (Georgian Court University, 2017, January 26) to continue to strengthen retention programs and increase student success. The vice president for finance and administration has guided the President's Cabinet to utilize a more systematic process for budget development and accountability, linking budget planning to the university's strategic planning and following a revised budget workbook and adjusted deadlines to better align with the budget approval processes.

Significant Events Since the 2009 GCU Self-Study and 2014 PRR

Joseph R. Marbach, Ph.D., became Georgian Court University's ninth president on July 1, 2015, following a long history of leadership by the Sisters of Mercy, the founders of the university (Georgian Court University, 2015a). Dr. Marbach initiated a Strategic Compass process in Summer 2016 to identify the direction of the university for its next stage of development. The GCU Strategic Compass was approved by the Board of Trustees in April 2018 (see Appendix B1). It emphasizes mission fulfillment through academic excellence, an exceptional student experience, revenue generation and diversification, and operational efficiency and resource optimization.

The university became completely coeducational in Fall 2013. GCU saw increased undergraduate enrollments in AY2013–2014 (1,567 students, 275 first-time, 218 transfer) and AY2014–2015 (1,621 students, 228 first-time, 222 transfer). A significant decrease in first-year, full-time students occurred in AY2015–2016 (1,528 students, 151 first-time, 205 transfer), although first-year retention of this group of students exceeded expectations (85%). Since that

time, GCU has experienced steady growth in undergraduate first-year, transfer, and graduate

students (AY2016–2017: 1,591 undergraduate students, 221 first-time, 209 transfer; AY2017–

2018: 1,613 undergraduate students, 216 first-time, 314 transfer). Graduate student enrollment

(headcount) from AY2014–AY2017 was 687, 594, 711, 777 (Georgian Court University, 2018,

April). While focused on improving the operations within the Office of Admissions and gaining

partnership agreements, this office is now poised to develop the Strategic Enrollment Plan to

move the university forward.

After several years of planning and development, GCU implemented its Bridge General

Education program in Fall 2016. This revised program was developed to offer students a

coherent and integrated learning experience in the Catholic intellectual tradition. This program is

anchored in three required courses: GEN101 First-Year Seminar: Pathway to the Bridge,

GEN199 Cornerstone Course: Discovering the Self in the Big Universe, and GEN400 Capstone

Course: Visioning the Future: Justice, Compassion, and Service. The goals of the Bridge General

Education Program include (a) foundational knowledge of human cultures and the physical and

natural world, (b) intellectual and practical skills, (c) personal and social responsibility, and

(d) integrative learning. The Bridge General Education program began with a systematic process

of program assessment, with a three-year cycle of implementation (Georgian Court University,

2016a).

In conjunction with investments as result of the New Jersey 2013 Building Our Futures

Bond Act, the university contributed matching funds that significantly upgraded and enhanced its

academic buildings and instructional spaces for all three schools: School of Arts and Sciences,

School of Business and Digital Media, and School of Education (Georgian Court University,

2012). This work was completed in 2016.

The programs with the greatest growth in student enrollment over the past three years include the BSN in the Hackensack Meridian *Health* School of Nursing nursing program (a partnership program with Hackensack Meridian *Health*), the graduate M.A. in Administration and Leadership program (off-campus hybrid programs, marketing partner is K–12 Teachers Alliance), and the undergraduate programs in business administration/finance/management/marketing. The education and psychology programs continue to be strongly populated at the undergraduate level, although with significant decline in enrollment in recent years, especially in undergraduate education as this program needed to increase requirements due to changes in state certification. For education, students enroll in a major program and additionally take courses required for teacher certification. GCU operates programs out of Hazlet, New Jersey (GCU@Hazlet in partnership with Brookdale Community College) and Vineland, New Jersey (GCU@Cumberland in partnership with Cumberland County College) and enrolled 107 students at these two sites in Fall 2017. GCU began its partnership with the New Seminary, a collegiate program for Orthodox Jewish women, in 2014, enrolling 54 students in Fall 2017. New academic programs introduced since 2009 include: an M.A. in Criminal Justice and Human Rights, an M.A. in Applied Behavior Analysis, a B.A. in Latino/a and Business Studies (now B.A. in Latino Business Studies), a B.A. in Digital Design, a B.F.A in Graphic Design and Multimedia, a B.S. in Finance, a B.S. in Management, and a B.S. in Marketing. Beginning Fall 2018, GCU will offer a B.S. in Health Sciences and a B.A. in Health Profession Studies. The Georgian Court University Lions compete in 14 NCAA Division II sports as a member of the Central Atlantic Collegiate Conference (CACC). During AY2017–2018, 249 student-athletes participated in the collegiate athletic program. GCU's student-athletes are the proud recipients of the 2017 NCAA Team Works Helper-Helper Community Service

Competition Award for their community outreach efforts, putting the Mercy core value of service into action (Georgian Court University, 2017, April 21; 2018, April 9). Continuing student-athletes have a GPA of 3.08 (Fall 2017) and maintain a six-year graduation rate of 56% (average from the last four years, as of Fall 2017).

Georgian Court University's unique learning environment—where students not only earn college credit and valuable life experience, but also participate in character-building, service learning programs, intensive writing courses, and other high-impact practices—makes it one of the nation's Colleges of Distinction. The 2017–2018 honor was awarded to GCU by the nationally recognized Colleges of Distinction (2018) program, which highlights excellence in undergraduate-focused higher education. "We are honored to name Georgian Court University as a 2017–2018 College of Distinction for its continued commitment to student success," said Tyson Schritter, chief operating officer for Colleges of Distinction. "Colleges of Distinction applauds Georgian Court for pushing the envelope with its up-to-date curriculum, enriching the college experience with high-impact educational practices, and providing every student with an education that stretches far beyond what's typically required from an academic major" (para. 3–4).

Intended Outcomes of the Self-Study

During the 2016–2017 academic year, GCU began a strategic planning process by engaging Dr. Jeffrey Buller, a professor at Florida Atlantic University and author of *Change Leadership in Higher Education: A Practical Guide to Academic Transformation* (2015). GCU is using the Strategic Compass framework outlined by Dr. Buller. This process began at the initial meetings of the Board of Trustees (BOT), the faculty and staff meetings at the beginning of the fall term, and within the President's Cabinet, the Provost's Council, and the President's

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Strategic Advisory Group. Using the data and ideas generated at these meetings, and as

processed through the Strategic Planning Committee of the BOT, the university defined its

Identity Statement, stating its bright points along with its current realities as a university

challenged by tuition-based revenue, fluctuating student enrollment, and critical changes in

administration and student body demographics. From the Identity Statement, an internal

document, the university community began to define its Compass Points. The university's

Strategic Compass continued to be developed during the Spring and Fall 2017 semesters, with

input from various constituencies of the university. There was a planned synergy between the

development of the Strategic Compass and the initial work of the GCU MSCHE Steering

Committee, with concurrent alignment of the Compass Points and the MSCHE Standards of

Accreditation. The data collected for the documentation roadmap informed the Strategic

Compass development. The Strategic Compass, as aligned with the MSCHE Standards, informed

the self-study narrative, but is a separate document included as Appendix B1. The Guiding

Principle of *The Strategic Compass . . . for an Even Better Tomorrow* is as follows:

> Georgian Court University is a distinct Catholic university in the Mercy tradition,
> empowering students to shape a just and compassionate world.

> Georgian Court University is re-creating itself by designing and delivering innovative
> academic programs, with a particular emphasis on the caring professions; enhancing the
> student experience inside and outside the classroom; expanding the university's footprint
> through multiple delivery formats at multiple locations in order to diversify revenue
> streams; and efficiently managing human and other resources to achieve positive revenue
> results (Georgian Court University, October 12, 2018, p. 3).

The Strategic Compass for GCU is viewed as a fluid and flexible document, and will be continually reviewed and its objectives and tactics updated annually, as overseen by the Strategic Compass Steering Committee and the Institutional Effectiveness Committee. Its overall strategy includes the following.

The university will:

- Attract more students by diversifying the academic programs offered in response to market demands.

- Expand its physical and virtual presence by offering courses on the Lakewood campus and beyond through multiple delivery formats at multiple locations.

- Retain more students by providing the best student experience possible, informed by the best practices aligned with student success.

- Utilize strategic planning in the areas of enrollment, advancement, and academic program development, as well as the development of a campus master plan and unit effectiveness in alignment with mission to actualize maximum operational efficiencies and revenue generation and diversification (Georgian Court University, October 12, 2018, p. 3).

As is required of all colleges and universities sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, a Catholic, Mercy Mission Accountability Process is to be conducted the year prior to the institution's accreditation visit. For Georgian Court, this process began in Spring 2017, and results will be aligned with continued compliance with Standard I. The accountability process is a peer-review mission assessment process for mission accountability as defined by the Conference for Mercy Higher Education. A site visit will occur to review these findings in Spring 2019 (see Appendix D).

GCU identified key personnel for its MSCHE Steering Committee, with co-chairs for each Standard of Accreditation. This committee had a twofold charge. The first charge was to provide the documentation necessary to show compliance with the MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation and Standards of Accreditation, and these documents provided additional data to complement the process of developing the university's Strategic Compass as well as forming the basis for the self-study and the university's compliance with the MSCHE Standards. The second charge for the Steering Committee was to identify additional research areas that align with both the Strategic Compass implementation and GCU's unique story of compliance with the MSCHE Standards. The Steering Committee met regularly to share results and to articulate areas in need of strengthening to continue meeting the Standards of Accreditation at the highest level. The meeting minutes, related documents, documentation roadmap, and self-study draft documents were housed in a secure SharePoint site on the university's portal. The university was offered several opportunities to be informed of the self-study process through newsletters, review of the drafts of the self-study, and most importantly, through widespread inclusion on the sub-committees of the Steering Committee.

Self-Study and Self-Recommendations

After completing the documentation roadmap in Spring 2017, the Steering Committee began to identify university strengths and opportunities for improvement, submitting an analysis for each Standard in August 2017. These areas were synthesized by the co-chairs and presented to the President's Cabinet on August 29, 2017. While the university determined through the evidence collected that it was in compliance with all Standards, there were three significant areas for improvement. These were: communication processes need to be reviewed and directed within and without the university; unit effectiveness needs a uniform and consistent process across the

university; and university viability needs the support of operational and strategic planning, with

aligned financial resources. Action planning related to the three self-recommendations continued

with the President's Cabinet through Fall 2017 and Spring 2018, resulting in a separate initiative

with some overlap with the Strategic Compass Points of Emphasis. (See Appendix C to the GCU

Self-Study.)

Alignment of the GCU Strategic Compass, Self-Recommendations based on the self-

study, and the MSCHE Standards of Accreditation is given in Table I-1 below. It is to be noted

as well that the GCU Self-Study is based on data and events as of June 30, 2018. Additional

updates will be provided at the time of the on-site visit by the MSCHE team appointed for the

decennial review.

Table I.1

GCU Alignment of Strategic Compass, MSCHE Standards, and Self-Recommendations

GCU Strategic Compass Points of Emphasis	MSCHE Standards aligned with GCU Strategic Compass	GCU Self-Recommendations based on Self-Study with related MSCHE Standards
Mission Fulfillment Through		
1. Academic Excellence	I, II, III, V	
2. An Exceptional Student Experience	I, II, III, IV	Integrated Communication Processes (Standard II)
3. Revenue Generation and Diversification	I, II,VI	
4. Operational Efficiency and Resource Utilization	I, II,VI,VII	Plans for Continued Viability (Standards VI, VII) University Effectiveness and Planning (All Standards)

CHAPTER 1 OF GEORGIAN COURT UNIVERSITY'S MSCHE SELF-STUDY:

STANDARD I. MISSION AND GOALS

The purpose of Chapter 1 is to state clearly how Georgian Court University (GCU) is in compliance with Standard I, Mission and Goals, and to demonstrate how this standard was integrated across all campus activities.

Statement of Compliance

Standard I, Mission and Goals, of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2014) requires institutions to perform as follows:

The institution's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission (p. 4).

Georgian Court University is in compliance with Standard I, Mission and Goals, as evidenced in this self-study and as shown in detail within the documentation roadmap for this self-study. In addition, GCU demonstrates compliance with the Requirements of Affiliation for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education that align with Standard I:

Requirement 7: The institution has a statement of mission and goals, approved by its governing body that defines its purpose within the context of higher education.

The remainder of this chapter highlights specific strengths of mission and goals at GCU, identifies challenges faced by the institution, and states how the institution will continue to meet the requirements of the standard.

Strengths of Georgian Court University in Standard I

     Development and approval process for GCU mission statement. The identity of Georgian Court University as a Catholic University in the Mercy tradition is its primary strength. GCU is one of 17 Mercy colleges/universities identified as part of the Conference for Mercy Higher Education. GCU lists its affiliation as a Catholic university in the MSCHE and is listed as part of the Official Catholic Directory. As such, GCU has a clearly defined mission and values that have been developed, periodically reviewed, and updated through the collaborative efforts of students, faculty, staff, administration, and the Board of Trustees (Standard I, Criterion 1a, 1b, 1c). The current mission statement is as follows:

> Georgian Court University, founded by the Sisters of Mercy of New Jersey in 1908 and sponsored by the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas since January 2007, provides a comprehensive liberal arts education in the Roman Catholic tradition. The university has a special concern for women and is a dynamic community committed to the core values of justice, respect, integrity, service, and compassion, locally and globally. Georgian Court University provides students with:
>
> - a curriculum broad enough to be truly liberal, yet specialized enough to support further study and future careers;
> - an environment for the entire university community to grow through shared educational, cultural, social, and spiritual experiences; and
> - the will to translate concern for social justice into action.

     Mercy core values. As colleges and universities under the sponsorship of the Sisters of

Mercy became part of the larger Mercy Institute, each college/university chose their signature values based on Catholic identity and the Mercy charism. Georgian Court University, then College, as part of the New Jersey regional community, embraced the values of respect, integrity, compassion, service, and justice. These values have become embedded into the fabric and culture of GCU, and they are displayed prominently throughout campus, including on signposts visible on campus.

Mission as Key to Decision Making

GCU's mission and core values are reflected in strategic planning (Strategic Plan 2012–2017, Strategic Compass 2018–present, and in the development of the Bridge General Education Program 2014–2016). This is consistent with Criterion 1, which requires the mission and goals to "guide faculty, administration, staff, and governing structures in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, program and curricular development, and the definition of institutional and educational outcomes" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 4).

Strategic planning. GCU's mission and values are integrated into the GCU community through the major planning documents of the university. To facilitate this campus-wide integration of mission, GCU has established the BOT Mission Committee and the Mission Advisory Committee. In addition, the vice president for mission integration is a member of the President's Cabinet.

2012–2017 Strategic Plan. Mission played an integral role in the 2012–2017 Strategic Plan (Georgian Court University, 2012), clearly evidenced by the vision statement, "Georgian Court University is a leading regional university that provides a transformative education, preparing students for ethical leadership and service in the Catholic Mercy tradition" (p. 9).

Initiatives outlined in the plan serve to "reposition (GCU) as a dynamic regional university rooted in the Catholic Mercy tradition" (p. 11), promote transformative education that "foster[s] commitment to social justice and ethical leadership" (p. 12), and "encourage[s] students to become civically and culturally engaged in the Catholic Mercy tradition" (p. 12).

2018 Strategic Compass. Since the former plan has been completed, the new *Strategic Compass . . . for an Even Better Tomorrow* document clearly indicates that mission is at the heart of all areas of the plan. Each major point of the Compass speaks to the issue of mission fulfillment. The Compass Points are #1 Mission Fulfillment Through Academic Excellence, #2 Mission Fulfillment Through an Exceptional Student Experience, #3 Mission Fulfillment Through Revenue Generation and Diversification, and #4 Mission Fulfillment Through Operational Efficiency and Resource Utilization. This total integration of the mission indicates the importance and significance of GCU's mission and values and provides a format to imprint indelibly its mission on all aspects of the university. (See Appendices B1-B3 for the final version, drafts and working documents of the Strategic Compass.)

Peer review: Conference for Mercy Higher Education. As a Mercy university, GCU participates in the Conference for Mercy Higher Education where there is a strong focus on the development of mission. As a requirement for membership, GCU must complete a campus-wide Mission Self-Study and Peer Review in conjunction with the MSCHE Self-Study. The self-study site visit will take place in Spring 2019. This effort is organized by the Executive Director of the Conference for Mercy Higher Education and is completed by the campus community based on the guidelines established to determine mission effectiveness. While the study examines the current integration of mission, it also asks to identify both the

gifts of mission as seen within the community and the challenges faced by mission integration. (See Appendix D.)

Curriculum and program development. GCU's mission and core values are also embedded across curriculum in both general education and discipline-specific majors, with a focus on service.

Bridge General Education Program. The core values have a prominent role in the general education requirements of the Bridge General Education Program, initiated in Fall 2016 (Georgian Court University, 2016a). Starting in the first semester, GEN101 Pathway to the Bridge covers GCU's Mission and values and introduces the history and charism of the Sisters of Mercy. This is followed in the second semester by an interdisciplinary cornerstone course, GEN199 Discovering the Self in the Big Universe, which is designed to examine and explore the values of respect and integrity. A final general education capstone offering, GEN400 Visioning a Future: Justice, Compassion, and Service, supports the student in thinking critically about the integrated core educational experience, and students are asked to determine how to vision and commit to the future of living a purposeful life in the Mercy tradition.

Integration of service. Upon their founding in 1831, the Sisters of Mercy were known as the "Walking Sisters," as their charism called them to be amongst the poor, the sick, and the uneducated as a non-cloistered community. Since their beginning in Dublin, Ireland, the Sisters of Mercy have become known throughout the world for their work addressing the needs of their time, having committed themselves to service in 47 countries throughout the world. Sisters of Mercy also take a fourth vow of service to the poor, sick, and uneducated. The GCU community mirrors that commitment to service, as a Mercy core value and

hallmark of the GCU community. From orientation through commencement, students are

engaged in service in their clubs, organizations, athletic teams, honor societies, general

education and major course requirements, as well as national and global experiences through

service learning and community service work.

Service is integrated into both the GEN101 and the capstone GEN400 courses of the

new Bridge General Education. At GCU, service learning is an undergraduate graduation

requirement. This can be fulfilled in the general education courses or a designated service

learning course. The Office of Career Services, Corporate Engagement, and Continuing

Education is currently tracking student service learning through required coursework, with a

revised process that began in Fall 2016. During the first year of tracking, the percentage of

students completing a service learning requirement during the fall and spring semesters was

87.2% and 83.7% respectively, of those who submitted service learning contracts. (See

Service Learning Reports, Appendix E). The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

2017 results showed that 87% of first-year students and 98% of senior students reported that

service learning was included in one or more courses. These high percentages are due to the

inclusion of service learning in general education cornerstone and capstone courses, as well as

the service learning requirement for undergraduates.

Given the importance of service to the mission of GCU, the Office of Mission

Integration developed a system to track the accumulated hours of service performed by the

overall community. Data from the last three years were submitted to the President Obama's

Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll and are used in reporting the GCU

contribution to the State of New Jersey's Appleseed Report of volunteer service hours

contributed to the state. Since tracking began, the number of service hours completed by the

GCU community has increased each year with an average of almost 90,000 hours of service

per year (see Table 1.1). As a result, GCU has been recognized and included in the President's

Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll nationally and was awarded the President's

Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll Award in 2015 (Corporation for National &

Community Service, 2016).

Table 1.1

Accumulated Hours of Service Completed by the GCU Community

Academic Year	Total Hours of Service
2013–2014	70,880
2014–2015	94,745
2015–2016	100,234
2016-2017	120,705

Publicizing Mission and Goals

One of the main strengths of GCU is emphasizing the mission and Mercy core values

as the standard for behavior across campus. Publications and Critical Concerns Week

provide clear evidence that the mission and goals "address external as well as internal

contexts and constituencies" and "are publicized and widely known by the institution's

internal stakeholders" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 4).

Publications. The mission, Mercy core values, and bylaws of GCU are clearly

outlined in the Policy Manual, Volume I: Institutional Governance (Georgian Court

University, 2017k). In addition, GCU's mission is clearly stated in publicity related to the

institution, including marketing materials, all grant submissions, handbooks, online, and in

printed materials, as shown in detail in the documentation roadmap for this study.

Critical Concerns Week. The lived expression of the mission and Mercy core values

of GCU is seen through the lens of the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy of the

Americas. These Critical Concerns are: Earth, immigration, nonviolence, racism, and women.

> The Sisters of Mercy were founded out of a deep concern for persons who are poor.
> Today, that commitment is focused in five "critical concerns" that we address
> through prayer; attention to personal, communal and institutional choices; education;
> advocacy with legislators and other government leaders; and corporate engagement.
> (Sisters of Mercy, n.d.)

At the last Sisters of Mercy Chapter meeting in August 2017, it was decided that the critical concerns share a common concern of nonviolence; the Mercy Institute, along with all its sponsored works, is dedicated to play an active role in addressing these concerns. GCU has focused on the Mercy Critical Concerns through the activities of its Mission Advisory Committee.

Each year since 2006, GCU has dedicated a week of scholarly study to one of the Sisters of Mercy's Critical Concerns. Since Georgian Court University began the dynamic program, the focus has been on in-depth, scholarly study of one issue at a time, including women's issues, the environment, immigration and identity, and nonviolence. (See Appendix F for Critical Concerns Week information for 2015, 2016, and 2017.)

GCU chooses to address and highlight the importance of Critical Concerns as a lived expression of the Mercy core values. Each year, the Mission Advisory Committee determines the Critical Concerns focus for the coming year. A committee, formed from interested faculty, students, staff, and administrators, plans a weeklong series of guest speakers, panels, artists, experiences, films/documentaries, spiritual experiences, etc., as an organized series of happenings. The Mercy Collegiate Society, a student organization intended to help students become persons of Mercy, is instrumental in planning, implementing, and hosting the series of events throughout the week. To promote attendance

and foster the involvement of the entire GCU community, many university meetings and

activities are suspended during Critical Concerns Week. In addition, the value related to the

annual theme is threaded throughout curricular pieces, volunteer work, service experiences,

and other events throughout the campus.

The programming is also open to the outside community to extend the reach of

GCU as a Catholic Mercy university. As a result, events for the past three years were

attended by more than 900 people (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2

Critical Concerns Week Attendance and Themes for 2015-2017

Year	Total Attendees	Critical Concern Theme	GCU Value
2015	1,058	Integrating Critical Concerns through the Lens of Mercy and Justice	Justice
2016	1,862	Women's Voices in the Jubilee Year of Mercy	Compassion
2017	905[a]	Embracing Nonviolence in a Turbulent World	Respect

[a] Several popular events (e.g., campus-wide read and bestselling author event) were not held in 2017

Guest Speakers for Critical Concerns 2017 (Georgian Court University, 2017a)

included Kate Hennessy, granddaughter of social activist Dorothy Day, who discussed her

book, *Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved by Beauty.* Other events included a

screening of *Don't Tell Anyone/No Le Digas a Nadie,* which follows the remarkable

journey of rights activist and DREAMer Angy Rivera, who led a Q&A session following

the film, and a screening of *Escape from Room 18,* which follows a former Neo-Nazi and

an ex-skinhead on a mission to change their lives and make amends, with an appearance

by director Daniel Brea.

Campus Integration of Mercy Co-Ministers

As the Sisters of Mercy age out of the Mercy-sponsored works/institutions, it is

incumbent upon lay co-ministers to join with the Sisters as a new reality and transition in

Catholic higher education takes place. While the hope is that there will always be the Mercy

presence of vowed religious within the institution, most of leadership and employees are and

will be laypersons. There is a strong emphasis that all involved in GCU see themselves as

committed to the Catholic Mercy identity and values of the university and act in accordance as a

co-minister in this sacred work. GCU is also committed to recognizing the importance of

embracing diversity through all faith traditions and with those who do not identify as faithful to

a religious tradition. To extend the Christian foundation of GCU, partnerships have been

established with the regional Sisters of Mercy who come to campus throughout the year for

various experiences to interact with, to interact with GCU community members. For example,

the vocation director for the mid-Atlantic region is frequently on campus to attend events with

students and faculty, and Sisters of Mercy from the region come to meet the newest GCU

students each year. Furthermore, students learn about the many roles Sisters play in the world by

traveling to places such as Guyana in South America to experience Mercy in different cultures.

A number of partnerships and student support programs have formed to further

integrate Mercy into student life (Standard I, Criterion 3). For instance, GCU paired with the

Center for FaithJustice, a diocesan Catholic organization, to extend volunteer service

opportunities to students on campus, as well as Salt and Light, a branch of Catholic Relief

Services, to help students embrace the challenges of people who desperately need support

around the world. In addition, GCU students collaborated with Boston College to create and

implement Agape Latte, a student-run program to invite persons of faith to share their story in

a coffeehouse-like setting to discover how people of faith see their journey. One of the most

highly valued student organizations on campus is the Mercy Collegiate Society, which

embraces the Mercy charism and encourages students to live a merciful life while on campus

and beyond. Activities of this group include organizing the hosting and introduction for guest

speakers during Critical Concerns Week and learning to lobby on behalf of the needy.

GCU also has established partnerships and programs to promote respect and

understanding across faiths. For instance, ministers of other faith traditions are invited to

campus to meet the needs of their populations. Also, there is also a growing partnership with

RAFT (Reaching Across Faith Traditions) a nonprofit organization working to promote "shared

knowledge of all faiths" (Ford, 2017, Fall, p. 12). Finally, as the main campus of the university

exists in a city in which the majority of citizens are Orthodox Jews, GCU partners with the

Ocean County Jewish Federation, members of whom were invited to the campus to meet

students in GEN101 and explain and answer questions about the Orthodox Jewish faith.

Assessment of Mission and Goals

Criterion 2 requires "institutional goals that are realistic, appropriate to higher education,

and consistent with mission" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 4), and

Criterion 4 requires "periodic assessment of mission and goals to ensure they are relevant and

achievable" (p. 4). Both the undergraduate Institutional Student Learning Goals (ISLGs) and the

Graduate ISLGs are consistent with GCU's mission and are evaluated through a variety of

mechanisms.

Undergraduate Institutional Student Learning Goals (ISLGs). Georgian Court

University offers curricular and co-curricular learning experiences designed to help students

achieve GCU's ISLGs. Two of the undergraduate ISLGs reflect an understanding of and/or

commitment to the mission and Mercy core values of Georgian Court University; ISLG 4:

Demonstrate understanding of the Mercy core values and ISLG 6: Explore spirituality and

personal growth. It should be noted that the undergraduate ISLGs will be reviewed beginning

in AY 2018–2019.

Assessment of ISLGs is overseen by the Office of Assessment and, as of Summer 2017,

is separated from general education assessment. The GCU Assessment Plan for Student

Learning (Georgian Court University, 2016c) outlines and identifies the method for assessing

student learning related to each goal. In addition to assessment in the curriculum and co-

curriculum, other sources of data, such as NSSE, are used to assess mission and goals. Some

highlights from recent assessment related to mission are described below.

NSSE results for AY 2015–2016 demonstrate a deepening commitment to service

and volunteer work throughout a student's time at GCU; with first-year students reporting

2.7 hours a week and seniors reporting 8 hours per week. Also, NSSE results report that

76% of seniors during AY 2014, 73% of seniors during AY 2015, and 75% of seniors

during AY 2016 were developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics. In

2017, the comparison of GCU NSSE data with that of 62 other Catholic colleges and

universities showed that GCU first-year students showed significantly higher results in the

understanding of mission, but significantly lower results in the areas of the importance of

social and personal development and respect for people of other races and cultures. The

GCU senior students were on a par with the peer comparison group in all mission-related

questions in the survey, except for reflection of mission in course offerings and awareness

of personal values.

Graduate Institutional Student Learning Goals (GSLGs). GSLGs were developed

by the Graduate Council in AY 2016–2017. GCU's mission and Mercy core values were

directly integrated into these goals as evidenced by Goal 5: GCU/Mercy Integration Learning

Outcome: Integrate Mercy core values and advocacy related to the Mercy Critical Concerns

(Georgian Court University, 2017h, p. 12). Implementation and assessment of the graduate

ISLGs began in AY 2017–2018.

Faculty end-of-course reflections. The incorporation of Mercy core values in GCU

courses is measured via the end-of-course reflection survey completed by each faculty

member. For Spring 2017, 84% of faculty ($N = 195$) responding indicated they deliberately

stressed and integrated the core values into their coursework. The most frequently cited value

was respect (30.7%), followed by integrity (22.2%), and compassion (15.9%). Interestingly,

the value of service was the lowest identified value at 6.3%, even though all undergraduate

students must complete at least one service learning experience during their time at GCU and

a high number of service hours were reported to the Office of Career Services, Corporate

Engagement, and Continuing Education.

Summary of Strengths of Georgian Court University

One of GCU's primary strengths is a clearly defined mission rooted in the Mercy core

values. Examination of recent strategic plans, the current Strategic Compass, and curriculum and

program development at both undergraduate and graduate levels, provide clear evidence of

compliance with Standard I. Furthermore, students are actively engaged in the mission though

coursework, service learning, Critical Concerns Week, and student organizations.

Key Findings for Continuous Improvement in Relation to Standard I

Key findings for continuous improvement at GCU in relation to Standard I center on

communication and assessment. Although GCU has a clearly defined mission, GCU could

improve its communication of the mission. For instance, the correct mission statement appears

in major GCU publications such as the Policy Manual, Volume I: Institutional Governance

(Georgian Court University, 2017k, p. 3), Undergraduate Catalog 2017–2018 (Georgian Court University, 2017r, p. 1), Graduate Catalog 2017–2018 (Georgian Court University, 2017h, p. 1), and in the Student Handbook 2017–2018 (Georgian Court University, 2017p, p. ii); however, a different version appears in other publications, such as the Strategic Plan, 2012–2017 (Georgian Court University 2012, p. 4). Furthermore, the mission statement does not appear in publications such as the President's Annual Report and Honor Roll of Donors, 2015–2016 (Georgian Court University, 2016d) or the President's Annual Report and Honor Roll of Donors 2016–2017 (Georgian Court University, 2017, Summer). The correct mission statement needs to be placed by appropriate university personnel in relevant university publications/web pages from which it is now missing, and corrected in publications/web pages where it is now stated incorrectly. The university has addressed the web page corrections.

The Office of Human Resources needs to place the mission statement and Mercy core values in the Georgian Court University Hiring Guidelines, and candidates for positions should be asked by interviewers about each candidate's willingness to promote GCU's mission and Mercy core values. These concerns were brought to the Office of Human Resources, and the updated Georgian Court University Hiring Guidelines now include mission-related questions and evaluations of potential employees include mission compatibility. (See Appendix G for the 2018 GCU Hiring Guidelines.)

The end-of-course reflection survey submitted by faculty for 195 courses in Spring 2017 indicates that faculty emphasized at least one of the Mercy core values in 84% of the courses offered. However, service was the value emphasized the least, in only 6.3% of the courses. The students registered for service learning opportunities in 2016–2017 who completed the outcome survey indicated that only approximately 6% of them believed

service was an important value. This demonstrates that GCU needs to find ways to better align explicit awareness of mission and Mercy core values with service learning for students involved in those opportunities.

In AY 2016–2017, the vice president for mission integration met with all the vice presidents to discuss steps to update policies and procedures to identify mission and Mercy core value connectedness within their areas of responsibility. Administrators are identifying connections where they are already in place and have begun to document them. Where the connections are not yet stated, the administrators will work to identify and document them.

Historically, mission and goals were directly assessed through the undergraduate ISLGs. This will be expanded to the graduate level with the recent adoption of GSLGs. However, GCU also needs to create assessment protocols to determine the effectiveness of mission and Mercy core value integration across GCU units (e.g., finance, development, enrollment management). Although these areas certainly attempt to remain faithful to GCU's mission and goals, currently there are not appropriate measurement mechanisms in place. This area is being addressed as part of the University Assessment Plan and Guide (2018c).

Alignment with Strategic Compass

Mission and goals are essential to the success of GCU. The Strategic Compass Action Plan and Tactics continue the work of previous strategic initiatives to integrate mission and Mercy Core Values across all aspects of GCU. Each of the strategic initiatives begins with the phrase "Mission Fulfillment Through . . . " The guiding principle of the Strategic Compass states that "Georgian Court University is a distinct Catholic university in the Mercy tradition, empowering students to shape a just and compassionate world" (Georgian Court University, October 12, 2018, p. 3). The above data show that GCU can improve its results in

the area of Standard I, Mission and Goals, by following the tactics included in the Strategic

Compass Action Plan. Standard I, Mission and Goals, will continually be evaluated through

an iterative process. The tactics that explicitly state alignment with the GCU Mission and

Mercy core values are 1.2, 1.2A, 1.5B, 2.1A, 2.1C, 2.1D, 3.3C.2, and 4.8, and are listed in the

table below.

Table 1.3

GCU Strategic Compass Tactics Aligned with Mission and Values

Tactic	Strategic Compass Tactic Statement
1.2	Plan for appropriate degree and certificate programs based on GCU Mission, current and future student demographics, and market research for future employment.
1.2A	Find the right balance of majors at Georgian Court University to support the university's Mission, strategic enrollment planning, and financial viability.
1.5B	Develop new degree and certificate programs based on objective market research data.
2.1A	Develop a recruiting strategy that is GCU Mission-aligned with student financial support and addresses the quality of student who will be successful in college and in GCU's key academic programs. Include in Strategic Enrollment Plan.
2.1C	Continue to develop the comprehensive student success programs aligned with retention: "Chart Your Course," TRIO, EOF, etc. (Title III grant)
2.1D	Emphasize the benefits of a liberal education in the Catholic Tradition through continued development of the Bridge General Education Program as integral to the student's undergraduate experience and immersion into service learning and the Mercy core values.
3.3.C.2	Strategically focus on messaging that invites alumni, donors, corporations, and friends to a call of action while rallying behind our Mercy Mission.
4.8	Develop a process for student volunteerism and employment to support projects (e.g., space painting) and ongoing tasks (e.g. Switchboard)

Standard I: Mission and Goals will continually be evaluated through an iterative process. Part

of this process is the Mission Accountability Study process through the Conference for Mercy

Higher Education. (See Appendix D.) The ability of GCU to meet Standard I is strongly

supported by the evidence presented in this chapter. Additional documentation for this

standard may be found in the documentation roadmap for this self-study.

CHAPTER 2 OF GEORGIAN COURT UNIVERSITY'S SELF-STUDY:

STANDARD II. ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

The purpose of Chapter 2 is to state clearly how ethics and integrity are integrated across all campus activities, how ethics and integrity are integrated into the goals of the Strategic Compass process, and to show collegiality in the development of this self-study and the institution's strategic planning process: GCU's Strategic Compass.

Statement of Compliance

Standard II, Ethics and Integrity, of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2014) requires institutions to perform as follows:

> Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor, its contacts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully (p. 5).

Georgian Court University is in compliance with Standard II, Ethics and Integrity, as evidenced in this self-study and as shown in detail within the documentation roadmap for this self-study. The remainder of this chapter highlights specific strengths of ethics and integrity at GCU, identifies challenges faced by the institution related to this standard, and states how the institution will continue to meet the requirements of the standard.

Strengths of Georgian Court University in Standard II

Commitment to freedom and respect. Georgian Court University is compliant in

its commitment to academic freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and

respect for intellectual property rights (Standard II, Criterion 1). Georgian Court, which

offers more than 30 undergraduate and 10 graduate programs through its School of Arts

and Sciences, School of Business and Digital Media, and School of Education, takes great

pride in the wide-ranging academic research areas and intellectual pursuits of faculty and

students.

     Evidence that most clearly shows compliance with Criterion 1 includes documents

referenced in the Policy Manual, Volume IV: Faculty Personnel Policies (Georgian Court

University, 2017m); Policy Manual, Volume I: Institutional Governance (Georgian Court

University, 2017k); and Policy Manual, Volume VIII: Academic Research (Georgian Court

University, 2017n). These items, which run the gamut from grade appeals (Georgian Court

University, 2017p, p. 8) to sabbatical leave (Georgian Court University, 2017m, p. 37),

provide ample guidance about a range of issues that require the consistent application of

ethics and integrity.

> Another example is a portion of the faculty personnel policy, which emphasizes that
>
> to acknowledge that scholarly productivity is an essential component of a faculty
>
> member's duties is not to diminish the importance of excellent teaching, but rather to
>
> ensure that teaching, which lies at the heart of Georgian Court's responsibility to its
>
> students, is able to draw upon the intellectual richness that typically characterizes a
>
> community of scholars. (Georgian Court University, 2017m, p.13)

     As such, faculty dedication to scholarship further reflects GCU's promise to equip

graduate students with "integrity, intellectual surety, and a powerful sense of purpose"

(Georgian Court University, 2018c, para. 1)

In addition, GCU also underscores the importance of ethics and integrity in academics through various recognition programs. Each year, the Office of the Provost produces *Faculty Focus* (see Georgian Court University, 2017g, for an example), a compendium of faculty research activities, presentations, and publications. *Faculty Focus*, which is shared at Convocation, the university's annual scholarship brunch, and at various conferences, donor meetings, and community settings, also includes feature articles on the work of exemplary faculty. These items are also added to the university website and may be used in magazines, advertising campaigns, and promotional materials, which further reinforce GCU's public commitment to ethics and integrity in the academic realm.

GCU's academic honesty policies are monitored by the deans of the respective schools. A common reporting tool gives the deans an overview of student violations, so that these policies can be uniformly enforced. These policies are clearly stated in the student catalog (Georgian Court University, 2017h, p. 15, 2017r, p. 51).

Fostering a Climate of Respect

Georgian Court University is a Catholic university in the Mercy tradition. "The university has a special concern for women and is a dynamic community committed to the core values of justice, respect, integrity, service, and compassion, both locally and globally." The university fosters a climate of respect among students, faculty, staff, and administration from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives (Standard II, Criterion 2). The policies that GCU has adopted across all facets of the university regarding equal opportunity, affirmative action, harassment, and governance comply with the criteria. The policies put in place help to create a dynamic community consistent with GCU's mission statement: "an environment for the entire community to grow through shared educational, cultural, social, and

spiritual experiences." Evidence to support compliance with Standard II includes the Student

Code of Conduct in the Student Handbook (Georgian Court University, 2017p, p. 18–30);

Faculty Governance in the Policy Manual, Volume I: Institutional Governance (Georgian Court

University, 2017k, p. 31); and the Affirmative Action Plan in Policy Manual, Volume III:

Institution-Wide Personnel Policies (Georgian Court University, 2017l, p. 41–51).

A Fair and Impartial Grievance Policy

GCU's policies and procedures are fair and impartial and assure that grievances are

addressed promptly, appropriately, and equitably (Standard II, Criterion 3). GCU defines

its student judicial policies, faculty grievance policies, and employee problem resolution

guidelines in its policy manuals and handbooks. These are readily available to faculty,

staff, and students.

Multiple platforms provide information (policy manuals, handbooks, campus

forums)and guidance. This aligns with GCU's commitment to its Mission of cultivating "an

environment for the entire university community to grow through shared educational, cultural,

social, and spiritual experiences." Addressing complaints and grievances in a timely, fair, and

impartial manner is also reflected in several of GCU's Mercy core values (respect, integrity,

justice, compassion, and service). Upon receipt, the president refers

questions/comments/suggestions to the appropriate Cabinet member for follow up. If the

individual identifies himself or herself, the Cabinet member communicates directly to advise

him or her on the status, solution, or explanation of the issue. In 2017, a total of 42 submissions

to the suggestion box were received. In early spring 2018, there have been three.

Ethics and Integrity in Human Resources

Criterion 5 requires "fair and impartial practices in the hiring, evaluation, promotion,

discipline, and separation of employees" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 5). GCU faculty, staff and administrators collectively represent the university's greatest assets, and work tirelessly in the service of students who choose to attend Georgian Court. As referenced in the university's branding guide, *The GCU Brand* (2014a):

> Georgian Court's faculty and staff share a dedication to teaching and mentoring students that is uncompromised by other priorities; they guide their students as they are guided themselves, by the Catholic mercy core values of integrity, respect, compassion, service, and justice. Georgian Court University is the Mercy University of New Jersey: its graduates go on to do many things, each living self-determined lives of service, leadership, and joyful purpose. (p. 2).

The institutional commitment to GCU faculty, staff and administrators is evidenced through significant human resource management efforts and tools, including hiring protocols, faculty and staff policies, expansive employee benefits programming, governance structures, handbooks, campus safety and security programs, and inclusive grievance and review processes (e.g., see Appendix H for the Hiring Policies, Georgian Court University, 2014a, 2017k, 2017m).

GCU also invests significant time and resources in critical areas that contribute to a diverse, talented, and productive workforce. Recruitment, hiring, orientation, and evaluation practices for administration, faculty, and staff, aligned with the Strategic Compass Point 4: Mission Fulfillment Through Operational Efficiency and Resource Utilization, are conducted according to published policies (Georgian Court University, 2014b, 2017k, 2017l, 2017m). The process of hiring, evaluation, promotion, discipline, and separation require significant documentation that is openly available to employees. Faculty have an

additional tool in Volume IV of the Policy Manual (Georgian Court University, 2017m), which fully covers fair and impartial practices in the hiring, evaluation, promotion, discipline, and separation of faculty members.

The range of employee engagement efforts led by the GCU Office of Human Resources provides further evidence. Taking its cues from industry best practices and GCU's 2014 campus climate task force (see Appendix I, Campus Climate Task Force Report), the office has created health and wellness programs (fitness competitions, yoga, walking clubs, mindfulness seminars) open to any member of the GCU community, and continues to broaden its communications strategy: the office delivers monthly updates regarding new hires and regularly shares important, employee-related events and deadlines via e-mail and the university portal.

Most recently, the Office of Human Resources launched the video-based, online training program "Not Anymore." The program, offered in compliance with the requirements of Title IX and the responsibilities of colleges and universities to educate their employees, is intended to raise awareness and promote prevention of sexual violence. GCU encourages a culture of reporting and (a) has processes that promote equity and fairness; (b) provides support and resources; and (c) offers various avenues of prevention training and education. As of early February 2018, 84% of employees had completed the training; the director of human resources continued to work with the remaining employees and their managers to ensure all employees complete the training.

Ethics and Integrity in Telling the GCU Story

One of GCU's biggest strengths is its aggressive effort to engage all stakeholders—students, faculty, staff, alumni, administrators, donors, employers, and the community-at-large—in the advertising, recruitment, and promotional activities of Georgian Court

University. With the help of various departments, the university produces and distributes

dozens of publications, internal and external reports, catalogs, presidential updates, web

pages, and other items with the intent of informing others about the merits of a GCU

education and the successful outcomes and third-party recognition (see Table 2.1: *Recent*

Recognition of Georgian Court University) associated with the university. Such broad

engagement promotes honest and truthful public relations and maintains compliance with

Standard II, Criterion 6.

Table 2.1

Recent Recognition of Georgian Court University

Source	Recognition
U.S. News & World Report	Best Regional Colleges/Universities (North)
Colleges of Distinction (2017–2018)	Catholic Colleges of Distinction; New Jersey Colleges of Distinction; Colleges of Distinction Recognition for Business, Education, and Nursing
Strive for College Partner (2017–2018)	Enrolling and graduating low-income and first-generation college students
Washington Monthly (2017)	Best Bang for the Buck
Champion of Good Works (2017)	Honored by the Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey (CIANJ) for second year in a row for supporting NJ charities for housing, hunger, education, and health
Abound: Finish College (2017)	2017 Top Degrees for Adult Undergrads in New Jersey; 2017 Top Degrees for Adult Undergrads in the Tri-State Area
Nonprofit Partner of the Year (2017)	Awarded by Greater Toms River Chamber of Commerce for local commitment to service
Guide to Military Friendly Schools: Special education issues of *GI Jobs* and *Military Spouse* magazines (2017)	GCU, which participates in the Yellow Ribbon program for military veterans, was showcased as a 2017 Military Friendly® School in Victory Media's annual *Guide to Military Friendly® Schools*, special education issues of *GI Jobs*® and *Military Spouse* magazine, as well as on militaryfriendly.com.

For example, in 2016, faculty, staff, students, and graduates collaborated on viewbooks,

brochures, advertising, social media campaigns, photo and video shoots, e-mail marketing, media

placements, community presentations, broadcast interviews, and promotional materials—all

touting GCU's progress (for example, see Appendix J, GCU Search Piece 2015–2016). While

much of the work targets prospective students and their families, a significant portion is also

meant to elevate brand awareness and institutional recognition, improve perception of GCU, and

provide important information to target audiences.

   Two areas of emphasis are accountability and accessibility, especially in relation to the

cost of attendance, financial aid options, scholarships, and other money matters. Some of the

evidence that most clearly shows GCU's compliance (Standard II, Criterion 7) is located in the

Student Handbook (Georgian Court University (2017p), Undergraduate Catalog (Georgian

Court University (2017r), and Graduate Catalog (Georgian Court University (2017h).

Comprehensive information is outlined in as an easy-to-read resource and reference. This is in

alignment with GCU's mission, which is committed to the core values of respect, integrity,

justice, compassion, and service. Providing such information also addresses integrity and

service, and reinforces GCU's commitment to (a) transparency in disclosures of cost; and

(b) providing resources to the underserved, poor and uneducated (see GCU HEOA compliance

webpage: Student Consumer Information: https://georgian.edu/heoa/).

   GCU communications strategies are evaluated in various ways.. For example, an

integrated marketing campaign to support enrollment marketing considers the number of

registrants for Open House events, digital advertising click-throughs to www.georgian.edu, or

student and family open rates for YouTube videos and GCU-sponsored e-mail campaigns. A

brand awareness effort, meanwhile, may focus on key messages the university wants to

amplify, including student and alumni success, and may incorporate various social media and

digital metrics (Google analytics, user engagement, financial donations, content shares, or conversions based on a specific call to action).

GCU's successful 2016 "Values" marketing campaign and annual Commencement Spotlight campaigns are examples of how the university positions successful students to help share the GCU story with prospective students, influencers, media outlets, employers, potential donors, and others. Based on select criteria, faculty and staff recommend strong student candidates for inclusion in a paid media advertising campaign that also receive prominent display on the GCU website and across GCU social media channels. Similarly, outstanding students in academics, athletics, and co-curricular leadership areas have the opportunity to manage the popular Takeover Tuesday, an Instagram series that gives students control of the university's account and allows them to illustrate a typical day in the life of a GCU student (see https://georgian.edu/marketing/social-media/takeover/).

Consistent with Standard II, Criterion 8, GCU complies with all federal, state, and commission reporting policies. Information regarding disclosure of current information on assessments, graduation, retention, and certification or licensure rates are accessible via the Student Consumer Information page (www.georgian.edu/heoa), which is linked from GCU's homepage. Furthermore, GCU complies with the commission's substantive change policy. In recent years, the only substantive changes have involved additional locations. All teaching sites that function as additional locations were approved by the MSCHE as additional locations before they began operation, and changes and relocations were reported to the MSCHE in accordance with its policy, including three additional location changes (Diocese of Camden, Diocese of Trenton, and Hazlet) in 2016.

Ethics and Integrity: Assessment Practices

Consistent with Criterion 9, GCU is committed to the ongoing evaluation and periodic assessment of institutional policies, processes, and practices and the manner in which these are implemented. This is in alignment with GCU's mission, which is committed to the core values of respect, integrity, justice, compassion, and service. The policy manuals of the university have been reviewed and updated as follows: Volume I in 2017, Volume II in 2014, Volumes III and IV in 2018, Volume V in 2014, and Volumes VI and VII in 2016 (see https://georgian.edu/publications/). The Student Handbook (see https://georgian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/GCU-Student-Handbook.pdf) is updated yearly by the Office of Student Life and underwent significant review prior to the AY 2017–2018 publication. Recent reviews of the Academic Honesty Policy and the research policies as defined for the GCU Internal Research Review Board (IRRB) show key GCU policies related to its expected ethics and values. While a concerted effort was made to review the GCU policies in AY 2015–2016 using an external consultant, GCU recognizes the need to have an ongoing, systematic process for regular review of its policies and manuals. The review in 2015-2016 resulted in an updated Vol 1, a new Vol 6 and a new Vol 8, all in 2016. Vol 2 is currently under final review. Human Resources (HR) volumes were overseen in HR committee. Vol 4 is regularly reviewed by faculty. There is a committee in Vol 1 that can be named by the President.

Summary of Strengths of Georgian Court University

As a Catholic Mercy university, with a mission rooted in the Mercy core values, ethics and integrity are a strength of GCU. Policies, procedures, and publications provide clear evidence of compliance with Standard II. Furthermore, future compliance with Standard II is promoted through the incorporation of ethics and integrity into the Strategic Compass.

Key Issues for Continuous Improvement in Relation to Standard II

An outcome of this self-study identified a gap in the consistent coordination of information across various stakeholder channels (i.e., students, staff, faculty, and their subgroups) at GCU. As a result of these findings, GCU has developed workgroups to address this issue and is creating a new vehicle to regularly inform and engage internal audiences. This gap was identified before and during the Strategic Compass planning phase, and is initially being addressed by the Office of Human Resources, Office of Information Technology, and Office of Marketing and Communications (see Self-Recommendation #2: Integral Communication Processes [Communication Integrity]).

The Office of Human Resources is also addressing a pressing concern of faculty and staff raised in the campus climate report by conducting a comprehensive salary study. From 2016 to 2017, the department worked closely with university President Joseph R. Marbach, Ph.D.; Provost William J. Behre, Ph.D.; and a cross-section of employee volunteers to determine if there were compensation gaps within the faculty ranks and among staffers. After more than a year of extensive research and consultation, the group concluded there were, indeed, pay gaps that needed to be addressed for 27 faculty members and 23 staffers among GCU's 300-member full-time workforce.

In late 2017, the study group recommended an action plan that would gradually increase the compensation of a select number of salaried employees, as per approval by the GCU Board of Trustees. Research continues as they evaluate job titles and position expectations and examine any disparities in pay among hourly employees whose compensation may include overtime.

An outcome of the self-study is that GCU recognizes the critical role of adjunct

faculty. Adjunct faculty represents a significant portion of educators at the university

however, those in the positions change frequently. The Office of the Provost is examining

ways to make the salaries of GCU adjunct faculty more competitive, given steep market

demands for university-level instructional talent in local counties.

Alignment with Strategic Compass

Ethics and integrity are essential to the function of Georgian Court University. The

above data showed that GCU can improve its results in the area of Standard II, Ethics and

Integrity, by following the actions included in the Strategic Compass Action Plan and in

Self-Recommendation 2 of this self-study, which will consider integral communication

processes and communication integrity. In addition to mission (Standard I), ethics and

integrity (Standard II) are aligned with all GCU Strategic Compass Points. The GCU

Strategic Compass Points are #1 Mission Fulfillment Through Academic Excellence, #2

Mission Fulfillment Through an Exceptional Student Experience, #3 Mission Fulfillment

Through Revenue Generation and Diversification, and #4 Mission Fulfillment Through

Operational Efficiency and Resource Utilization. Within Compass Point #4 is the statement

"The university will develop a strong brand that promotes its mission, outcomes, and shared

experiences such that Georgian Court becomes a first-choice university for an increasing

number of ambitious students" (Georgian Court University, October 12, 2018, p. 12).

Tactics that explicitly state alignment with ethics and integrity are 1.2, 2.1A, 3.3A,

3.3B, 3.3C, 4.10B, 4.10C, and 4.12. See Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2

GCU Strategic Compass Tactics Aligned with Ethics and Integrity

Tactic	Strategic Compass Tactic Statement
1.2	Plan for appropriate degree and certificate programs based on GCU Mission, current and future student demographics, and market research for future employment.
2.1A	Develop a recruiting strategy that is GCU Mission-aligned with student financial support, and addresses the quality of student who will be successful in college and in GCU's key academic programs. Include in Strategic Enrollment Plan.
3.3A	Fundraising: Capital Campaign. Determine readiness to develop and plan for a Capital Campaign based on the university's Strategic Advancement Plan, and implement based on that assessment.
3.3B	Review long-term costs (e.g., decreased morale, staff attrition, financial and human resources wasted on searches that do not result in retained staff) and benefits (e.g., increased donor funds) of an immediate Capital Campaign launch v. postponing launch until OIA has stabilized (approximately 6 months, see below).
3.3C	Reorganize OIA following established best practices for realignment of individuals in the workplace. For instance, review organizational structure. Does it need to be expanded or collapsed; is it current to OIA goals? Review job descriptions and specifications, interview current team members.
4.10B	Develop an intranet, replacing the portal for information sharing, where employees can communicate and share information that others need. Key tactic for immediate broad improvements across the university. It will enable all employees to provide better service, which will support our student-focused brand.
4.10C	Develop and maintain department policy and procedure handbook.
4.12	Strengthen institutional recognition and the GCU brand.

Standard II, Ethics and Integrity, will continually be evaluated through an iterative

process driven by compliance with all applicable federal, state, and commission reporting

policies, regulations, and requirements. In addition, GCU will be more directive in its

periodic review of policies and policy manuals. Additional documentation for this standard

may be found in the documentation roadmap for this self-study.

CHAPTER 3 OF GEORGIAN COURT UNIVERSITY'S MSCHE SELF-STUDY:

STANDARD III. DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to state clearly how Georgian Court University (GCU) complies with Standard III, Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience, and to demonstrate how this standard is related to the mission of GCU and integrated into GCU's strategic planning process, GCU's Strategic Compass.

Statement of Compliance

Standard III, Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience, of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2014) requires institutions to perform as follows:

An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence at all program, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program pace/schedule, level, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations. (p. 7).

Georgian Court University is in compliance with Standard III, Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience, as evidenced in this self-study and as shown in detail within the documentation roadmap for this self-study. In addition, GCU demonstrates compliance with the two Requirements of Affiliation for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education that align with Standard III:

- *Requirement #9:* The institution's student learning programs and opportunities are characterized by rigor, coherence, and appropriate assessment of student

achievement throughout the educational offerings, regardless of certificate or

degree level or delivery and instructional modality.

- *Requirement #15:* The institution has a core of faculty (full-time or part-time) and/or

  other appropriate professionals with sufficient responsibility to the institution to

  assure the continuity and coherence of the institution's educational programs.

The self-study inquiry has also targeted a specific suggestion emerging from the

2014 Periodic Review Report (PRR) that the institution develop, implement, and sustain a

general education assessment plan that clearly articulates linkages between course-level,

program-level, and university-level student learning goals. This analysis indicates that GCU

has made strides in reviewing and refining the General Education Program (Georgian Court

University, 2016a) and its implementation and continues to expand assessment of learning

outcomes (Georgian Court University, 2016c). The remainder of this chapter highlights

specific strengths of the student experience at GCU, identifies challenges faced by the

institution, and states how the institution will continue to meet the requirements of

Standard III.

Strengths of Georgian Court University in Standard III

Coherent student learning experience that promotes synthesis of learning. GCU has

a wide variety of undergraduate and graduate programs that provide students with a coherent

learning experience as indicated by Criterion 1, which requires

certificate, undergraduate, graduate, and/or professional programs leading to a degree or

other recognized higher education credential, of a length appropriate to the objectives of

the degree or other credential, designed to foster a coherent student learning experience

and to promote synthesis of learning. (Middle States Commission on Higher Education,

2014, p. 7)

GCUs undergraduate degree programs range from 120 to 136 credits. The graduate

programs range from 30 to 68 credits for master's degree and various certificate programs.

Broadly speaking, GCU's undergraduate curriculum can be divided into two parts:

general education and specific major requirements. Graduate programs focus on major content

above the bachelor's degree. National and international professional associations accredit many

of GCU's undergraduate and graduate programs, which is an indicator of the quality of

academic programs. Accreditors include ACBSP for business, TEAC/CAEP for programs

preparing elementary and secondary school teachers, CACREP for counseling programs, CCNE

for nursing, and CSWE for social work programs. The school psychology program is approved

by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

Curriculum Planning

Curriculum planning at Georgian Court University is an ongoing, iterative process. In

terms of curriculum and related student offerings, planning follows a regular pattern. In order to

determine curricular demands and the distribution of resources, the provost and deans review

program enrollments and staffing annually. The provost also reviews data on student demand

with the vice president for enrollment management. In particular, these reviews focus on

current programs with low admissions yields in order to identify areas of potential weakness

from a prospective student perspective. They also review programs that students request that

GCU does not currently offer in order to identify potential new programs. When program

possibilities emerge from these discussions, an outside research firm is typically employed to

confirm or disconfirm widespread demand for the program. Finally, where relevant, New Jersey

Labor Statistics are explored to determine if a market need for professionals in these fields

exist. Recent analyses have suggested a local need for the newly approved health sciences degrees. GCU has updated its new program approval process and program withdrawal curricular process for faculty in Volume 4 of its Policy Manuals.

GCU regularly uses enrollment and outcomes data to assure that its current programs retain student interest. GCU currently offers 35 undergraduate and 11 graduate degree programs. Popular undergraduate majors include nursing, business, English, psychology, and biology. GCU has a long history and strong reputation in teacher preparation, for which completers receive state certification. The largest graduate enrollments are in education, psychology, and business.

In an effort to boost enrollments, GCU has entered into several marketing agreements with third-party providers. In each of these agreements, the university's partner provides marketing and technical support. GCU, however, maintains close control of the curriculum. In addition, all of the faculty who teach GCU courses marketed by these providers are GCU employees. Whenever possible, the university seeks to maintain a mix of full-time faculty and adjunct faculty. One partnership (VCamp/Savant), which offered its first courses in January 2018, represents GCU's continuing efforts to offer an undergraduate degree-completion program online. However, this partnership was not successful and is discontinued. With this program and other online course offerings, the university has committed to building online courses using best practices. The university has committed to offering extensive *Quality Matters*® training to both full-time and adjunct faculty through its recent Title III grant.

Previous online program development occurred in 2003 with a Sloan grant to offer a distance learning degree completion of its existing B.S. in Business Administration, and in 2007, the offering of an accelerated online version of its M.A. in Administration and

Leadership program. The first online program, although not populated, did stimulate development of online courses. The second program is offered to one cohort per year. All of GCU's online programs and certifications can be viewed at GCU Online.

When the GCU faculty plan curriculum, they must build into their proposals appropriate rigor, student learning goals, and assessments. They follow faculty Program Approval processes in Volume 4 of the Policy Manual. In addition, new programs are approved by the curriculum of the school in which the program is being sponsored, the Faculty Assembly, and then committees of the Board of Trustees. Below are three examples of curricular development efforts to illustrate this process and procedures.

Health sciences. In late 2014, the provost convened a group of faculty members from multiple disciplines to explore potential new majors at GCU. This group produced a report that explored labor statistics, GCU's capacity, and potential student interest. This work culminated in a report that was submitted to the provost in Fall 2015 (see Appendix K for the report). The provost then engaged a third-party consultant to verify potential student demand. The consultant's work looked primarily at external demand indicators (such as Google searches for different programs). This work winnowed down the list of potential majors. Based on demand seen in GCU's admissions office, health sciences became a focus.

Next, a multidisciplinary faculty group convened in 2016 to design a health science major. The group ultimately chose to recommend two majors. The first is a B.A. likely leading to direct entry into the workforce. The second is a B.S. that is designed to meet the needs of students looking to matriculate into a graduate health-related program. Both of these programs have articulated student outcomes. They each have a curricular design that includes progressively

more rigorous classes so that students remain challenged as they progress in the degree program. Finally, each program has, at its inception, a plan for outcomes assessment (see course proposal documents).

Before a plan goes to the faculty for approval, the provost reviews the proposal. The provost's review focuses on GCU's capacity to deliver the program as well as the evidence of demand for the program. While the provost does act as a "critical friend" in terms of the academic substance, the faculty are the final arbiters of the program's academic appropriateness. (See Faculty Policy Manual Vol 4.18.1 for The Program Approval process.)

The proposal for the B.A.in Health Professional Studies and B.S. in Health Sciences was approved by the faculty assembly in Fall 2017. To help assure appropriate content and rigor, it also underwent external review in Fall 2017. It was approved by the GCU Board of Trustees and the New Jersey Presidents' Council in Spring 2018. Full implementation will occur in Fall 2019.

Teacher education curriculum. In August 2017, the School of Education received curriculum revision approval from the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) for undergraduate and graduate teacher education certification programs that met newly revised state requirements. The new programs include additional clinical practice hours and new courses in special education along with clinical experience in that setting.

The process for the education programs revision began in Fall 2015, when a Teacher Education Task Force was formed. The task force consisted of department faculty, the director of field placement, and the School of Education dean, who assembled at standing bimonthly meetings for over a year. During this time, the group met with NJDOE personnel to understand the new requirements. They designed and discussed possible solutions. They reported to the

wider faculty, sharing proposed program details and calling for feedback. This included

Department of Teacher Education meetings (Spring 2016, Fall 2016, Spring 2017), School of

Education meetings (Fall 2016, Spring 2017), the multidisciplinary faculty group—Teacher

Education Coordinating Committee (Spring 2017) and the Faculty Assembly (Spring 2017).

Program offerings that exceeded the NJDOE regulation requirements were agreed upon and

submitted for approval. The programs will be fully implemented commencing Fall 2018.

The Bridge—Georgian Court's General Education Program. The Bridge General

Education Program was initiated at Georgian Court University (2016a) in Fall 2016 after a

three-year process of committee review of the General Education Program and the development

of a revised program. The General Education Committee's work is a direct result of the

intentional development of program assessment processes (III.5a, III.5b). The committee worked

to develop goals, objectives, assignments, and assessments for the new courses (GEN101,

GEN199, GEN400) as well as apply goals to the courses that comprise the Bridge General

Education Program and develop common objectives, assignments, and assessments. This was

achieved through numerous meetings, discussions, and debates over the three-year period in an

effort to develop criteria that reflected the university's mission.

The Bridge's name began as a compromise between two proposed models. When

selected faculty attended the AAC&U summer institute on general education assessment,

they used the name as a way of clarifying the distinction between our old and new programs.

In several sessions, task force leaders encouraged the faculty to maintain the Bridge as its

moniker as a distinctive way to convey the program's design. It helps highlight the program's

transformative vision, as well as promote integrative learning with a student's chosen field of

study. The use of the Bridge name ultimately encourages students to envision pathways of

lifelong learning informed by the university's mission and Mercy charism.

Today, the Bridge General Education Program provides students with rich and diverse learning experiences that offer a cogent and integrated learning experience in the Catholic intellectual tradition, the university's Mercy core values, and its special concern for women. The Bridge program aims to cultivate passion for intellectual growth and to foster informed, responsible, and creative citizenship for a complex 21st -century world. In its current strategic plan ("The Strategic Compass"), the community has summed these goals into a succinct guiding principle: "Georgian Court University is a distinct Catholic university in the Mercy tradition, empowering students to shape a just and compassionate world." (See Georgian Court University, October 12, 2018, p. 3).

The Bridge program emphasizes the importance of critical inquiry that leads to knowledge across fields of study and provides a means for students to think critically and creatively, connecting, building upon, and bridging what they learn in their general education courses to their major area of study. The Bridge program offers a sufficient scope to draw students into new areas of intellectual inquiry, expanding their cultural and global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and preparing them to make well-reasoned judgments outside as well as within their academic field. Students examine conditions necessary for peace, justice, and sustainability, as well as the ways mercy and justice are integral for how we confront the present and vision the future. The Bridge General Education Program has four goals and related learning outcomes (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Bridge General Education Program Goals and Related Learning Outcomes

Goal		Learning Outcome(s)
GOAL 1:	Foundational Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World	1a. Students will demonstrate the ability to apply foundational knowledge in the arts, humanities, languages, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences.
GOAL 2:	Intellectual and Practical Skills	Students will demonstrate competence in 2a. Critical and creative thinking, grounded in inquiry, analysis, and synthesis of information 2b. Written and oral communication 2c. Quantitative literacy 2d. Information literacy 2e. Teamwork and problem solving
GOAL 3:	Personal and Social Responsibility	Students will demonstrate 3a. Ethical reasoning 3b. Global awareness and respect for diverse cultural perspectives 3c. Knowledge of the university's mission and Mercy charism 3d. Civic knowledge–local/global
GOAL 4:	Integrative Learning	4a. Students will demonstrate the ability to make connections among courses in multiple disciplines, as well as between their experiences inside and outside the classroom.

The Bridge program (Table 3.2) enables students to envision a future shaped by their engagement with the university's mission and Mercy charism, as evident in GEN101 Pathway to the Bridge, GEN199 Discovering the Self in the Big Universe, and GEN400 Visioning a Future: Justice, Compassion, and Service. Georgian Court University's mission articulates its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and outcomes. The Bridge goals are linked to the mission statement and provide a clear plan to guide the institution as it fulfills its mission (III.5a, III.5b). Transfer students may have some requirements waived, depending on their coursework before enrolling at GCU. However, within the Bridge program is a *Common Intellectual Experience* required of all undergraduate students. None of these four requirements is waived because of their centrality to the university's mission.

Table 3.2

The Structure of the Bridge General Education Program at Georgian Court

Course	Credits
Pathway to the Bridge (GEN101)	2 credits
Cornerstone: Discovering the Self in the Big Universe (GEN199)	3 credits
Academic Writing and Research	3 credits
History	3 credits
Literature	3 credits
Philosophical Inquiry	3 credits
Visual and Performing Arts	3 credits
Modern Language/Culture/Global Studies	3 credits
Social Sciences (one discipline)	3 credits
Social Sciences (a second discipline)	3 credits
Natural Sciences with Lab	4 credits
Quantitative Analysis	3–4 credits
Common Intellectual Experience	
Religious Studies	3 credits
Ethics	3 credits
Shaping Lives: Women and Gender	3 credits
Capstone: Visioning the Future: Justice, Compassion, and Service (GEN400)	3 credits

Writing Intensive (WI) courses. The General Education Program also requires that all undergraduate students complete a minimum of four Writing Intensive (WI) courses. Course sections are designated as WI on the course schedule for easy identification. Again, transfer students may complete fewer than four WI courses at GCU, depending on their previous educational experiences in academic writing.

Faculty Ownership of Curriculum at GCU

GCU faculty are qualified for the positions they hold and are effective in teaching, assessment of student learning, scholarly inquiry, and service. Ninety-one percent of GCU full-time faculty hold terminal degrees. The faculty ensure transparency of departmental grading through a grade distribution report for each academic term that is shared with all faculty at an open forum. Criterion 2 requires "student learning experiences that are designed, delivered,

and assessed by faculty (full-time or part-time) and/or other appropriate professionals" (Middle

States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 7). Faculty are surveyed at the end of the

semester on the effectiveness of their teaching conducted by the university's Office of

Assessment. The executive reports on the End-of-Course reflection can be found on the GCU

assessment webpage. In addition, students regularly assess the quality of teaching and learning

through the end-of-course surveys using the ETS® Student Instructional Report (SIR II) or

Campus Labs Course Survey for Online Courses. Faculty routinely engage in scholarly inquiry

and report those activities annually, which are reviewed by their chairs/deans, often with

recommendations for improvements. The annual *Faculty Focus* publication, a public

document, reports on faculty scholarly activities (Georgian Court University, 2017g). In

addition, GCU faculty routinely engage in service activities, reporting 4,214 faculty service

hours for the 2015–2016 academic year to the Office of Mission Integration.

Faculty at GCU

Faculty are sufficient in number as evidenced by GCU's faculty to student ratio (1:13).

There are 85 full-time faculty and 175 part-time faculty at GCU (AY 2016–2017). Teaching is

the primary responsibility of GCU's faculty, with a 4 + 4 teaching load as the norm. Faculty

are provided with and utilize sufficient opportunities, resources, and support for professional

growth and innovation. Funds are available each year for professional development. In addition,

there are ample opportunities for on-campus development.

In an effort to centralize the coordination of professional development workshop offerings

and improve communication with faculty, the university planned for and opened a Center for

Teaching and Learning, which launched in Fall 2017. The Center for Teaching and Learning is

designed to promote GCU's mission by supporting GCU faculty in the areas of teaching,

advising, scholarship, and service. The center reports to the Office of the Provost. Decisions

about topics for professional development activities and resources come from analyses of the

annual *Faculty Activity Report* (see Appendix L); course reflections; course evaluation forms

completed by students; NSSE; and information received from consultations with deans,

department chairs, faculty, the Faculty Development Committee, the Third-Year Review

Committee, and the director of assessment. In 2016-2017, the director of assessment offered

multiple workshops that addressed the teaching of critical thinking and the improved

assessment of student performance using rubrics and signature assignments. Examples of

workshops offered to faculty include: Using Classroom Assessment Techniques, Assessing

Critical Thinking, From Assignment to Rubric, and Active Students = Engaged Students.

GCU's faculty are reviewed regularly and equitably based on written, disseminated,

clear, and fair criteria, expectations, policies, and procedures in Volume 4: Faculty Personnel

Policies (Georgian Court University, 2017m). GCU's tenure and promotion process focuses on

teaching, scholarship, and service, activities that are described in that volume. Full-time faculty

have students review all courses before their third-year reviews and then a selection of courses

on a schedule thereafter. All full-time faculty members are evaluated annually by chairs/deans

using the faculty-approved *Faculty Activity Report* document, which includes activities in

teaching, scholarship, and service. New full-time faculty members undergo a major review in the

third year by peers, chair, dean, and provost, with written feedback returned to the faculty

member undergoing review. This review includes peer, chair, and dean observation and

evaluation of teaching. The third-year review process is supported by the Center for Teaching

and Learning. Full-time faculty members undergo a rigorous peer and administrative review

when they apply for tenure after the sixth year of teaching or for full professor after earning

tenure and promotion to associate professor. This review includes chair and dean observation

and evaluation of teaching. After receiving tenure, full-time faculty members continue to submit

the annual *Faculty Activity Report*, which is reviewed by the chair and school dean.

Part-time faculty members' teaching is reviewed by the chair or program director during

their first semester. Students evaluate the courses of part-time faculty members on a schedule

delineated in Volume 4: Faculty Personnel Policies (Georgian Court University, 2017m).

Descriptions of Programs of Study

The curriculum and other requirements for all academic programs are provided in detail

in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs, which are revised each year by the faculty to reflect

the current curriculum. Updated versions of the catalogs are published each year in the summer

before the start of the academic year. The current catalogs and links to the most recent five years'

catalogs are kept on a single webpage. Catalogs form the basis for "progress charts," which list

program requirements in the form of a table. Each undergraduate student is provided with a

progress chart on which degree progress is kept current by the student and academic advisor.

Learning Opportunities and Resources

Multiple learning opportunities and resources are made available to students. GCU

offers enough course sections in varied formats (hybrid, face-to-face, online) and sufficient

frequency (in addition to fall and spring semesters, there are two 7.5-week sessions per

semester, a winter session, and five summer sessions) to allow for regular progress toward a

degree. This meets Criterion 4 guidelines, which requires "sufficient learning opportunities and

resources to support both the institution's programs of study and students' academic progress"

(Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 7). See Tables 3.3–3.5 for course

type, modality, and sites for the Spring 2018 schedule of classes.

Table 3.3

GCU Course Sections Spring 2018: Class Type

Class Type	Number of Sections	Percent of Total
Externship	1	0.13%
Field	24	3.10%
Internship	23	2.97%
Laboratory	105	13.55%
Lecture & Laboratory	9	1.16%
Lecture	536	69.16%
Practicum	11	1.42%
Research	8	1.03%
Seminar	18	2.32%
Studio	40	5.16%
Total	**775**	

Table 3.4

GCU Course Sections Spring 2018: Class Modality

Class Type	Number of Sections	Percent of Total
Face-to-Face	340	43.87%
Hybrid	140	18.06%
Independent Study	63	8.13%
Laboratory	114	14.71%
Online	118	15.23%
Total	**775**	

Table 3.5

GCU Course Sections Spring 2018: Course Sites

Class Sites	Number of Sections	Percent of Total
Cumberland CC	6	0.77%
Education (KTA)	23	2.97%
Hazlet	20	2.58%
High Schools	6	0.77%
Lakewood - Online	118	15.23%
Lakewood Campus	583	75.23%
New Seminary	7	0.90%
The Learning House (TLH)	4	0.52%
Virtual Campus (VC)	8	1.03%
Total	**775**	

Roughly half of the students who come to GCU are first-generation college

students, and about half are Pell Grant-eligible, with considerable overlap between these two groups. GCU provides multiple programs to assist this potentially academically underserved population. To meet the needs of the student population, the university has reorganized and expanded academic and support services to foster academic persistence and success. Examples of programs available for student support are highlighted below, and further expanded in Chapter 4 of this self-study.

       Comprehensive tutoring. The Academic Development and Support Center (ADSC) houses a myriad of services including peer tutoring, disabilities services, The Learning Connection (TLC), and Performance Assistance through Coaching and Tutoring (PACT). The primary mission of the ADSC is to provide a variety of services that assist undergraduate students in developing and enhancing their academic skills, meeting educational goals, and building confidence in a supportive and caring environment. ADSC is designed for student retention through a holistic approach geared at improving learning, building confidence, and empowering students with the necessary tools to succeed in college and in life. Students learn self-help strategies, self-advocacy, and exploration of spiritual development within the context of the Mercy core values. Students are encouraged to pursue their degrees as active learners who are independent problem solvers and globally conscious members of society. Academic support services are explained in depth in Chapter 4 .

       Reviewing the usage and results data for the ADSC from the 2015–2016 and 2016–2017 academic years showed increased demand for tutoring, especially for gateway courses in math and science, and a lack of student compliance within the PACT program while the TLC program was successful. In 2017–2018, changes were made to the ADSC programs of PACT and peer tutoring with the support of the Office of Student Success. These changes

are more fully developed in Chapter 4.

State and federally funded support programs. The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) and the federal TRIO-Student Support Services (SSS) program offer academic support for students who come from educationally underserved backgrounds. TRIO-SSS aspires to meet the needs of low-income and/or first-generation students, or those with a documented disability, who have the potential to successfully overcome the challenges of higher education. Our focus is to ensure that program participants have a realistic chance of degree attainment and admission into graduate and professional degree programs. To accomplish these objectives, TRIO-SSS provides services that foster academic achievement and personal success, which corresponds with the university's mission and Mercy core values. TRIO-SSS is funded to serve 160 students each academic year. The 2016–2017 Annual Performance Report (APR) results indicate an 86% persistence rate (above the 70% approved rate), good academic standing at 82% (above the 80% approved rate), and earned bachelor's degrees at 61% (above the 52% approved rate). The approved percentage rates are targets that were determined by GCU based on institutional research. These percentage rates were submitted in the 2015–2020 grant proposal and approved by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) for the five-year grant cycle. Our TRIO-SSS program exceeded the approved rates for 2016–2017. Out of the 160 TRIO-SSS students, 72 (45%) ended the year with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better, with 25 (16%) of the total earning a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or better for 2016–2017.

Undergraduate academic advising (advising fellows) program. Partially funded by the Title III grant, this program creates a dedicated cadre of faculty advisors who provide professional development for their peers as well as advising services to students in challenging situations. Under the direction of an assigned academic advisor, undergraduate students select

appropriate academic and personal goals and make satisfactory academic progress, reviewed at least once a semester. To help faculty, staff, and students with the advising process, each student is issued an academic progress chart, which tracks requirements as the student works toward a degree. including completed and pending requirements for both general education and the major (III.C3). Additional information about the academic advising program is available in Chapter 4.

Integration of GCU Mission and Student Learning Goals

> GCU's mission statement aligns with MSCHE Standard III, which requires a general education program, freestanding or integrated into academic disciplines, that offers a sufficient scope to draw students into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their cultural and global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and preparing them to make well-reasoned judgments outside as well as within their academic field, and offers a curriculum designed so that students acquire and demonstrate essential skills including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy. Consistent with mission, the general education program also includes the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives. (2014, p. 7)

Georgian Court University is a comprehensive university deeply rooted in the liberal arts with a broad set of general education course requirements (III. 5a, III. 5b). The university mission states:

Georgian Court University provides students with a curriculum broad enough to be truly

liberal, yet specialized enough to support further study and future careers; an

environment for the entire university community to grow through shared educational,

cultural, social, and spiritual experiences; and the will to translate concern for social

justice into action.

This mission is complemented by the following Institutional Student Learning Goals (ISLGs)

for undergraduate students.

1. Communicate effectively in written and spoken English.

2. Apply critical thinking, problem-solving, and research skills.

3. A. Demonstrate academic excellence in the major field.

   B. (for general education courses): Gain a broad foundation in knowledge and

   understanding of modes of inquiry in the arts, humanities, behavioral and social

   sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics.

4. Demonstrate understanding of the Mercy core values.

5. Demonstrate awareness of women's issues.

6. Explore spirituality and personal growth.

7. Demonstrate awareness of the value of engagement in local, national, and global issues.

8. Demonstrate analytical skills to appreciate the aesthetic.

9. Demonstrate leadership skills.

10. Demonstrate awareness of diversity issues.

Concerning Criterion III.5a, guided by the ISLGs, the Bridge General Education

Program offers a comprehensive liberal arts education, requiring 42 to 49 credits for the

bachelor's degree programs, across a broad spectrum of the foundational liberal arts

disciplines. Similarly, with regard to Criterion III.5b, specific skills are outlined in the ISLGs

and addressed in the Bridge curriculum. The Strategic Compass, GCU's strategic plan, reminds

the community that the core values that are central to a Mercy Catholic education are clearly

and consistently evident within the Bridge curriculum. As a result, these values are emphasized

in both the cornerstone and capstone courses within the Bridge program. Table 3.6 illustrates

the key areas in which undergraduate ISLGs are addressed.

Table 3.6

Undergraduate ISLGs as Aligned with the Curriculum at Georgian Court University

Course	ISLG
Pathway to the Bridge (GEN101)	1, 4 &7
Cornerstone: Discovering the Self in the Big Universe (GEN199)	1, 2, 4 & 7
Academic Writing & Research	1,2
History	1, 2, 3b & 10
Literature	1, 2, & 3b
Philosophical Inquiry	1, 2 & 3b
Visual and Performing Arts	1, 2, 3b & 8
Modern Language/Culture/Global Studies	1, 2, 3b & 10
Social Sciences	1, 2, 3b & 10
Natural Sciences with Lab	1, 2 & 3b
Quantitative Analysis	1, 2 & 3b
Writing Intensive Courses	1 & 2
Religious Studies	1 & 6
Ethics	1 & 9
Shaping Lives: Women and Gender	1, 2, 3b, 5 & 10
Capstone: Visioning the Future: Justice, Compassion, and Service (GEN400)	1, 2, 4, 7 & 9
Major Coursework	1, 2 & 3a

At the graduate level, the five graduate student learning goals were developed in

2016–2017 and are listed in Table 3.7. Goal 1 is related to the mission statement's mention of

"specialized curriculum." Goal 2 is related to "future study and future careers." Goal 3 is

related to "shared educational, cultural, social, and spiritual experiences" and "the will to

translate concern for social justice into action." Finally, Goals 4 and 5 are related to the core

values and "the will to translate concern for social justice into action."

Table 3.7

Graduate Student Learning Goals and Related Learning Outcomes

Goal	Learning Outcome
Goal 1: Knowledge	Gain in-depth knowledge, competency, and mastery in field of study through academic and professional experiences.
Goal 2: Scholarly Inquiry	Engage in academic research that includes scholarly inquiry for evidence-based practice and knowledge integration.
Goal 3: Communication	Apply clear and effective oral, written, and technological communication skills appropriate to engagement with general and specialized audiences.
Goal 4: Ethical Leadership	Self-identify as leaders who follow the highest standards of ethics and of the professional field.
Goal 5: GCU/Mercy Integration	Integrate Mercy core values and advocacy related to the Mercy Critical Concerns.

High-impact student experiences. Internships and other experiences are integral in helping GCU students connect to people and ideas that will allow them the opportunity to contribute to local and global communities. These educational experiences allow students to develop as reflective practitioners and problem solvers. As such, GCU has a rich body of students who major in the helping professions; social work, education, and nursing are among the programs for which GCU is known. To serve such programs, a rigorous process is in place that involves faculty who oversee internship assignments, guide students through the experience, and help them link their learning to practice. They also conduct site visits, meet with internship supervisors, and evaluate projects.

Study abroad has been available to students for decades. However, it has been a

curricular focus since 2012. In that time period, participation in study abroad programs has

grown from about 1% of the traditional undergraduate population to about 10%. Similarly, the

Undergraduate Research Fellows program has been formed, and several faculty members have

undergone training through programs of the Council for Undergraduate Research (CUR).

These trained faculty have returned to GCU to educate their peers. They are in the process of

building an undergraduate research culture on our campus through the creation of various

campus-wide, school-wide, and department-level activities that support undergraduate research.

For example, the research fellows implemented a research week in April 2018 to highlight

student–faculty research at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

The third high-impact practice, and the one most prevalent for GCU students, is that of

service learning. In NSSE 2017, 88% of first-year students and 94% of senior students reported

having service learning in some, most, or all courses. GCU has a service-learning requirement for

graduation, and it is integrated into the Bridge General Education Program's Capstone (GEN400)

course in alignment with the exploration of Mercy core values. Over 94,745 hours of community

service were recorded in AY 2016–2017 by GCU faculty, students, and staff, making this a

pervasive value throughout the campus community. The number of hours of community service is

prominently and proudly displayed on the university website.

At the graduate level, all programs offer students the opportunity to do research,

scholarship, or independent thinking, either through a capstone research or other scholarly

project, or through field experiences/practica in which students must think independently and

apply what they have learned. All full-time and part-time faculty teaching at the graduate level

have a doctorate or are professionally qualified in the field in which they are teaching.

Assessment of Programs of Learning

GCU faculty and administration strive to implement assessment approaches to evaluate the quality of its academic programs and student learning experiences using a stepped approach. This includes curriculum development considerations and assessment plans that start at the course level, ramp up to the program level, and rise to the institutional level. Criterion 8 requires "periodic assessment of the effectiveness of programs providing student learning opportunities" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 8). The institution has established procedures and hired personnel to support the review and implementation of assessment activities and plans. Faculty and administration have developed a process that allows for the reporting and sharing of assessment findings at all levels: course, program, and institution. A culture of assessment is slowly but surely developing at this university, and metrics have become the core from which future decisions and directions emerge. The university's assessment plan for learning can be found on its assessment webpage. In addition, current program assessment plans and reports are available on this site (https://georgian.edu/assessment-of-student-learning).

GCU uses a variety of data points to gauge the effectiveness of its programs. First, where available, GCU uses subject-specific exams to understand students' accomplishments in a variety of fields, such as NCLEX scores for nursing students; PRAXIS scores for education students; and the ETS® Major Field Test scores for business, biology, psychology, and chemistry students, which give the university an indication of learning outcomes. In the future, edTPA scores for education students will be added to the mix. Often, GCU students meet or exceed national norms on these exams. Additional information is found on the university's HEOA webpage.

Annually, each academic program reviews its students' outcomes. These reviews generally result in course-level revisions. If a major gap in knowledge is identified, then larger curricular revisions could ensue. These types of changes based on a single annual review are rare. Larger concerns tend to emerge from trend data, which necessarily take multiple years to accrue. An executive summary of the academic program assessment reports are found on the university's assessment webpage (Georgian Court University, 2017d, 2017e, 2017f).

To assure a thorough review of trend data, a formal program review is conducted every seven years. This comprehensive review includes a review of student outcomes, an evaluation of the currency of the curriculum, and a report from an external evaluator. Once the review is complete, the department leadership meets with the dean and provost to build an action plan to assure that the program is current and relevant. An overview of this process as well as assessment plans can be found in the document roadmap for this standard. The university's Academic Program Review and Assessment Committee (PRAC) oversees the process of academic program review.

GCU triangulates its data by reviewing student feedback. This feedback is in the form of regular course reviews (ETS SIR II), the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). While there are significant limits to these reviews as they are student self-reported, it is a useful heuristic to help the university community understand its students' perceptions of their college experience. While NSSE data and trends are shared in some GCU public documents, the full data sets are shared internally and regularly reviewed by various university departments, councils, and committees. The data are presented at general faculty meetings. Trend data for NSSE is found in Appendix M.

Finally, employment outcomes data are reviewed and disseminated to help make

certain that students are able to meet their career goals. These data can be found in the document roadmap for this standard.

Summary of Strengths of Georgian Court University

The planning process for the development of curriculum and related student offerings is a regular, iterative process and considered a strength for GCU. Assessment of programs is also now embedded into the culture of GCU. Examples of regular program planning and continued assessment are highlighted above with the description of the Bridge General Education Program, the development of the new health sciences programs, and the revision of the teacher education programs. There is also now a shared language across campus due to the standardization of assessment templates.

Key Findings for Continuous Improvement in Relation to Standard III

Key findings for continuous improvement in relation to Standard III are related to the continued use of assessment data to review and revise academic programs and associated offerings. For example, assessment data on the impact of the first-year seminar will be collected to ensure that it meets both the academic and social needs of students who are transitioning to GCU. Further, additional data about our process for documenting service learning experiences will be reviewed to ensure that all aspects of the process are clear for students who are completing service hours through various courses.

Alignment with Strategic Compass

Design and delivery of the student learning experience is essential to the success of GCU. Several initiatives are underway or planned in the Strategic Compass Action Plan that will continue to strengthen the design and delivery of the student learning experience, and plans to

continually evaluate the process are ongoing. This standard aligns with Compass Point #1,

Mission Fulfillment Through Academic Excellence, and Compass Point #3, Mission Fulfillment

Through Revenue Generation and Diversification. In addition, GCU's Self-Recommendation #1,

Plans for Continued Viability, includes a Strategic Enrollment Plan, closely linked to review of

current academic programs and development of new programs to meet student need and demand.

This self-study informed the Strategic Compass in its development. This is evident within the

description of Strategic Compass Point #1 as stated below.

> The university will evaluate, design, and deliver diversified academic programs offered
>
> in response to market demands based on both student interest and employer needs. It will
>
> prepare students to be confident positive contributors to their chosen professions through
>
> expanded opportunities to develop and apply skills through high-impact academic
>
> experiences. It will support teaching and learning excellence in all venues and modalities
>
> of instruction. To do so, the university will judiciously expand its physical and virtual
>
> presence (Georgian Court University, October 12, 2018, p. 5).

Tactics that explicitly state alignment with the Design and Delivery of the Student

Learning Experience are 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.6, 2.1C, 2.1D, 3.2, 3.4, 4.3B, 4.5. See Table 3.8 below.

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Standard III, Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience will continually

be evaluated through an iterative process. The ability of GCU to meet Standard III is strongly

supported by the evidence presented in this chapter. Additional documentation for this

standard may be found in the documentation roadmap for this self-study.

Table 3.8

GCU Strategic Compass Tactics Aligned with the Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

Tactic	Strategic Compass Tactic Statement
1.1	Support faculty in areas related to research, pedagogy, assessment of learning, and use of technology.
1.2	Continue to resource and develop GCU's Center for Teaching and Learning
1.4	Support faculty technology needs for teaching and research. Train faculty in effective use of technology for teaching, communication, operational efficiency, and scholarly work. Plan this training as part of the implementation plan for the introduction of new or updated software systems.
1.6	Support faculty research in the disciplines to maintain teaching and learning excellence. Continue to resource faculty who engage students in undergraduate research.
2.1C	Emphasize the benefits of a liberal education in the Catholic Tradition through continued development of the Bridge General Education Program as integral to the student's undergraduate experience and immersion into service learning and the Mercy core values.
2.1D	Continue to implement the high-impact practices (HIPs) for undergraduates including undergraduate research, experiential and service learning, study abroad, and capstone experiences.
3.2	Expansion Programs Committee (EPC): Put a process in place that determines internal consistency (e.g., cost/benefit analysis) for taking on expansion programs.
3.4	Convene committee (half faculty, half administration) to create process of judging partnership program viability by December 2019 [based in part on evaluation of previous program success (see next bullet point)]
4.3B	Within the Campus Master Plan, include academic space allocation and improvement, as well as provisions for on-site and virtual learner engagement.
4.5	Assess and plan restructuring of Academic Affairs based on growth in programs such as nursing.

CHAPTER 4 OF GEORGIAN COURT UNIVERSITY'S MSCHE SELF-STUDY:

STANDARD IV. SUPPORT OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to state clearly how Georgian Court University (GCU) complies with Standard IV, Support of the Student Experience, and to demonstrate how this standard is related to the mission of GCU and integrated into Standard C2 of GCU's strategic planning process, GCU's Strategic Compass.

Statement of Compliance

Standard IV, Support of the Student Experience, of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2014) requires institutions to perform as follows:

Across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experience, and fosters student success. (p. 9)

Georgian Court University is in compliance with Standard IV, Support of the Student Experience, and Requirement for Affiliation 10, as evidenced in this self-study and as shown in detail within the documentation roadmap for this self-study. The remainder of this chapter highlights specific strengths of the student experience at GCU, identifies challenges faced by the institution, and states how the institution will continue to meet the requirements of the

standard.

Strengths of Georgian Court University in Standard IV

Georgian Court University's support of the student experience is a reflection of the mission of the university, particularly its foundation on the Mercy core values of compassion and service. It also rests on the long history of the Sisters of Mercy, following the example of their foundress, the Venerable Mother Catherine McAuley, whose reason for founding the Sisters of Mercy was to expand her ability to serve the poor of Dublin. From the start, one of the primary foci of the Sisters of Mercy has been to provide education to individuals who might not otherwise have access to it, particularly women and those facing financial disadvantage (Mercy International Association, 2010). This tradition still burns brightly at GCU, where the drive to educate is founded on a special concern for women, a dedication to social justice, and a compassionate approach to the ministry of education. Particular strengths of GCU include the ability to support students whose academic and other challenges might otherwise present barriers to their ability to achieve a university education.

Support of Underprepared Students at GCU

A primary strength of GCU is the many and varied programs specifically designed for individuals with academic vulnerability. Criterion 1b requires "a process by which students who are not adequately prepared for the study at the level for which they have been admitted are identified, placed, and supported in attaining appropriate educational goals" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 9). These can be divided into two categories: programs for individuals who demonstrate academic vulnerability upon entering GCU (see Table 4.1), and developmental coursework designed to build academic strengths in preparation for college-level work (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.1

Georgian Court University Programs for Supporting Academically Vulnerable Students

Program	Description
Performance Assistance through Coaching and Tutoring (PACT)	Mandatory program of academic support and coaching for students whose credentials do not attain the minimum requirements for admission. Provides academic coaching and support.
The Learning Connection (TLC)	Fee-based academic support and coaching program for individuals with learning disabilities.
New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF)	A state-funded program for increasing student persistence and completion; offers academic and educational advisement, tutoring, leadership development initiatives, and a financial aid supplemental grant.
TRIO Student Support Services (TRIO-SSS)	A federally funded student success program providing basic skills instruction, tutoring, academic and graduate school counseling, financial literacy training, study skills workshops, limited financial assistance, advocacy, mentoring, coaching, and support.
Academic Improvement Program (AIP)	Student-athletes who matriculate with indications of academic vulnerability are required to participate in this program; it includes academic coaching and mandatory study and tutoring sessions.

Table 4.2

Developmental Courses for Students Presenting Lower Academic Preparedness

Course	Description
SD100: Basic Mathematics	Developmental course for students who are insufficiently prepared for college-level math. This self-paced course is based on the Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS) modules and is supported by a Math Lab with professional and peer tutors.
SD112: College Reading Skills	Developmental course for students who are insufficiently prepared for college-level reading.
EN105 and EN106: Essentials of Academic Writing I and II	Developmental courses designed to prepare students for the required composition course, Academic Writing and Research (EN111).

Note. SD courses do not provide academic credit toward graduation. EN courses provide academic credit but do not satisfy the composition requirement.

Programs for individuals who demonstrate academic vulnerability at entry. The

Performance through Academic Coaching and Tutoring (PACT) program is a mandatory

support program required of students whose credentials do not attain the minimum

requirements for admission to GCU. These students receive weekly professional academic

coaching and are required to make use of additional academic support services (e.g., tutoring,

use of the Writing Center). In Fall 2016, 34 PACT students enrolled at GCU. Of the original

34, 29 (85.3%) continued to the Spring 2017 semester, and 19 (55.9%) continued to Fall 2017.

Over the past 10 years, the university-wide first-semester retention rates have ranged from

83% to 94%, and the one-year retention has ranged from 65% to 80% (Georgian Court

University, 2017a), suggesting that, despite the academic vulnerability of the PACT students,

their one-semester continuance was within normal limits for GCU. One-year continuance,

however, was substantially below the normal level. A factor that moderated the effectiveness

of PACT was student compliance with the requirements of the program. Initially, there were

no external consequences for failure to cooperate with the PACT requirements, and a majority

of PACT students were noncompliant with PACT requirements. In partitioning the sample

into compliant and noncompliant students, a clear picture emerges. Students who were

compliant—defined as missing fewer than three PACT coaching appointments—earned

dramatically higher term GPAs than noncompliant students (Compliant students GPA

Fall 2016: 2.36, Spring 2017: 2.44; Noncompliant students GPA Fall 2016: 1.75,

Spring 2017: 1.34). In addition, continuation rates for compliant PACT students were

markedly higher than for noncompliant students (Compliant students' retention rate 2016–

2017: 70%, Noncompliant students' retention rate 2016–2017: 63%). Based on data provided

by the director of the Academic Development and Support Center (L. Fahr, personal

communication, November 13, 2017).

The Learning Connection (TLC) is a fee-based optional support program for students with learning disabilities and/or other conditions that present challenges to academic performance. It is designed for students who need support in addition to their required ADA accommodations. Professional counselors in TLC provide assistance to students, including academic coaching and tutoring. In contrast to PACT, which is a one-year program, TLC students generally stay in the program throughout their time at GCU. Continuance in TLC is remarkable, with 95% one-semester and 95% one-year continuance to Fall 2017. Students in TLC perform academically at comparatively high levels, with 72% earning a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher in 2016–2017 (Fahr, 2017). Given that the average GPA earned at GCU in Spring 2017 was 3.15 (Institutional Research, 2017), this is a clear indication that this academically vulnerable group is performing very well.

GCU participates in the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF), a state-funded program designed to support diversity of the student body in New Jersey colleges and universities. Students who participate in the programs offered through EOF may be first-generation college students, may come from disadvantaged school districts, and/or may have minority status. EOF provides academic coaching and tutoring, leadership development, and some financial support. EOF runs a college readiness summer program that includes developmental writing courses and an extensive orientation, as well as a large number of engagement events during the academic year. Students whose GPAs were below a 2.0 at the end of the fall semester were placed on a specific study and counseling plan with EOF staff. Eighty-two percent of EOF students matriculating in Summer/Fall 2017 completed the Fall 2017 semester. The average GPA at the end of

Fall 2017 was 2.287. Fifty-seven percent of EOF students had GPAs above 2.0 (J. Smith, personal communication, February 16, 2018). In Spring 2017, EOF instituted a contract, requiring students to engage in the GCU experience through their attendance at university-sponsored events and through their consistent involvement with the EOF program. To date, nearly 75% of the population has successfully completed the requirements.

TRIO–Student Support Services (TRIO–SSS) is a federally funded program to assist students who belong to one or more of these categories: low income; first-generation college students; and/or disabled. The program provides academic coaching and tutoring, limited financial assistance, workshops, and life coaching. According to the 2015–2016 TRIO–SSS annual report, persistence (retention + graduation as a proportion of number of students in the program) is very high. The criterion for success in this program according to federal requirements is 70%, but GCU's program yielded persistence rates of 89% (Fall 2015) and 91% (Spring 2016). Students receiving tutoring through TRIO–SSS earned passing grades or better in 81% (Fall 2015) and 85% (Spring 2016) of courses.

Student-athletes who enter GCU with weak academic credentials (cumulative high school GPA below 2.3 or who identified as partial qualifiers by NCAA standards) are required to participate in the Academic Improvement Program (AIP). Students in this program are required to attend weekly coaching and study sessions, and staff in the Department of Athletics and Recreation closely monitor their academic performance. In Fall 2016, only three students were required to participate in the AIP, and all three attained acceptable term GPAs, with an average of 2.65.

Developmental courses. GCU revised the format of developmental mathematics courses at the start of Fall 2016, moving to a single self-paced Math Lab course, SD100, using the web-based

training system ALEKS (ALEKS Corporation, 2010). Students were individually assessed, and a

program was designed for each learner based on the college-level math course required by the

student's educational program. This program was supported by the U.S. Department of Education

Title III grant, PR/Award Number P031A160191-17, *Chart the Course to Graduation*, which was

awarded to GCU in October 2016. Of the 54 students enrolled in SD100 in academic year 2016–

2017, 77.8% achieved a satisfactory grade, indicating that they were ready to advance into their

100-level math courses. This exceeded the target for the first year of the grant (70%). Twenty

students advanced into 100-level math courses, and 70% of them passed their second course.

SD112 is GCU's developmental college reading course. Students are placed in this

course based on SAT verbal scores. The course has a demonstrated history of success as

measured by the Townsend College Preparatory Reading Test (n.d.). Prior to taking the test,

the average student's scores have been well below the passing rate of 70, but at the end of the

course, mean scores increase to well above the passing rate (See Figure 4.1). In the past three

years, 87% of students have scored at or above 70 at post-test (E. N. Brooks, personal

communication, November 10, 2017).
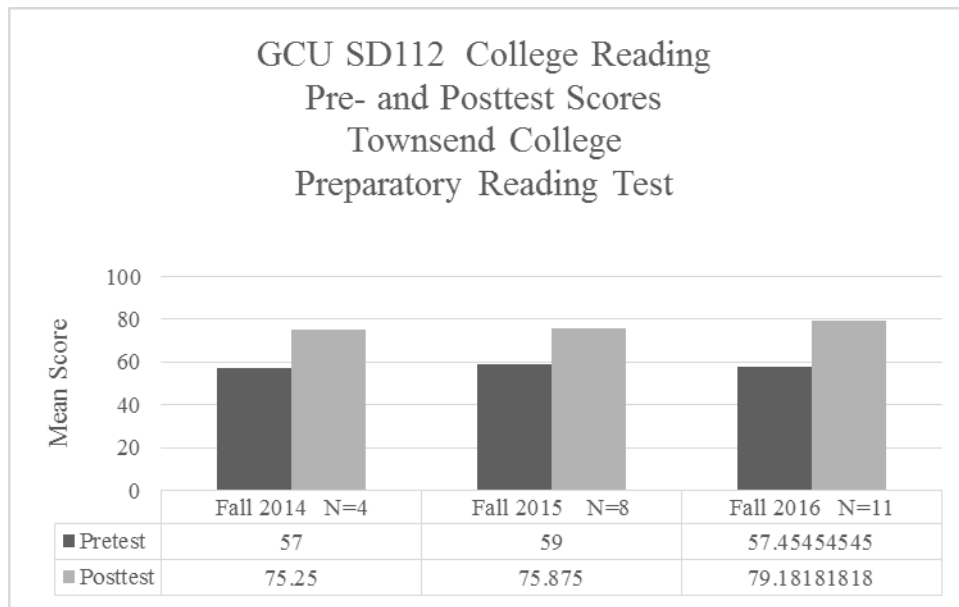
Figure 4.1. Mean pretest and post-test Townsend College
Preparatory Reading Test scores for SD112 students. A passing score for
this test is 70. Based on data provided by the course instructor (E. N.
Brooks, personal communication, November 10, 2017).

EN105 and EN106 are GCU's developmental writing courses. Students taking these

courses receive university credit toward graduation, but the courses do not satisfy the general

education requirement for writing. To advance to the next course, students must earn at least a C

in the course; students whose performance is sufficiently high in EN105 may sometimes skip

EN106 and advance directly to the required course, EN111. In Fall 2016, 34 students were

enrolled in EN105 and 59 in EN106. The pass rates for these courses, together with subsequent

enrollment and pass rates for EN111, may be seen in Table 4.3. Overall pass rates were

acceptable, with 74.2% of students demonstrating readiness to advance to their next course.

Table 4.3

Pass Rates for Developmental English Composition Courses F2016

Course		*n*	Passed EN105/106	Enrolled EN111 S'17	Passed EN111
EN105	Used Writing Center	3	3 (100%)	2 (66.7%)	1 (33.3%)
	No Writing Center	31	18 (58.1%)	7 (22.3%)	5 (16.1%)
	Total	34	21 (61.8%)	9 (26.5%)	6 (17.6%)
EN106	Used Writing Center	10	10 (100%)	9 (90.0%)	8 (80.0%)
	No Writing Center	49	38 (77.6%)	35 (71.4%)	28 (57.1%)
	Total	59	48 (81.4%)	44 (74.6%)	36 (61.0%)

Note. Percentages are expressed as percentage of students enrolled in course. Passing any of these courses means attaining a grade of C or higher. Low numbers of EN105 students enrolling in EN111 are due to the fact that only a small number of EN105 students qualify to skip EN106. The majority of EN105 students enrolled in EN106 in Spring 2017.

Communication of academic support programs. Many of these academic support programs (writing center and math lounge) are recommended to students through direct outreach. Students are identified for PACT, TLC, EOF, AIP, and the developmental courses during the admission process. PACT participation is a requirement for admission, but TLC, TRIO-SSS, and EOF are voluntary. Marketing efforts for these voluntary programs include flyers and pamphlets, the university website, representation at university admissions events, listing in the Student Handbook (Georgian Court University, 2017p) and Undergraduate Catalog (Georgian Court University, 2017r), presentations in GEN101, the first-year orientation course, and direct recruitment of individuals identified as qualified for the programs.

Orientation and Advisement

GCU demonstrates a strong commitment to enhancing retention by guiding students throughout their educational experience, as required by Criterion 1c (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 9). This is demonstrated in all three areas: orientation, advisement, and counseling.

Orientation. All undergraduate and graduate students undergo an orientation process upon entering the university. The process for undergraduate orientation was extensively reviewed by two committees during the 2016–2017 academic year, resulting in two procedures: Admissions Procedure #AD0003, which articulates the path from deposit to matriculation for undergraduate students; and #AD0001, which revised the plan for undergraduate check-in. In addition, the Office of Student Life revised the undergraduate student orientation procedure. The result of the changes to the orientation procedure included an increase in second-day orientation participation to 90%, up 33% from the previous year. Satisfaction ratings also increased by 12%, with a 72% overall satisfaction rating as compared to 60% from the previous year. More students also reported finding value and enjoyment in the programs (57%, up from 44% the previous year).

GCU implemented a new General Education Program starting in Fall 2016, which includes a modified first-year orientation course, GEN101, and a second-semester cornerstone course, GEN199. In GEN101, students are systematically oriented to the mission and culture of GCU, as well as to academic and other resources. GEN101 also provides a series of orientation workshops on topics of wellness, academic support, co-curricular programming, career preparedness, and academic self-management. GEN199 continues the orientation at a more advanced level, integrating study of the Mercy core values in the context of understanding commonality, diversity, and symbiosis. Both practical and cultural orientations are thus embedded in this required course sequence.

Additional programs provide orientation to targeted subpopulations: PACT, athletics, EOF, TRIO–SSS, and the nursing program all have formal orientation programs, as do the off-site programs at the New Seminary (a program for Orthodox Jewish women), GCU at

Hazlet, and GCU at Cumberland County College. Each graduate program runs its own orientation in addition to the university-wide graduate student orientation.

Advisement. The 2017 NSSE indicates that GCU students are generally satisfied with their advisement. They indicate that they discuss career plans with advisors, with first-year students averaging 2.4 and seniors averaging 2.8, on a three-point scale where 2 is *sometimes* and 3 is *often*. On the same scale, they indicate that they discuss their academic performance with academic advisors, with first-year students averaging 2.4 and seniors averaging 2.6. They rate the quality of interaction with advisors positively, with first-year students averaging 5.3 on a seven-point (*poor* to *excellent*) scale, and seniors averaging 5.0. This is consistent with the findings of an internally generated study, in which GCU students rated the helpfulness of their advisors an average of 3.8 on a five-point scale, where 3 was *somewhat helpful* and 4 was *very helpful*.

A new advising model was established in Fall 2015; it was subsequently strengthened through the Title III grant. In the past, students with declared majors were advised by faculty in their major, while students who had not declared majors went to an advising center. The new advising model reflects a shift to a fully faculty-based advising model, with a team of five faculty (advising fellows) responsible for advising undeclared students and for increasing advising effectiveness across the institution. A plan for increasing advising effectiveness was written in 2016–2017, and substantial initiatives have been implemented, including an advising faculty handbook, systematic advisor training, new technology for advising appointments, and increased communication with faculty and students to facilitate advising. In the first year of the grant, 13 advising workshops were presented, with 48 participants.

Counseling. Accredited by the International Association of Counseling Services since

2006, the GCU Counseling Center provides individually tailored services to address issues

such as mental health, personal development, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and stress

management. During the 2016–2017 academic year, GCU's counselors treated 161 students

over a period of 1,314 hours. Of those students, 71% noted that therapy was very helpful in

keeping them enrolled in school, 61% reported that their sessions were very helpful in

allowing them to achieve academic success, and 70% reported that their time with their

counselor was very helpful in reaching their personal goals. The counselors also offered

101 hours of mental health programming and workshops reaching 1,749 people. In addition to

meeting with students, counselors collaborate with other departments on events and programs

and work with outside providers to present students with the best mental health resources

available. The Counseling Center also sponsors the Student Veterans Resource Project, an

ongoing collaboration among a variety of administrative, student services, and academic

departments aimed at enhancing veteran students' academic and social success at GCU.

Support for Students at Risk

GCU Cares. GCU Cares is a program providing case management to students in

distress. A specialist is assigned to the student to assist with connections to appropriate campus

and community resources and to foster student success. Referrals come from the Student

Concerns Team and from faculty and staff. The GCU Cares staff provide outreach to minimize

the impact of distress on the academic and personal pursuits of at-risk students through

effective case management, coordination of care, and communication between campus and

community resources. In 2016–2017, 317 students responded to outreach for student advocacy

and academic support. Personal and academic support accounted for 79% of the cases, whereas

the other 21% consisted of financial support and outside resources. Of the students using GCU

Cares, 87% reported that the experience helped them to use campus resources. The GCU Cares team offered 77 hours of academic and violence prevention programming reaching 968 people. In addition, the GCU Cares programs oversees the $299,829 three-year EMPOWER Grant, which was awarded in October 2016 from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women. This grant is designed to increase campus awareness of issues of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and dating violence. GCU Cares has recently extended its outreach to any students, staff, faculty, or families who have experienced catastrophic loss due to the recent hurricanes, earthquakes, and various shootings across the country. GCU Cares provides support for anyone affected by these tragedies.

Title III grant. One of the main strengths of GCU is the wide array of programs that are designed to identify and support struggling students and help them succeed (see Table 4.4). Many of these have been developed or expanded under the Title III grant. GCU meets Criterion 1d, which requires "processes designed to enhance the successful achievement of students' educational goals including certificate and degree completion, transfer to other institutions, and post- completion placement" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 9).

The Title III grant funded the establishment of The Writing Center (TWC), the primary purpose of which is to support the composition courses. The goal for the first year of the grant was that 70% of students using TWC in developmental composition courses EN105 and EN106 would advance to their next course. In the first year of operation, 96% of students who used TWC in their developmental composition courses earned a C or better in their developmental course, allowing them to advance to the next course, earning a C or better. Voluntary use of TWC in Fall 2016 was determined to be low (14% in Fall 2016, 9.5% in Spring 2017), so

students in EN105 and EN106 were required to use TWC starting in Summer 2017; this yielded

an increase to 83.3% usage of TWC.

Table 4.4

Academic Support Programs for Students Who Experience Academic Difficulties After Matriculation

Program	Description
The Early-Warning System (EWS)	Problem-reporting dashboard for instructors, based in Self-Service, the web-based interface with Power Campus. Faculty are encouraged to report academic and other problems through the EWS, which triggers a response from the Office of Student Success. For students who are affiliated with other student success programs (EOF, TRIO–SSS, TLC, AIP), a report is automatically sent to that office as well.
Academic Development and Support Center (ADSC)	Academic support center providing tutoring and other academic support services.
The Writing Center (TWC)	Open-door and by-appointment writing tutoring service, available to all students who need assistance with writing. Students may be required to attend TWC if faculty deem their writing to be substandard. Funded by a Title III grant, *Chart the Course to Graduation.*
Math Lounge	Open-door and by-appointment mathematics tutoring service, available to all students who need assistance with quantitative reasoning. Staffed by peer and professional tutors. Funded by a Title III grant, *Chart the Course to Graduation.*
Chart the Course	Student success initiative funded by a Title III grant. Its purpose is to help students who are behind schedule in terms of the number of credits earned by giving them access to no-cost targeted courses during the winter and summer sessions.
Probation	Students whose performance drops below developmental criteria are placed on probation; this carries a requirement to attend academic coaching and tutoring sessions.
Academic Improvement Program (AIP)	Student-athletes whose GPA drops below 2.5 for two consecutive semesters are required to participate in this program; it includes academic coaching and mandatory study and tutoring sessions.
GCU Cares	Program assisting students with personal and financial crisis counseling and with emergency financial support.

In Summer 2017, the Title III grant funded the creation of a Math Lounge, a studying

and tutoring space staffed by professional and peer mathematics tutors. Effectiveness data are

not yet available for this program, but since its opening in September 2017, the Math Lounge

has been extremely popular, fulfilling 32 tutoring appointments in the first month, increasing to

62 in the second month (R. Devlin, personal communication, November 9, 2017). The hiring of

highly qualified mathematics professionals has increased the university's ability to provide

tutoring and academic support for upper-level mathematics.

Another initiative of the Title III grant is a supplemental course program referred

to as Chart the Course (CTC). Students may be behind the target of at least 15 credits

earned per semester for any of several reasons: They can fail to sign up for enough

credits; they can take SD courses that do not carry college credit; or they can fail or

withdraw from courses. Students who are behind in credits are invited to take CTC

courses in the winter and summer sessions, tuition free. Of the first-year students starting

in Fall 2016, 97 were offered a Winter 2017 CTC course, and 77 were offered a

Summer 2017 CTC course. A total of 78 students (44.8%) elected to take the courses,

and 64 (82.1%) achieved passing grades, increasing their total credits earned by 3 credits.

All but one of the winter CTC students (98%) retained to the spring semester, and 100%

of students taking summer CTC courses retained to the fall semester. This profoundly

compassionate approach to student success is designed to give students an additional

boost toward timely completion, and it is clearly working well.

Early Warning. The Early Warning System (EWS) is an electronic reporting system

through Self-Service, the student information service. To increase the usage of the EWS among

faculty, the director of advising instituted a series of prompting e-mails and announcements

concerning the EWS in Fall 2017; this was followed by a dramatic increase in faculty use of the system. Faculty made 82 and 247 reports on the EWS in September and October 2016, respectively. This compares to 188 and 321 reports in the same months of 2017, an increase of more than 50%. EWS reports are followed up by interventions on the part of the Office of Student Success and other co-advisors, such as EOF, TLC, and athletics.

Tutoring. The Academic Development and Support Center (ADSC) offers tutoring and academic coaching to any GCU undergraduates. Goals include improving academic performance, increasing academic self-efficacy, and building academic skills. The ADSC offered 673.5 hours of tutoring during 2016–2017. At least 90% of requests were accommodated. Courses that lacked adequate peer tutor availability included upper-level math and science courses. This deficit has been addressed in two ways: through the establishment of the Math Lounge (see Title III Grant), and through the conversion of the tutoring to a supplemental instruction (SI) model, whereby tutors are tied to particular courses. Courses were identified for SI based on frequency of tutoring requests. Additional tutoring is still provided through the ADSC. Based on self-reported GPAs, 19 (86.4%) students surveyed reported an increase in grades following peer tutoring.

The Office of Student Success works with the Academic Standards Committee to place students on academic probation. The level of support varies according to the student's level of academic distress. In 2016–2017, 39 (17.6%) of the first-year cohort were placed on probation for the Spring 2017 semester. Of the 27 students who chose to re-enroll in Spring 2017, 10 (37%) improved their GPA, and 12 (44%) retained to the Fall 2017 semester. The matter-of-fact, non-punitive approach of the student success staff means that students regard them as mentors and coaches.

Student-athletes who do not attain a GPA of at least 2.5 are required to participate in the Academic Improvement Program (AIP). AIP requires students to participate in coaching, study hall, and academic support programs such as the Math Lounge, TWC, and ADSC. The group of students placed in the AIP for Spring 2017 averaged a term GPA in the preceding semester of 2.07; after participation in the AIP in the Spring 2017 term, their term GPAs averaged 2.37. Of the 31 students, 20 (64.5%) showed increases in GPA for the spring semester.

GCU as a Transfer-Friendly Institution

One of the major strengths of GCU is that it is a very transfer-friendly institution. GCU accepts up to 75 credits from two-year institutions and up to 90 credits total from all sources. GCU has comprehensive dual admission agreements with Atlantic Cape Community College, Brookdale Community College, Cumberland Community College, Mercer County Community College, Middlesex County College, and Raritan Valley Community College, and some program-specific dual admission agreements with Ocean County College. GCU participates fully in the NJ Transfer initiative, which lists course equivalencies between New Jersey's 19 community colleges and the 25 participating four-year institutions in the state, and provides recommended community college programs of study for transfer to programs of study at the four-year institutions. In the undergraduate population, 63% of new students are transfers.

Transfer students retain at high levels; the one-year retention rate has been at or above 80% since 2007, the last date for which data are available in the Fact Book (Georgian Court University, 2017a). In addition, the average six-year graduation rate for transfer students at GCU is 77% (Institute of Educational Sciences National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). This is dramatically higher than the national transfer graduation rate for Title IV degree-granting institutions, which average a rate of 60%. The six-year graduation rate for GCU's

transfer students was 78% for the 2009 cohort, 74% for the 2010 cohort, and 76% for the 2011 cohort.

GCU comfortably meets Criterion 2, which requires "Policies and procedures regarding evaluation and acceptance of transfer credits, and credits awarded through experiential learning, prior non-academic learning, competency-based assessment, and other alternative learning approaches" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 9). There is a generous policy for accepting transfer credit, including credit earned through non-academic learning (e.g., military service) and through competency-based assessments such as CLEP and AP exams. These policies are clearly articulated in the catalogs (Georgian Court University, 2017h, 2017r). GCU is also a Military Friendly® School as reported by Victory Media (Georgian Court University, 2015c).

Summary of Strengths of Georgian Court University

One of GCU's primary strengths is in the support of students who might otherwise be unable to succeed academically in a university environment. An extensive network of support, which is brought to bear both upon admission and afterward, enables students to attain levels of achievement in academic performance, retention, and completion that are beyond what would otherwise be expected of many of GCU's students. This follows the long history of the Sisters of Mercy, bringing education to those for whom social and other factors would otherwise present barriers.

Key Findings for Continuous Improvement in Relation to Standard IV

Key findings for continuous improvement at GCU in relation to Standard IV are not in the actual services that are provided but in how the university communicates the availability of those services to students and in the planning and evaluation of their effectiveness. Increases in

the consistency of communication will de facto increase the availability of services to students.

Communication. GCU could improve its communication of available services. For example, the Graduate Catalog 2017–2018 (Georgian Court University, 2017h) is not as clearly organized as the Undergraduate Catalog, and some information is not clearly relevant to graduate students. In particular, EOF and TRIO–SSS are listed as special programs but these programs do not provide services to graduate students. Although the Writing Center, the Math Lounge, and GCU Cares provide services to graduate students, they are neither listed nor described in the Graduate Catalog. A systematic review of the avenues for communication of student services is indicated.

Planning. GCU does not presently have an enrollment management plan, due to recent turnover in the highest levels of administration. The hiring of a new president in 2015, followed by a new dean of admissions in 2015, ushered in a new era in strategic planning, and that meant putting the enrollment management plan on hold. At the time of this writing, the strategic plan was being developed, and once that is in place (late Spring 2018), the vice president of enrollment management will lead the development of the strategic enrollment management plan. The Strategic Enrollment Plan is a tactic of Strategic Compass Point #4, Mission Fulfillment Through Operational Efficiency and Resource Utilization. In addition, the Strategic Enrollment Plan is within GCU's Self-Recommendation #1, Institutional Viability, based on this self-study.

Assessment

The units that constitute the GCU Division of Student Affairs include the Counseling Center, the Health Center, the Office of Residence Life, the Office of Student Activities, and the Office of Student Leadership. The assistant provost for student success and retention oversees the TLC, PACT, the ADSC, the Career Center, and student retention and success. The

EOF and TRIO–SSS programs report to the provost. All of these units conduct annual reports with self-assessments. A summary of annual assessment reports for the above cited programs is found on the university's [assessment webpage](#). At the time of this writing, they do not conduct periodic unit evaluations; therefore, GCU does not have consistent assessment of the effectiveness of its student support programs, with the exception of the grant programs which have to re-apply and present data to support their program outcomes. Evaluation plans have been developed for each unit and are being implemented starting in 2017–2018.

Student Engagement Opportunities

GCU offers a wide variety of opportunities for engagement for all students, including a University Honors Program, departmental honors programs, honor societies, a flourishing global studies program, student life and activities, and student leadership development. GCU's Division II athletic program supports 14 teams and has a strong commitment to campus involvement. In the 2017–2018 academic year, eight student-athletes served as resident assistants in the dormitories, and student-athletes are well-represented in honor societies, the Student Government Association, leadership programs, and campus clubs and activities. GCU Athletics received the NCAA Division II Helper Helper Community Service Competition Award in 2017, which recognized the program as having the largest number of service hours in Division II athletics (L. Liesman, personal communication, January 25, 2018).

Despite these many areas of strength, however, there has historically been a certain level of dissatisfaction with the non-academic student experience at GCU. Past surveys have indicated that students are dissatisfied with dining services and student co-curricular activities. However, the most recent data in the 2017 internal student satisfaction survey have shown that of 520 student responses, over 50% responded as extremely happy, very happy, or somewhat

happy in response to the question: How happy are you with the choice of university-sponsored

extracurricular activities at GCU? Breaking these data down by resident/commuter status

reveals two telling results: First, commuters are dramatically more likely to respond "Not

Applicable" when asked about their satisfaction with extracurricular activities. Second, if the

"Not Applicable" responses are eliminated from the analysis, commuter students are somewhat

more satisfied with their extracurricular activities than are resident students. This has two

implications: that commuters are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities; but that

those students who do choose to participate are more satisfied with the opportunities made

available to them (see Figures 4.2A and 4.2B).

GCU Student Satisfaction Survey
Question 12: University-Sponsored Extracurricular activities
Spring 2017

	Extremely happy	Very happy	Somewhat happy	Not so happy	Not at all happy	Not applicable
Resident Responders N = 172	8.14%	21.51%	26.74%	26.74%	13.95%	2.91%
Non-Resident Responders N = 340	8.53%	18.82%	18.82%	8.53%	4.71%	40.59%
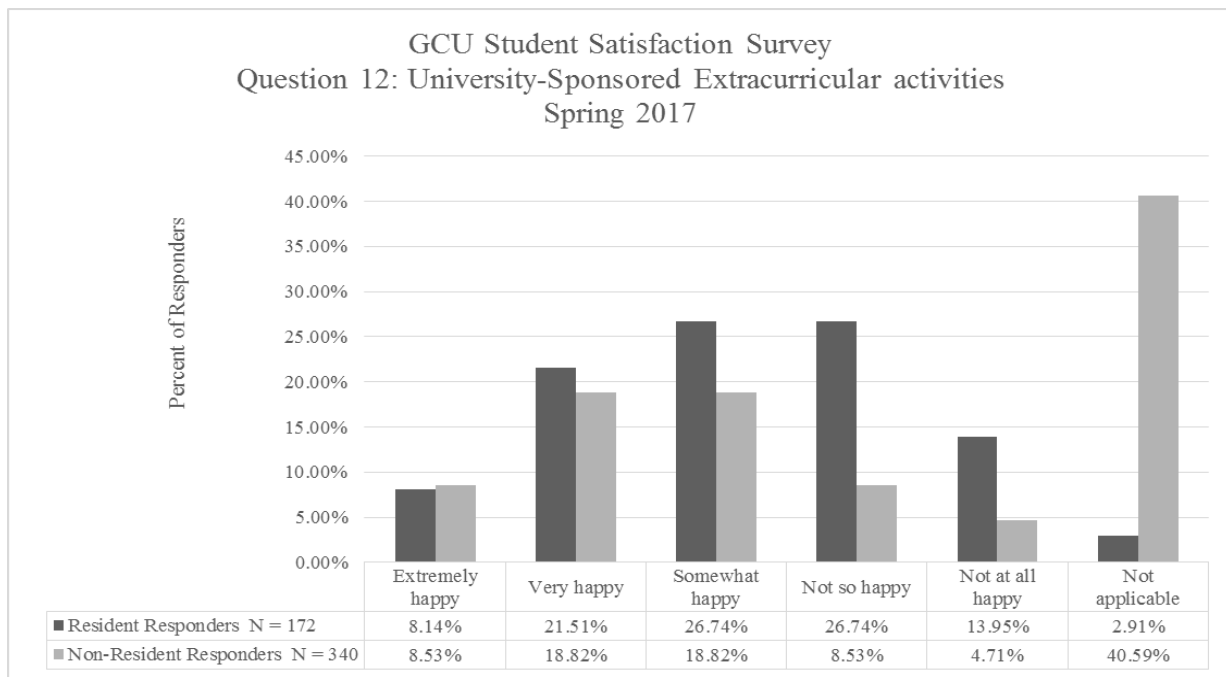
Figure 4.2A. Percentage responses for all data on internal satisfaction survey to
Question 12: "How happy are you with the choice of university-sponsored extracurricular
activities at GCU?"

GCU Student Satisfaction Survey
Question 12: University-Sponsored Extracurricular activities
Spring 2017

	Extremely happy	Very happy	Somewhat happy	Not so happy	Not at all happy	Not applicable
Resident Responders N = 167	8.38%	22.16%	27.54%	27.54%	14.37%	
Non-Resident Responders N = 202	14.36%	31.68%	31.68%	14.36%	7.92%	0
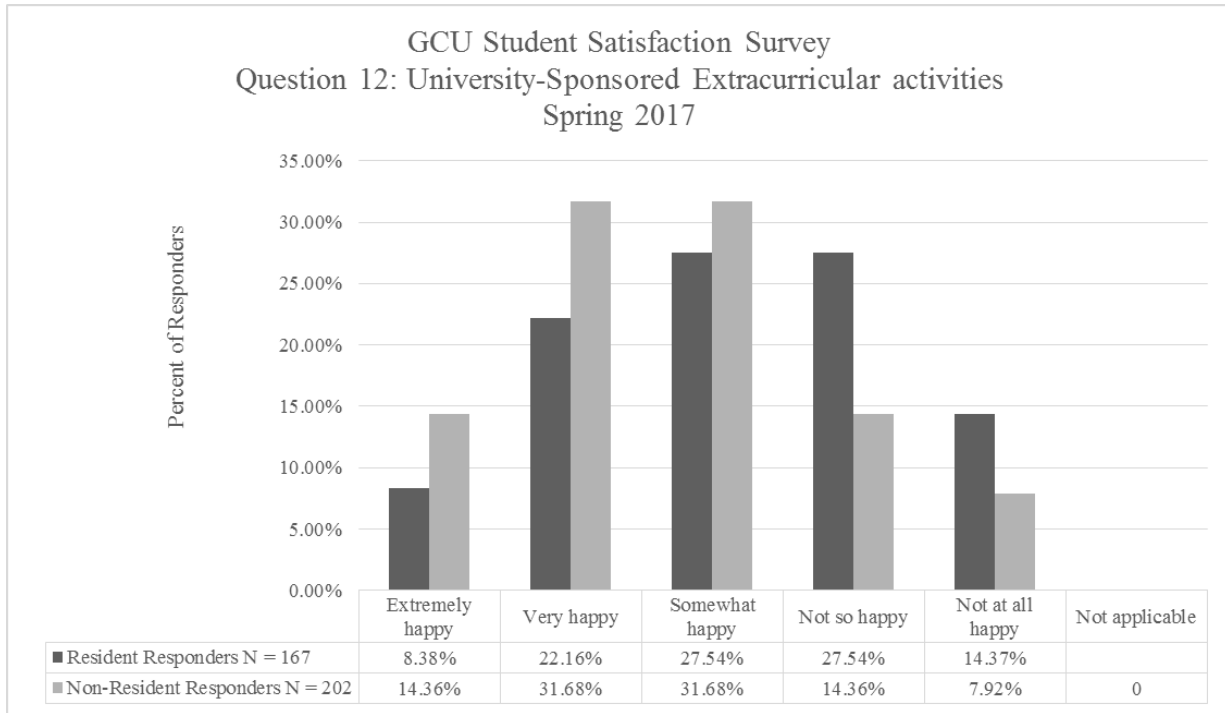
Figure 4.2B. Percentage responses for all students who did not respond "Not Applicable" on internal satisfaction survey to Question 12: "How happy are you with the choice of university-sponsored extracurricular activities at GCU?"

Another troubling statistic comes from an analysis of retention data for residential students. Retention was markedly lower for students who did not have a specific organizational affiliation of athletics or honors program enrollment. Analysis of the Fall 2016 cohort found that the students who just missed the invitation to participate in the University Honors Program (just below our measure and were not an athlete), retained significantly lower than their program affiliation classmates (athletes retained at 78%, University Honors Program students at 96%, non-affiliated students at 65%; see statistics sheet). A strategic reorganization of housing was instituted in Fall 2017 to address the retention problem found in students who had no specific organizational affiliations. In addition, these academically successful students from the cohort without an affiliation were recruited to participate as supplemental instructors in Fall 2017 for the first-year seminar GEN101 Pathway to the Bridge in hopes of deepening their connection to

Georgian Court.

The challenges surrounding the student life experience at GCU involve campus culture, funding, and space. Because GCU students are mainly commuters, and because they have reduced engagement on campus, programming that works for a traditional residential campus does not work here. In addition, a culture of intentional non-engagement has developed, particularly within segments of the residential population. Limited funding and the lack of a dedicated student center have further hampered efforts to develop a vibrant campus culture.

The newly hired (January 2017) dean of students has taken a number of steps to address these challenges: (a) the development of commuter-centered programming that is brief and designed to engage students who spend limited time on campus; (b) an increase in the programming budget for the Office of Residence Life and diffused control of the programming through that office; (c) plans to institute a student activity fee; (d) the establishment of 24-hour access to the student lounge and increased availability and promotion of recreational sports and other activities, and (e) the Office of Student Affairs has moved to a building with additional space that can be used for student programming.

Alignment with Strategic Compass

Support of the student experience is essential to the success of GCU. There are robust and thoughtful procedures for assigning academically underprepared students to appropriate support networks. There are a wide variety of programs designed to provide academic and other support to students who experience difficulties once they matriculate. In addition, many substantial initiatives are under way to reshape and reinforce existing programs, so it is anticipated that the ability to achieve the institutional mission will be strengthened moving forward.

The above data show that GCU can improve its results in the area of Standard IV, Support of the Student Experience, by following actions included in the Strategic Compass Action Plan. This self-study informed the development of the Strategic Compass, and the data of this standard was directed toward Compass Point #2, Mission Fulfillment Through an Exceptional Student Experience, which addresses the current challenges in providing appropriate engagement for students, both residents and commuters, while Strategic Compass Point #4, Mission Fulfillment Through Operational Efficiency and Resource Utilization, addresses the need for strategic planning for enrollment and student life facilities. Compass Point #2 reads:

> The university will enhance the student experience and attract and retain more students . . . by creating an environment in which the entire community can grow through shared educational, cultural, social, and spiritual experiences. It will develop a community of active participation that expands the interactions of students and increases the opportunities to understand various perspectives (Georgian Court University, October 12, 2018, p. 7).

Tactics that explicitly state alignment with the Support of the Student Experience are 1.5, 1.6, 2.1(all), 2.2 (all), 2.3 (all), 2.4 (all), 3.5, and 4.8. See Table 4.5 below.

Standard IV, Support of the Student Experience, will continually be evaluated through an iterative process. The ability of GCU to meet Standard IV is strongly supported by the evidence presented in this chapter. Additional documentation for this standard may be found in the documentation roadmap for this self-study.

Table 4.5.

GCU Strategic Compass Tactics Aligned with the Support of the Student Experience

Tactic	Strategic Compass Tactic Statement
1.5	Support the GCU student to meet degree-completion goals.
1.6	In recruitment, target students who are motivated to complete degree goals in a timely manner.
2.1	Engaging Student Experiences
2.2	Student-Centered Spaces through Master Planning
2.3	Technology to Enhance the Student Experience
2.4	Residential Life Experiences Tactics
3.5	Decrease student debt. Resource procurement for students to decrease college debt and increase future employment options.
4.8	Develop a process for student volunteerism and employment to support projects (e.g., space painting) and on-going tasks (e.g. Switchboard).

CHAPTER 5 OF GEORGIAN COURT UNIVERSITY'S MSCHE SELF-STUDY:

STANDARD V. EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to state clearly how Georgian Court University (GCU) complies with Standard V, Educational Effectiveness Assessment. The processes by which GCU utilizes assessment data to inform decision making about existing and new programs will be highlighted within this chapter.

Statement of Compliance

Standard V, Educational Effectiveness Assessment, of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2014) requires institutions to perform as follows:

Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their programs of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education. (p. 10).

Georgian Court University is in compliance with Standard V, Educational Effectiveness Assessment, as evidenced in this self-study and as shown in detail within the documentation roadmap for this self-study. In addition, GCU demonstrates compliance with the Requirements of Affiliation for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education that align with Standard V:

Standard 8: The institution systematically evaluates its educational and other programs and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes.

The remainder of this chapter highlights specific strengths of the educational

effectiveness assessment at GCU, identifies challenges faced by the institution related to this standard, and states how the institution will continue to meet the requirements of the standard.

Strengths of Georgian Court University in Standard V

Assessment of the student learning experience is an integral part of the community culture at GCU, with all faculty and administration involved in the assessment of educational effectiveness. Assessment results are utilized to strengthen programs, identify needs and areas of improvement, and develop new programs. GCU utilizes a variety of systematic assessments to evaluate student achievement and university and program goals.

Learning Outcomes Related to Educational Experiences and Mission

GCU has clearly defined institutional student learning goals (ISLGs) at the undergraduate and graduate levels. This is considered to be a primary strength at GCU and is in alignment with Criterion 1 of MSCHE, which requires "clearly stated learning outcomes, at the institution and degree/program levels, which are interrelated with one another, with relevant educational experiences, and with the institution's mission" (2014, p. 10).

GCU developed the undergraduate goals in 2003 based on the institutional mission and the general education program in place at that time. When the most recent Bridge General Education Program was put into place in 2016, the faculty based the general education goals and learning outcomes on the AAC&U essential learning outcomes, as well as the institutional mission and the ISLGs. Further, GCU's Graduate Council developed the graduate goals in 2017 based on the institutional mission as well as the learning goals of the individual graduate programs. The undergraduate ISLGs, Bridge General Education Program learning outcomes, and graduate ISLGs are aligned with the GCU mission statement (see Appendix N for the

learning outcomes mission alignment, 2017). The learning outcomes for courses and for academic and student life programs are aligned with the undergraduate and graduate ISLGs, and thus, are also aligned with the mission.

The undergraduate ISLG assessment plan was developed in 2016 (Georgian Court University, 2016c), and the graduate ISLG assessment plan was developed in 2017 (Georgian Court University, 2017i). Both plans include indirect and direct assessment measures that include course and program outcomes as well as institution-level measures such as NSSE survey results. The undergraduate ISLG plan includes a variety of co-curricular outcomes.

Degree programs and student life programs, regardless of mode of delivery, have had clearly stated goals and student learning outcomes dating back to the mid-2000s. The newly developed Bridge General Education Program has clearly stated goals and student learning outcomes dating back to the program's launch in Fall 2016. Modifications of student learning goals across the university occurred in Fall 2016 with the arrival of the new director of assessment. The new director improved assessment practices by asking units to use a unified template for their plans and to better identify, as appropriate, indirect and direct evidence, and formative and summative assessment, cognizant of alignment with the university mission. Department assessment plans were reviewed by the director of assessment and a peer faculty committee (the Academic Program Review and Assessment Committee [PRAC]), and modifications were made to ensure that departments clearly articulated their learning outcomes. Each program's assessment plan uses a template that demonstrates the relationship between the program learning outcomes and related ISLGs, general education goals, and specialized accreditor's standards (Georgian Court University, 2017c, 2017d). Undergraduate and graduate assessment plans are publicly available on the university's website (see

https://georgian.edu/assessment).

Courses have clearly defined learning outcomes developed by the faculty. These outcomes are mapped onto the learning outcomes for the program and ISLGs as appropriate and are independent of course mode of delivery (online, hybrid, in-person). Faculty make course learning goals and assessment plans available to students, but use of uniform templates for this information is not required. When new courses are submitted to the appropriate curriculum committee, they must be accompanied with an assessment plan and learning outcomes aligned with appropriate goals.

Organized and Systematic Assessments

GCU maintains a rigorous assessment protocol in degree and general education programs, conducted by faculty, to evaluate student achievement of program goals. Similarly, undergraduate and graduate institutional goals are evaluated on a systematic basis by the director of assessment with input from academic programs. This is in alignment with Criterion 2, which requires "organized and systematic assessments, conducted by faculty and/or appropriate professionals, evaluating the extent of student achievement of institutional and degree/program goals" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 10).

Assessment common to all academic programs. Each degree program and the general education program assesses learning outcomes over a three-year cycle and submits an annual report each summer. The annual report is based on a standardized template and reviewed by the PRAC with feedback provided the following semester. Departments are expected to modify assessment plans after reviewing results at the end of the three-year cycle, but they are able to do so earlier if necessary.

The Program Review Process is on a seven-year cycle. It involves administration,

faculty, and outside reviewers. Retention rates are included and analyzed for areas of

improvement. Current students, alumni, and faculty are surveyed to get information about

program outcomes and feedback that can be used to improve course experiences, student

achievement, facilities and equipment, and the learning environment. The Program Review

Process itself is currently undergoing review by the director of assessment and PRAC. A

revised template for program review was introduced in Fall 2017, and this template will form

the basis of an annual evaluation report. Five-year data trends on enrolled students, program

courses, and program faculty are being made available for regular review by deans and

department chairs.

General education assessment. GCU put into effect its new general education program

in Fall 2016, in part because the 2007–2016 general education program lacked a comprehensive

assessment program with well-defined goals and learning outcomes. The previous program also

did not make clearly defined contributions to achievement of several of the ISLGs. For

example, writing assessment was done in the first-year composition courses, but not in a

uniform way later in the program. Additionally, service learning, a requirement for graduation,

was not well-integrated into the general education program; in fact, the service learning director

remarked that service learning often seemed to be an "add-on" to courses.

The new Bridge General Education Program's learning goals and objectives were

based on the AAC&U LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes and revised to align the goals

with GCU's mission as a Mercy university. The program includes the first-year seminar

course and two Writing Intensive (WI) courses focusing on the Mercy core values. The

first of these courses, GEN199, is a freshman-level course that centers on the Mercy

values of respect and integrity. The major topic of the course involves discovering the self

and what it means to be creative, responsible human beings in an integrally connected global society. GEN400, the capstone general education course, asks students to reflect on how their worldview has developed throughout their education, to synthesize their awareness of the other three Mercy core values (justice, compassion, and service), and to create and present a plan that contributes to the development of a just and compassionate world. A service learning project is integral to the course. With the support of a NetVUE grant, faculty participated in WI workshops and workshops to develop GEN199 and GEN400 in 2014. WI workshops continue to be sponsored by the university each semester. To improve the first-year seminar course, the university also sent faculty and staff members to a conference entitled *Institute on Developing and Sustaining First-Year Seminars* to learn about best practices for first-year programs.

The General Education Curriculum Committee, in cooperation with the director of general education and director of assessment, evaluates assessment results and documents areas in need of attention. The director of general education shares the feedback with the faculty so that they can make improvements. In most cases, faculty members identify gaps in learning or in assessment during this process and initiate solutions. For example, in the assessment of the Writing Program in its first year (2016–2017), about one-fifth of GEN199 artifacts needed modifications due to discrepancies in rubric-based reviews. Through the assessment process, the reviewers identified confusion about the assignment as a potential barrier and considered solutions such as collecting prompts or modifying the rubric.

Meaningful goals and defensible standards. Programs with specialized accreditation/approval/licensing enroll over one-third of the matriculated undergraduate students and all but about 100 graduate students. These programs have curricular goals and

standards that meet the expectations of their accreditors. Programs that do not have external

discipline accreditation also have meaningful goals and defensible standards.

At the undergraduate level, English has one of the largest enrollments and has three

learning outcomes: literary analysis, communication, and perceptive thinking. Summative

assessment of each goal is based on a portfolio or signature assignment in a capstone course.

This is assessed based on evaluations derived from a prescribed rubric, with a goal of most

students scoring at the accomplished/effective level, and on course evaluation, with a goal of

the majority of students scoring courses as moderately effective or higher. Psychology and

biology are the other two largest undergraduate majors without specialized accreditation.

These programs and some other programs have a learning outcome that is assessed based on

whether students achieve an ETS major field test score that is within a certain range of the

national mean. At the graduate level, the M.A. in Applied Behavior Analysis program is not

accredited but meets the standards of the Behavior Analysis Certification Board. One measure

of achievement of each program outcome is that 80% of the program completers will pass the

BACB certification exam.

GCU supports and sustains this approach to assessment of student learning in a variety of

ways. Faculty serve on committees charged with developing and reviewing assessment plans

and procedures (e.g., General Education Curriculum Committee, Graduate Council, PRAC).

Since 2005, GCU has employed a full-time director of assessment whose primary

responsibility is assessment of student learning. The director works with units to develop,

maintain, and improve their assessment programs. The director also collects and disseminates

assessment data, performs institution-level assessment of student learning, and offers

assessment workshops for faculty and staff. As a member of the Provost's Council, President's

Leadership Council, PRAC, and Administrative Technology Committee, the director has a prominent place in decision-making groups.

To support assessment, GCU annually pays for assessment instruments to measure achievement of student learning. For example, students evaluate courses using the SIR II (ETS' student instructional report) or, for online courses, a university-designed survey. Institutional budgets also pay for other assessment instruments, including ETS Major Field Tests, National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE), Kaplan NCLEX Predictor Exam, NCSBN NCLEX Program Reports, and LibGuides (used to create SearchPath information literacy tutorials) software.

In addition to general integration of assessment into faculty workload, GCU pays for personnel to do assessment work each year. For example, full-time faculty members are required to attend an assessment day each spring semester. Members of the PRAC are compensated for time spent reviewing assessment reports when off-contract. GCU pays external consultants to evaluate academic programs undergoing program review. Some program budgets, such as that of the Writing Program, have funding to support faculty training and workshops. Department chairs and program directors are compensated for those roles, of which assessment is a key component.

Assessing goal attainment and student preparation for future. GCU systematically assesses attainment of goals as well as student preparation for the future. Executive summaries of annual assessment reports document the extent to which goals are met at program and institutional levels (see Appendix O for executive summaries of the Academic Program Assessment Report (O.1), the Annual Report on General Education Assessment (O.2), and the Student Life Support Assessment Report (O.3); Georgian Court University, 2017c, 2017d, 2017e).

The institutional goal of effective communication can be used as an example to highlight how GCU assesses goal attainment at the institutional level. Effective communication is a fundamental skill for successful careers, meaningful lives, and further education, and is an undergraduate and graduate ISLG. Surveys such as NSSE are one institution-level measure of goal achievement. The NSSE survey asks seniors how much their experience at GCU contributed to their knowledge, skills, and development in 10 areas. Two of these are speaking clearly and effectively, and writing clearly and effectively. In NSSE 2014, 2015, and 2017, 71 to 86% of GCU seniors responded "very much" or "quite a bit" to these questions.

In the 2017 NSSE survey, four of the five questions on which GCU seniors provided the highest scores compared to those at other institutions were related to successful careers, meaningful lives, and further education: (a) courses that included a community-based project, (b) participation in an internship or other experiential learning, (c) talking about career plans with faculty, and (d) completing a culminating senior experience. Demonstrating excellence in the major field is an indicator of being prepared for success. In 2016 and 2017 combined, 78% of GCU nursing students passed the NCLEX, and in 2016–2017, the teacher certification pass rate was 100%. However, students in disciplines that administered the Major Field Test in 2016–2017 (biology and business) did not achieve their goals. Most GCU graduates are employed or pursuing further education. Six months after graduation, 19% of May 2016 undergraduates said they were attending graduate school, and another 63% were employed.

GCU's undergraduate ISLG 4, demonstrating understanding of the Mercy core values, contributes to being prepared for meaningful lives. In end-of-course reflection surveys in 2016–2017, more than 85% of faculty said they integrated at least one core value in their course. That

year, 281 students reported doing 4,548 hours of service learning across 176 courses.

Additionally, GCU student-athletes received a NCAA Division II award for doing the most

service in the division.

Utilizing Assessment Results to Improve Educational Effectiveness

GCU has a strong history of utilizing assessment results to improve educational

effectiveness as required by Criterion 3, which requires institutions to demonstrate

"consideration and use of assessments results for the improvement of educational

effectiveness" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 10). GCU meets

this criterion consistent with its mission in several areas, including improving curriculum,

developing programs, and improving key indicators of student success. GCU maintains an

assessment webpage on its website that shares significant assessment results through

executive reports available to the public. All assessment reports require each program to

analyze data and develop an action plan based on assessment results. Examples of this

analysis follow.

Academic degree programs. Executive summaries of annual assessment reports

provide examples of programs that identified needs to improve instruction based on

assessment results. In academic year 2016–2017, biology, exercise science, criminal justice,

social work, Spanish, digital communication, and graphic design and multimedia programs

identified areas for improving pedagogy or curriculum based on learning outcomes they

assessed that year (see Appendix O.1).

General education program. In 2016–2017, the program assessed one objective

(application of knowledge) and four criteria under that objective. For three of the four criteria,

the students mostly achieved at the expected performance level. For one criterion, students in

6 out of 22 sections did not achieve at the expected levels. These outcomes prompted discussions about expectations, assignments, and how to report assessment results. The director of general education then worked with the departments offering the courses to review and revise expectations and assignments (see Appendix O.2).

Programs Developed in Response to Assessment Data

In addition to academic programs, administrative offices support students in all aspects of their college experience to improve student retention, graduation, and placement rates. In Summer 2015, GCU submitted a Title III grant proposal designed to improve student retention and graduation rates. The proposal was funded in late 2016 (see Appendix P for the Title III Grant Proposal, 2015). It was prepared using assessment of student retention and graduation rates. Assessment results indicated a long-term average retention rate from first to second year of 69%, a four-year graduation rate of 28%, and a six-year graduation rate of 50%. One factor affecting these rates was that many students enter GCU academically underprepared. From 2012 to 2014, the average percentage of students who required developmental courses totaled 48% in writing, 43% in math, and 37% in reading. In the Fall 2013 freshman cohort, only 36% earned 30 collegiate credits before the start of the second year, meaning that 64% of the 2013 freshman class were not on track to graduate in four years. In addition, students saw advising as an area for improvement. In the 2013 NSSE, half of first-year students assigned moderate or low ratings to the quality of their interactions with academic advisors. Nearly a quarter of students indicated that GCU provided only "some" or "very little" emphasis on the support they needed to succeed academically. Similarly, 13% of students felt the university provided "some" emphasis on learning support services. In response, GCU proposed the following actions designed to improve the one-year retention rate to 85% and the six-year graduation rate to 75%:

(a) create a writing center (implemented in Fall 2015 before the grant was awarded); (b) create

a math tutoring lounge; (c) expand a program ("Chart the Course") that offers free general

education courses in winter and summer terms to students who are behind in completing

15 credits per semester; and (d) improve faculty advising through training, workshops, and

creation of a "faculty fellows" system. These changes were put into effect. In addition, several

existing programs were enhanced and modified to improve student outcomes.

   Writing Center. The Writing Center was established in 2015 (see Title III grant

proposal), in part because of the large percentage of students who need remediation in writing

(30% to 50% of the 2012–2016 freshman cohorts). Assessment results from the first year of the

existence of the Writing Center indicate that it has been successful in assisting students in their

communication of written English. Of the students who required developmental writing

(EN105 and EN106) in Fall 2016 and used the Writing Center, 92% advanced to EN111 (the

university entry level composition course). All of the students (100%) who enrolled in EN105

and EN106 and used the Writing Center earned a C or better. In 2016–2017, the Writing Center

assessed student learning related to ISLG 1: Communicate effectively and ISLG 2: Apply

critical thinking, problem-solving, and research skills. Students who visited the Writing Center

were asked to submit drafts of papers, and center personnel scored them with a rubric. The

weakest scores were for the rubric categories "Research Skills" and "Style Sheets." Given this

data, the Writing Center is now asking students to submit assignment sheets along with their

drafts. The director of the Writing Center hosted a joint workshop with the library to reinforce

the connection between research and style. Usage of the Writing Center increased by 21% from

2015–2016 to 2016–2017. To maintain the gains in usage, the Writing Center piloted online

tutoring during Summer 2017. In October 2017, the Writing Center joined with the library staff

to offer an APA boot camp to education students enrolled in EDC6095 Project Applied Thesis. Attendance was voluntary, but evaluation sheets indicated satisfaction and usefulness of these sessions. This program will again be offered in June 2018 and will be mandatory for all students enrolled in the course. After the June 2018 session, continuance and expansion of the program will be determined based on assessment data.

Chart the Course program. The Chart the Course program was instituted in Winter 2015 to improve retention and graduation rates. National data (Complete College America, 2013) show that students who complete at least 30 credits per year have higher graduation rates than those who do not. The goal is for freshmen to attain 30 credits by the end of their first year. Students who fell below 15 credits in their first semester were invited to take a Winter Session general education course free of charge. In Winter 2017, 54% of eligible students participated; 79% of these students successfully completed the course and 43% obtained 15 credits by the end of the Winter Session.

Advising fellows. The Advising fellows program was created in part due to student assessment data that indicated that advising was an area in need of improvement (see Title III grant section, pp. 13–15). Advising fellows are faculty who are trained in effective advising. The goal is for advising fellows to assist in improving retention and student success by giving attention to undeclared majors and offering advising workshops to faculty. In the Fall 2016 semester, over 90% of undeclared students accepted an invitation to meet with an advising fellow and/or declare a major. By the spring semester, the roster of undeclared majors was reduced by almost half. Fourteen percent of undeclared majors visited the Office of Career Services, Corporate Engagement, and Continuing Education to discuss their career/life goals.

Math Lounge. In Fall 2017, the professionally staffed Math Lounge (see
Appendix P) made its debut and offers tutoring at all levels of quantitative instruction,
freshman through graduate level. In its initial semester, the Math Lounge served over
100 students.

Professional Development. Gap analyses were conducted comparing online course
delivery to the Interregional Standards for Effective Distance Education. This led to increased
Blackboard workshops offered annually by GCU's Office of Information Technology. The
office used Title III funding to finance summer workshops led by instructors from Blackboard
and Quality Matters, offered to faculty free of charge and with stipends during 2016–2017. The
advising fellows offered workshops on advising and the Writing Program offered workshops on
how to teach writing intensive courses.

Existing Programs Enhanced in Response to Assessment Data

Academic Development and Support Center. Peer tutoring at GCU has been judged
by students to be useful in increasing their performance. In 2016–2017, 86.4% of tutored
students responding to a survey reported an increase in grades due to peer tutoring. The
Academic Development and Support Center administers the peer tutoring program, the
Learning Connection (TLC) program, and the Performance Assistance through Coaching and
Tutoring (PACT) program. TLC is a fee-based, formally structured support program for
students with learning disabilities or other conditions. During the 2016–2017 academic year,
the program had a one-year 95% continuation rate from the previous year, and 85 to 90% of
students had term GPAs of 2.4 or higher. The PACT program, designed for students identified
as being at risk academically, has been less successful: in 2016–2017, 27 to 33% of students
had a term GPA of 2.4 or higher and 56% were retained from the previous year. In their

assessment, staff documented a positive correlation between PACT student failure to attend

program activities and poor GPA. Therefore, staff implemented new program rules for 2017–

2018 that make students more accountable for their grades and attendance at PACT activities

and require students with a 2.0 GPA or lower to meet with the Academic Standards

Committee to determine if they will be permitted to continue at GCU.

Career services. The Office of Career Services, Corporate Engagement, and

Continuing Education is working to become more visible on campus. In fact, one of the

office's program goals is to reach more students. Compared to the 2015–2016 year, during

the office saw a 5% increase in appointments in 2016–2017. The career services staff also

offered more programs (34 vs. 23), and gave presentations in more classes (21 vs. 13).

Counseling Center. Students who utilized the Counseling Center reported that the

counseling they received was "very helpful" in remaining enrolled in school (68% in

Fall 2016, 74% in Spring 2017). The Counseling Center is accredited by the International

Association of Counseling Services, Inc., and meets all standards for this organization.

TRIO–Student Support Services. The TRIO–SSS program is designed to provide

services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their retention and

graduation rates. In 2015–2016, it served 160 students. Of those served by the program, 45%

earned a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher, and in that year, 51 of its students graduated,

showing that a significant portion of the program's students achieve academic success. This

federally funded program meets all requirements of annual reporting.

Facility, technology, and equipment upgrades to support student learning. The

university used assessment data to identify areas where resources needed to be upgraded or

replaced to support student learning. State bond funds were sought and received to address the

need for facility, technology, and equipment upgrades. In Hamilton Hall (home of the nursing

program), these funds were utilized to improve skills lab and classroom space. Raymond Hall

(home of the School of Education) needed a state-of-the-art model classroom and technology to

prepare students for new teaching portfolio assessment. Jeffries Hall (the main academic

building) received additional equipment, and laboratory facilities improvement identified in the

2012 biology program review, among other improvements. All bond proposal documents are

available for review within the GCU self-study documents. These improvements were

completed during the 2015–2016 academic year.

Communication of Assessment Results

GCU communicates the results of assessment to stakeholders in various ways,

including an internal fact book. GCU's Student Consumer Information webpage

(http://georgian.edu/heoa/), has links to pass rates for nursing (NCLEX), teacher preparation

licensure, as well as retention rates, graduation rates, and alumni employment and graduate

school attendance rates. The GCU assessment webpage (https://georgian.edu/assessment/)

makes institutional and program goals and student learning assessment plans and results

available to the public. Highlights of surveys such as NSSE are shared with the Faculty

Assembly, Provost Council, and President's Strategic Advisory Group.

The director of assessment and the PRAC play a significant role in facilitating the

exchange of information and providing guidance and feedback to departments on assessment and

educational effectiveness. Reporting and feedback procedures include the annual Assessment

Day, regular updates at Faculty Assembly meetings and faculty committee meetings, and PRAC

and administrative feedback to every department. Faculty and administrators report on

assessment findings to the Board of Trustees and the President's Cabinet. The president presents

an annual teaching excellence award to a GCU professor, who later delivers the keynote address

at the annual fall Convocation Ceremony, which is another way that GCU conveys educational

effectiveness to internal audiences. GCU's website is a key source of information, including the

assessment section, which contains learning assessment plans and results for a variety of

audiences, including prospective students and their parents, as well as community members

external to GCU.

In addition to the assessment web pages, GCU seeks to disseminate information about

the institution and its programs more widely. One approach is to showcase educational success

stories focused on individual students or specific programs to a wide community that includes

internal audiences, alumni, prospective students, potential donors, and community members

(see Appendix Q). The biannual *GCU Magazine* (https://georgian.edu/publications) is a forum

for this type of communication, as is the semi-annual GCU Alumni E-News list serve and the

annual *Faculty Focus* publication (http://georgian.edu/wp-content/uploads/Faculty-Focus.pdf).

The Office of Marketing and Communications works actively on a variety of social media

platforms, including Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/georgiancourt), Twitter

(https://twitter.com/Georgiancourt), and Facebook (https://georgian.edu/marketing/newsroom).

That office maintains a "Newsroom" website (https://georgian.edu/marketing/newsroom) with

regular press releases. GCU events and alumni functions are additional venues for

disseminating information about educational effectiveness.

Periodic Evaluation of Assessment Processes

Criterion 5 requires "periodic evaluation of the assessment processes utilized by the

institution for the improvement of educational effectiveness" (Middle States Commission on

Higher Education, 2014, p. 10). GCU assessment procedures fluctuated to some extent from

2014 through Summer 2016, when GCU began to implement comprehensive new processes. The director of assessment position became vacant in 2014 and again in 2015. The downside of these staffing transitions was a delay in embedding a new system-wide assessment process, as well as some changes in approach over this time. On the positive side, the transitions allowed senior management to reconsider assessment needs and practices multiple times. The transitions also allowed for a learning process across the university that ensured confidence in the processes now in place.

The current director of assessment, who arrived in Summer 2016, reviewed all the student learning assessment processes and proposed several changes, which were approved by the Provost's Council in 2016–2017. These changes also prompted further discussions among the internal GCU community—within and among GCU academic departments and in the PRAC in particular—about assessment practices. New procedures include a new comprehensive assessment plan and reporting timelines and expansion of the role of the PRAC from the end of the 2016–2017 academic year to include review of assessment plans and reports rather than only periodic program reviews. The NSSE administration process was also changed to improve the low (15%) response rate. Instead of students completing it on their own outside of class, it is now allotted time in specific classes.

The director also received approval for a new multi-year schedule for administration of surveys. The review of assessment practice led to revised learning goals for many programs and the establishment of ISLGs at the graduate level.

GCU now also has a more rigorous peer review of program assessment plans and reports that features feedback from peer faculty on an annual basis. This allows programs to routinely act on data and their own recommendations for improvement. The seven-year

program review process has been streamlined to include a specific process to facilitate tracking

of implementation of recommended improvements.

At the time of this report, programs are still implementing initial assessment plans (on a

three-year cycle) and the seven-year program review process has only just been revised. A new

process of centralized data storage in a Blackboard assessment "organization" in which all

faculty are enrolled allows for institutional knowledge, so that the processes and data will not be

lost when personnel change.

Key Findings for Continuous Improvement in Relation to Standard V

Assessment of student learning and institutional, department, and program review has

become an integral part of the culture at GCU. Faculty have conducted extensive course

assessment, and the General Education Committee conducted some evaluation of the ISLGs,

albeit without a formalized plan. However, with the separation of the ISLG assessment from

general education assessment, GCU developed an undergraduate ISLG assessment plan in

2016, with implementation of its first assessment cycle to complete in AY2018–2019.

Similarly, GCU established the Graduate Institutional Learning Goals (GSLGs) in 2017. These

goals are now related to goals at degree/program levels and linked to relevant educational

experiences and GCU's Mission. The first year of assessment of the GSLGs was AY2017–

2018. In light of the PRR report feedback and follow-up, GCU now has well-defined practices

and processes for valid assessment of student learning according to its institutional student

learning goals.

In regards to program level assessment, some departments formerly relied heavily on

indirect assessment until recent years. Because many assessment practices and processes changed

in 2016–2017 with the arrival of a new director of assessment, the institution is now completing

the first three-year academic program assessment cycle using its revised program assessment

plans. This cycle spans the academic years from 2016–2017 to 2018–2019. The revised plan

requires both direct and indirect evidence of student learning along with formative and

summative assessment points.

Relevant to Criteria 5, GCU is finalizing processes that will be used to "assess

assessment" and establish a timeline for the process once there has been sufficient time for the

new assessment processes to embed. Currently there are ongoing discussions within the PRAC

and among faculty members, and between faculty and the director of assessment, about good

practice in assessment and anecdotal evaluation of the new processes. Actions have been taken

to improve processes and to ensure centralized documentation of information on an ongoing

basis. Certainly it is premature to evaluate formally the processes because some have not been

fully implemented, but in the near future, GCU will want a system in place for this evaluation,

to determine if there are gaps in institutional knowledge on assessment, or if any aspect of the

processes are not workable or not eliciting sufficient information. A key issue will be to

determine whether the processes facilitate action being taken, by faculty members and the

institution, after recommendations are made. GCU also needs more opportunities for disclosure

and discussion of assessment results between departments and at levels above the academic

program/department. In the interim, GCU asks each academic department to submit an Annual

Audit of Assessment Activities. The Office of Assessment prepares an executive report based

on these results.

While there has been significant development of the assessment of student learning,

overall university unit assessment and evaluation has not been equally organized. The area of

university assessment is being addressed within Self-Recommendation #3: University

Effectiveness and Planning. As of January 2018, the director of assessment has taken on the added

role to oversee university assessment, and is now the assistant vice president for university

assessment and accreditation. The university established the Office of Institutional Assessment

and Accreditation and re-activated the Institutional Effectiveness Committee. A University

Assessment Plan and Guide was approved by the President's Cabinet in January 2018, and this

plan addressed unit assessment and review across all areas of the university.

Alignment with Strategic Compass

The university embarked on a strategic planning process known as the Strategic Compass

starting in AY2016–2017. Discussions among stakeholders about appropriate points of emphasis

and the working groups assigned to them were informed by assessment results, particularly

institutional-level outcomes and measures such as retention and graduation rates and NSSE survey

results. The above data show that GCU can improve its results in the area of Standard V by

following the actions included in the Strategic Compass Action Plan. In particular, Compass

Point #1, Mission Fulfillment Through Academic Excellence, and Compass Point #2, Mission

Fulfillment Through an Exceptional Student Experience, will enhance the use of periodic

assessment in the evaluation of tactics related to academic programs and student life and support

services.

> The university will evaluate, design, and deliver diversified academic programs. . . .
> (Georgian Court University, October 12, 2018, p. 5).
>
> Operational efficiency, or offering the university's services in the most cost-effective
> manner, is a critical component of sustainability over time. This efficiency, coupled with
> effectiveness, applies to all aspects of the university. . . . (Georgian Court University,
> October 12, 2018, p. 12).

Tactics that explicitly state alignment with Educational Effectiveness Assessment are

1.1D, 1.3A, 1.6B, 1.6C, 1.6D, 2.1D, 3.2, and 4.13. See Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1.

GCU Strategic Compass Tactics Aligned with the Support of the Educational Effectiveness
Assessment

Tactic	Strategic Compass Tactic Statement
1.1D	Continue to use program assessment practices to improve teaching and learning.
1.3A	Evaluate effectiveness of current partnerships related to academic programs. Determine continuance at current level of involvement, expansion of services in partnership, and decrease of services in partnership.
1.6B	Review recent NSSE findings on academic challenge and high-impact practices (HIPs). Develop strategies to enhance these areas of student experience.
1.6C	Redefine the Undergraduate Institutional Student Learning Goals.
1.6D	Maintain the appropriate rigor of the GCU academic programs.
2.1D	Continue to implement HIPs for undergraduates, including undergraduate research, experiential and service learning, study abroad, and capstone experiences.
3.2	Expansion Programs Committee (EPC): Put a process in place that determines internal consistency (e.g., cost/benefit analysis) for taking on expansion programs.
4.13	Continually assess and improve units.

Standard V, Educational Effectiveness Assessment, will continually be evaluated

through an iterative process. GCU's compliance with Standard V is strongly supported by the

evidence presented in this chapter. Additional documentation for this standard may be found in

the documentation roadmap for this self-study.

CHAPTER 6 OF GEORGIAN COURT UNIVERSITY'S MSCHE SELF-STUDY:

STANDARD VI. PLANNING, RESOURCES, AND INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT

The purpose of Chapter 6 is to state clearly how Georgian Court University (GCU) complies with Standard VI, Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement, and to demonstrate how this standard is related to the mission of GCU and integrated into Compass Points #3 and #4 of GCU's strategic planning process, the Strategic Compass.

Statement of Compliance

Standard VI, Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement, of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2014) requires that "the institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges" (p. 12). Georgian Court University is in compliance with Standard VI, Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement, as evidenced in this self-study and as shown in detail within the documentation roadmap for this self-study. In addition, GCU also complies with two Requirements of Affiliation for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education that align with Standard VI:

- *Requirement #10:* Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments. (2014, p. 3)

- *Requirement #11:* The institution has documented financial resources, funding

base, and plans for financial development, including those from any related

entities (including without limitation systems, religious sponsorship, and

corporate ownership) adequate to support its educational purposes and programs

and to ensure financial stability. The institution demonstrates a record of

responsible fiscal management, has a prepared budget for the current year, and

undergoes an external financial audit on an annual basis. (2014, p. 3)

The remainder of this chapter highlights specific strengths of planning, resources, and

institutional improvement at GCU, identifies challenges faced by the institution, and states how

the institution will continue to meet the requirements of the standard.

Strengths of Georgian Court University in Standard VI

Georgian Court University's mission and Strategic Compass require that the institution

provide students with a transformative education. To achieve this goal, GCU's finances,

technology, human resources, and facilities are carefully managed through planning,

accountability, and assessment.

Recent recognition suggests that GCU's planning, resources, and institutional

improvement have positively affected the lives of its students. For example, in 2015, *The*

Economist ranked Georgian Court in the top 10 percent of all four-year colleges and universities

for delivering a value-added education. Out of 1,275 ranked schools, GCU placed 119th overall,

and 4th out of 24 New Jersey institutions (Georgian Court University, 2015d). In a separate

ranking by *Money Magazine*, Georgian Court ranked 25th out of 50 colleges that add the most

value, placing GCU in the top 2% of more than 1,500 institutions (Georgian Court University,

2015b). Finally, the U.S. Department of Education's (2015) financial responsibility test ranked

Georgian Court with a composite score of 2.3 out of 3.0 (a score greater than 1.5 indicates that

the institution is financially responsible

These successes are notable at a time when GCU has faced budget constraints. The following narrative, inclusive of data tables and supporting appendices, explains the ways in which GCU has managed its resources to provide a transformative education. This chapter provides evidence of compliance and support for the conclusions and recommendations presented.

Thoughtful Management During Fiscal Challenges

Criterion 3 requires "a financial planning and budgeting process that is aligned with the institution's mission and goals, evidence-based, and clearly linked to the institution's and units' strategic plans/objectives" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 12). This is a primary strength of GCU, which has thoughtfully managed its finances to face fiscal challenges as well as meet the evolving needs of its students. GCU has revised the ways in which it plans its budget and has carefully navigated enrollment issues, increasing enrollment overall during the past five years.

Financial planning. In the development of the Strategic Compass, GCU has established clear and succinct goals that inform decisions and the allocation of resources at all levels of leadership. The budget process begins each July, immediately after the end of the prior fiscal year, so that preliminary year-end data can be evaluated, reviewed, and incorporated in the planning process for the next fiscal year. The President's Cabinet engages in a series of retreats in July and August to review strategic objectives for the next fiscal year and work through appropriate tactical plans so that collaboration and synergies can be realized across campus divisions.

Changes to the planning process reflect Strategic Compass Point #4, Mission Fulfillment Through Operational Efficiency and Resource Utilization (Georgian Court University, October 12, 2018, p. 10) In particular, one objective of Compass Point #4 is to "develop an

entrepreneurial university business model that will make the university more agile in a changing market, providing greater resource opportunities to become financially sustainable while enhancing and expanding its ability to provide quality education" (Georgian Court University, October 12, 2018, p.13). The work to achieve this objective is already underway. In the recent past, the university presented operating budgets to the Board of Trustees' Finance Committee and, ultimately, the full Board of Trustees during the last quarter of the fiscal year (April to June). Given this timing, adjustments and planning were generally more rushed, as resource allocation decisions had only a limited time to be made. In 2017, the budget process was accelerated so that planning would begin in July, and the final budget could be presented to the board committees and the full Board of Trustees for approval in January. This additional time allows for greater flexibility and coordination of resources and tactical plans to address operating changes and challenges in a more direct and timely manner.

      Enrollment over the past five years. During the past five years, Georgian Court University's enrollment levels have been strong, overall. The success has been due, in part, to the university's transformation into a completely coeducational institution, beginning in Fall 2013. Enrollment was strong in AY 2013–2014 and again in AY 2014–2015. A substantial decrease of first-year, full-time students occurred in AY 2015–2016, which coincided with major turnovers at the vice president, admissions, director, and professional staff levels. Due to these changes and the late issuance of financial aid packages, the incoming freshman class was exceptionally small, although first-year retention of this group was substantial (85%). Enrollment has improved significantly over the past two years, however, as strategic efforts have taken hold and off-campus and online program offerings have expanded. Table 6.1 indicates increases in the fall full-time and part-time head count enrollment, as well as the full-time equivalency enrollment (FTE).

Table 6.1

Fall Full-Time and Part-Time Headcount Enrollment and Full-Time Equivalency Enrollment

Academic Year	Undergraduate		Graduate		Total	
	FULL	PART	FULL	PART	Head Count	FTE
2013–2014	1,261	306	210	480	2,257	1,850
2014–2015	1,299	322	199	488	2,308	1,874
2015–2016	1,249	279	157	437	2,122	1,735
2016–2017	1,319	272	185	526	2,302	1,916
2017–2018	1,343	270	178	599	2,390	1,971

Note: The University calculates FTE (full-time equivalents) assuming 15 credits per semester for undergraduate students and 9 credits per semester for graduate students. FTE is generally considered to be a more reliable measurement of expected revenue than headcount because headcount does not reflect the actual amount of credit hours paid for by students (based on data provided by the Office of Institutional Research, 2017).

Undergraduate applications, admits, and enrolled students have experienced some fluctuations over the past five years due in part to the overall economy and market forces, but they have shown a steady increase in the past two years (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2

Undergraduate Applications, Admits, and Enrollments Over the Past Five Years

Head Count		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Freshmen	Applications	1,276	1,290	1,322	1,609	1,946
	Admits	994	878	963	1,198	1,340
	Enrolled	*275*	*230*	*151*	*221*	*216*
Transfers	Applications	627	591	621	526	874
	Admits	417	403	426	410	549
	Enrolled	*218*	*222*	*205*	*209*	*314*
Readmits	Applications	33	34	35	19	24
	Admits	31	32	33	16	19
	Enrolled	*21*	*21*	*17*	*11*	*16*
Total	Applications	1,936	1,915	1,978	2,154	2,844
Bachelor's	Admits	1,442	1,313	1,422	1,624	1,908
	Enrolled	*514*	*473*	*373*	*441*	*546*

New degree programs are being explored to further expand course offerings and expand the university's footprint beyond Lakewood, New Jersey. This is in accordance with Compass Point #3, which states that "the university is committed to maintain well its main campus in Lakewood, while seeking alternate sites as determined by program interest and availability" (Georgian Court University, October 12, 2018, p. 10). The university moved the satellite location it had in partnership with Brookdale Community College (BCC) from BCC's facility in Wall (13 miles away from Lakewood) to a more desirable location accessible to a new student market at BCC's facility in Hazlet (31 miles away from Lakewood) in 2016, and established a satellite location at Cumberland County College in 2017 in partnership with that institution (Bachelor of Social Work degree-completion program). These sites offer degree-completion programs in traditional, online, and hybrid delivery modalities. Offering courses at locations more convenient to student populations across the state will position the university to reach students who otherwise might not consider Georgian Court University, given our physical location.

Graduate program applications, admits, and enrolled students have also shown steady increases over the past three years (see Table 6.3), for the reasons cited above. The Master of Education (M.Ed.) is the leading program, followed by the Master of Arts (M.A.) in Administration and Leadership and the Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.). In 2017, GCU changed to M.Ed. programs, within the same curricular areas previously offered as Master of Arts in the School of Education.

Table 6.3

Head Count of Master's Degree Students

Head Count		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Master's	Applications	293	279	289	369	402
New	Admits	183	176	173	211	242
	Enrolled	*127*	*106*	*114*	*139*	*161*
Master's	Applications	11	16	22	21	48
Readmit	Admits	11	16	22	18	35
	Enrolled	*9*	*9*	*20*	*12*	*27*
Master's	Applications	304	295	311	390	450
Total	Admits	194	192	195	229	277
	Enrolled	*136*	*115*	*134*	*151*	*188*

Steps to improve enrollment and outcomes. In an effort to deliver educational

programs that are affordable and can be completed in an accelerated timeline, additional

partnerships have been developed with other institutions, as outlined in the prior section. For

example, the nursing program, which is in a partnership with Hackensack Meridian *Health,* has

expanded to new locations (Riverview Medical Center and Hazlet) and added an RN to B.S.N.

program and a fast-track accelerated B.S.N. program for transfer students. Furthermore, the

university is responding to the needs of school districts to provide post baccalaureate teacher

training and state teaching certificates in elementary, secondary, special education,

bilingual/bicultural and world languages through a partnership with K–12 Teachers Alliance

(KTA), an organization that assists in recruiting students for GCU throughout New Jersey.

The use of technology is paramount in every component of GCU. Indeed, Compass

Point #4 "requires a level of proficiency in the use of technology across the university to allow

for comprehensive communication of the university's mission, critical data, accomplishments,

access to services, and events" (Appendix B1, p. 12). The expectation is that all information is

available and accessible electronically and that it be the preferred method of delivery of

information. GCU continues to improve electronic availability of all student-related services. For example, the Office of the Registrar has added more of its forms online, and the Blackboard Learning Management System Organization feature has allowed more coursework and extracurricular activities to be done electronically. The university acquired Slate, an admissions customer relationship management (CRM) platform, after a year-long selection process, and the system went live on July 5, 2017, in time for the 2017–2018 enrollment cycle. Slate enhances the ability of the admissions staff to manage contact with prospective students, manage travel and feeder schools, organize data, and create reports. It provides automated admissions contact and an activity information database for both the student and the admissions counselor with an electronic inquiry request. The recruitment database tracks activities related to prospective student contact by mail, e-mail, and telephone.

The university has taken other steps to improve enrollment. For example, among first-time, full-time regularly admitted students, some are offered additional support services through the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF), federally funded TRIO–Student Support Services (TRIO–SSS), and Performance Assistance through Coaching and Tutoring (PACT) programs.

Retention and graduation rates suggest that GCU's enrollment strategies have positively affected students. GCU has worked to retain and graduate at-risk students. For example, the university applied for and was awarded a Title III grant in 2016. Likewise, as of Fall 2017, GCU's four-year average of the one-year retention rate was 81% for transfer students and 76% for freshmen. This compares favorably to the national average, which was 81% for 2014 freshmen at all types of four-year institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). At schools with so-called "open admissions," the national average was only 62%, well below GCU's averages for first-time freshmen and transfers. Furthermore, as of Fall 2017 GCU's

four-year average of the six-year graduation rate for freshmen was 48%, which aligns to the

48% national average for less selective four-year institutions. For institutions with "open

admissions," 32% was the national average.

Tuition, fees, and room and board. The university has been strategic in both

positioning of tuition and fees, but also in providing for minimal increases each year so as to

improve placement relative to peer institutions, support retention efforts, and keep a GCU

education accessible (see Table 6.4).

Table 6.4

Tuition, Fees, and Room and Board

Academic Year	Tuition	Fees	Room & Board	Total	Increase
2013–2014	$28,238	$1,368	$10,120	$39,726	---
2014–2015	$29,566	$1,432	$10,596	$41,594	4.7%
2015–2016	$30,158	$1,460	$10,808	$42,426	2%
2016–2017	$30,158	$1,460	$10,808	$42,426	0%
2017–2018	$30,800	$1,460	$10,808	$43,068	1.5%

Competing favorably with nearby institutions. Georgian Court is the only four-year

comprehensive university in Ocean County, New Jersey. The university currently competes with

a number of private and public higher education institutions located in the state. Data show that

Georgian Court University has the most affordable price compared to nearby private

competitors, while above the price of attending nearby state universities and community colleges

(see Table 6.5).

Table 6.5

Comparison of Tuition and Fees Between GCU and Its Competitors

Institution	Location	Tuition & Fees for AY 2016–2017
Rider University	Lawrenceville	$39,820
Monmouth University	West Long Branch	$35,364
Seton Hall University	South Orange	$39,238
College of St. Elizabeth	Convent Station	$32,192
GEORGIAN COURT UNIVERSITY	Lakewood	$31,618
The College of New Jersey	Ewing	$15,794
Rowan University	Glassboro	$13,108
Stockton University	Pomona	$13,076
William Paterson University	Wayne	$12,574
Montclair State University	Upper Montclair	$12,116
Kean University	Union	$11,870
Brookdale Community College	Lincroft	$ 8,299
Ocean County College	Toms River	$ 5,035

Five-year financial performance. The University Statement of Activities (see

Appendix R) demonstrates some of the enrollment challenges encountered by GCU. Despite

these considerations, net operating income, minus depreciation, has improved primarily because

of strategic cost-containment efforts and improved enrollment and retention efforts. However,

budget deficits from recent years have been aligned with deferred maintenance for the university

campus. The Facilities Conditions Assessment (FCA) completed in Spring 2018 attests to the

current needs in this area. The cost-containment efforts were perceived as short-term, but may

have longer term consequences. The Strategic Compass addresses these concerns within its goals

and initiatives.

One indicator of Georgian Court University's successful financial performance is from

Moody's Investor Services. Since 2015, Georgian Court University's bond rating has improved.

In December 2015, Moody's downgraded GCU's bond rating from Baa2 to Baa3, no doubt a

result of the smaller class size and executive leadership changes that year. This downgrade

(which keeps GCU in the "investment-grade" category) was expected, as Moody's rating outlook

on the university had been "negative" since September 2012. However, beginning in

February 2017, Moody's upgraded GCU's outlook to "stable," and that rating has remained

during reevaluations in November and December 2017. This improvement takes into

consideration GCU's increased enrollment, improved cash flows, and growing partnership

programs. Improvement can also be attributed to growing interest in GCU's master's-degree

programs, as more than 300 graduate students are currently enrolled at off-campus sites in Essex,

Union, Somerset, Ocean, Monmouth, and Mercer counties. In addition, the university has seen

steady increases among transfer students and more students pursuing degrees in nursing,

business, biology, and exercise science (For GCU Annual Reports, go to

https://georgian.edu/publications).

Other indebtedness. The university has been strategic in the amount of both short-term

and long-term borrowing so as not to adversely affect future bonding capacity or hamper

investments in current operations. The bonds payable and other debt as of June 30, 2017 and

2016 are shown in Table 6.6.*GCU Indebtedness,* as taken from the university audited statements.

Table 6.6

GCU Indebtedness

Bonds Payable and Other Debt	2017	2016
New Jersey Educational Facilities Authority, Project Revenue Bonds,2007 Series Project D, due 2037	22,564,051	23,366,254
New Jersey Educational Facilities Authority, Higher Education Capital Improvement Fund, Series 2006A, due 2024	-	392,862
New Jersey Educational Facilities Authority, Higher Education Capital Improvement Fund, Series 2014D, due 2020	296,065	361,857
New Jersey Educational Facilities Authority, Higher Education Capital Improvement Fund, Series 2016A, due 2024	361,006	-
New Jersey Educational Facilities Authority, Higher Education Capital Improvement Fund, Series 2016B, due 2037	277,723	-
New Jersey Educational Facilities Authority, Project Revenue Bonds, 2007 Series Project H, due 2022	470,287	544,789
Mortgages	305,770	406,290
New Jersey Educational Facilities Authority, Dormitory Safety Trust Fund Bonds, Series 2003A, interest free, due 2018	9,542	18,627
New Jersey Educational Facilities Authority, Equipment Leasing Fund, Project Revenue Bonds, Series 2014, due 2018	42,500	82,500
OceanFirst Line of Credit	1,900,000	-
Other Obligations	66,048	83,541
Total	**$26,292,992**	**$25,256,720**

Facilities

The university footprint consists of 150+ acres and 29 buildings in Lakewood, New Jersey, in addition to lease/partnership facilities in Hazlet and Cumberland County, New Jersey. As part of funding received through the 2013 Higher Education General Obligation Bond issue (Building Our Futures Bond Act), significant renovations and improvements were made to several academic buildings, in particular those serving our nursing, science, and teacher education programs. In 2015, the university installed a turf field that supports a number of our Division II athletic programs and enhances practice and competition fields.

In 2017, the university refinanced the majority of its outstanding debt to achieve favorable debt service savings in addition to providing additional capital (approximately $7.5 million), which will be used to fund campus capital investments and reduce existing deferred maintenance budgets. As part of this endeavor, the university has contracted with a vendor to perform a Facilities Conditions Assessment (FCA) to appropriately identify, value, and assess all physical buildings and spaces on the main campus so that an appropriate plan can be developed to utilize available funding to improve the performance and use of existing assets. This plan, in addition to the Strategic Compass, will be used to formulate a Facilities Master Plan (FMP) and Information Technology Master Plan (ITMP).

Additionally, the annual budget process collects from campus manager's data as it relates to deferred maintenance and information technology considerations so that they may be shared with appropriate campus leaders and resource allocations in any given fiscal period are inclusive of these capital considerations in addition to operating needs.

Improvements to Georgian Court's Infrastructure

Facilities, infrastructure, and campus planning are being addressed through Strategic Compass Point #4, Mission Fulfillment Through Operational Efficiency and Resource Utilization. Criterion 6 requires "comprehensive planning for facilities, infrastructure, and technology that includes consideration of sustainability and deferred maintenance and is linked to the institution's strategic and financial planning processes" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 12). This has become a focus of GCU, and the governing structure has been expanded from a single Instructional Technology Committee to include three operating technology committees: the Administrative Technology Committee, the Instructional Technology Committee, and the Technology-Assisted Communication Committee. These three committees, which each focus on different aspects of technology at GCU, report to the GCU Technology Committee, which is headed by Cabinet-level personnel. This tandem of four committees will allow GCU to better research and plan IT initiatives. Governance for technology is broad, comprising members of GCU's faculty, staff, students, and administrators.

Realignments and accomplishments in human resources. Criterion 4 requires that an accredited institution demonstrate "fiscal and human resources as well as the physical and technical infrastructure adequate to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 12). Recent realignments and accomplishments in the Office of Human Resources show that Georgian Court meets Criterion 4.

In 2016, the Office of Human Resources (HR) office was realigned under the vice president for finance and administration. The purpose of this change was, in part, to more clearly link budget development and accountability. The HR office was charged with developing a more

strategic and integrated structure that supports daily operations while informing the university of support and professional development needed for future growth, sustainability, and appropriate unit and organizational succession planning. Some of these efforts are still in development as they require further articulation within the Strategic Compass.

Accomplishments of the HR office to date include better trained and credentialed staff. Staff members who are responsible for Title IX, OSHA, and other training programs are continuously updated, and training sessions for the campus community are offered throughout the year. These trainings include general sessions for campus groups, as well as more targeted opportunities to address training, development, and other staffing considerations within specific departments/offices.

In 2017, the university conducted a comprehensive salary and equity study involving all campus positions. GCU's staff is its most valuable asset and integral in the execution of its mission and service to its students. This endeavor involved representation from many different faculty and staff groups/committees with a focus toward improving compensation, staff development, position development, and succession planning.

The HR office is in the process of further developing GCU's existing annual employee evaluation program. The new program will include expanded employee performance measurement and evaluation metrics as well as improved linkages to the Strategic Compass. The university staffing table is embedded in the annual budget and forecasted financial operating plans. This process has allowed for better support when making investment decisions. An easier and more efficient process now exists for new position creation as well as the ability to realign staff where possible to realize operating efficiencies.

Expansion of technology governance. Consistent with the creation of the Strategic Compass, the IT Master Plan (2013) is being updated to reflect the current technology needs/requirements for academic and administrative functions across campus operations. As the university has expanded its operations, it has employed a series of four technology committees that serve to solicit input from the campus community, collaborate on effective solutions, and inform future tactical and strategic directions as it adapts to meet the needs of faculty, students, and staff. This process has informed the development of technology standards that facilitate better integration and support for technology-based solutions on campus. For example, each technology committee is refining the ways in which GCU creates IT initiatives through review, approval, and execution. All initiatives will be scored using a standardized matrix to evaluate the need, cost, deferred maintenance, and alignment with the Strategic Compass. This process will become an invaluable resource as GCU decides when and how to replace aging technology (Information Technology, 2017). The documentation roadmap for this standard contains additional documentation on the above IT initiatives.

The bond project and its expansion of GCU services. In conjunction with investments made as a result of the New Jersey 2013 Building Our Futures Bond Act, from which funds were not disbursed to GCU until 2015, the university contributed matching funds that significantly upgraded and enhanced classrooms and instructional technologies as well as infrastructure updates to the core switch and wireless networks across campus. This work was completed in 2016. While this is a significant stride forward, there are many desktop and administrative computers that are in need of upgrades to current specifications. Given the budgetary challenges of the past three operating cycles, planned upgrades were not possible or delayed. In the interim, the university has carefully inventoried units across campus so that as funding becomes

available, the most critical units have been identified and may be addressed on a priority basis. Similar to the physical plant, having this detailed inventory allows for choices that are more thoughtful while informing possible contingencies that may need to be planned for and formulating reserve plans.

The GCU Information Technology Master Plan currently runs through 2018. The vision is to create a robust environment that supports GCU with "powerful tools, reliable systems, and forward-looking programs of exploration and education" (Information Technology, 2013). The plan employs five strategies: foundation, access, education, stewardship, and innovation. Additional information on GCU IT can be found in the documentation roadmap for this standard.

University Audit

Criterion 7 requires "an annual independent audit confirming financial viability with evidence of follow-up on any concerns cited in the audit's accompanying management letter" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 12). Georgian Court University is in compliance with Criterion 7; indeed, both internal and external audits of the university's finances indicate no inaccuracies or weaknesses. Annual audits of the university's financials are completed by KPMG and are reviewed by the Board of Trustees annually.

Effective external audits for Georgian Court University. Included in Appendix S are the audited financial statements of the university for the periods 2015–2017. The Audit Committee, as charged by the Board of Trustees and in coordination with the finance team, oversees the annual audit of the university's financial operations. This annual audit program is designed to include the required campus operations with a direct and evaluative framework to safeguard university assets and provide reasonable oversights and controls over the use of resources within the compliance framework. As noted in the Report of the Independent Auditors,

there have been no reported instances of noncompliance or material weaknesses over internal

controls. For fiscal year 2017, no management letter was issued as there were no current or prior

year findings.

GCU remains cost conscious across its operations. All university expenses are evaluated

not only for potential savings, but also for impact to current and future operations. Likewise,

GCU has not drawn on the endowment or operating reserves to meet any current obligations.

The use of any credit is generally only for limited periods between semesters where the timing

of cash receipts and expenditures may provide challenging for short periods. It should be noted

that cash flow from operations is positive. KPMG/Prager ratios demonstrate operations that are

not inconsistent with peer institutions. Effective endowment management has contributed

positively to the growth of underlying assets and thereby provides any reserves for investment

in the future capital expansion and renewal.

Fiscal year 2017 actual results were in line with the budgeted expectations. In fact, actual

operating results improved slightly given improved enrollment and retention efforts. Unrestricted

investments are in excess of $25 million, which may contribute to operating and capital expense

support, if needed. However, as noted, the university has only used these funds to support

strategic projects. Operating support has been limited to the board-approved 4.5 percent; 36-

month average draw, which has historically been about $1.3 million per year.

Summary of Strengths of Georgian Court University

One of GCU's primary strengths is the care and attention it pays to students

underprepared for college. This includes the student who shows financial vulnerability. To that

end, increases in tuition and fees have been modest so as not to limit any competitive advantage

or enrollment opportunities. The university needs to continue to grow revenues through

enrollment growth and a diversity of programs rather than through egregious tuition increases.

Enrollment stabilization is evident in the latest operating results as the university expands

programs beyond historically traditional operations. New programs and partnership endeavors

have extended enrollment beyond Lakewood, New Jersey, to include several other counties,

satellite locations, and online programs.

Key Findings for Continuous Improvement in Relation to Standard VI

GCU spends its money thoughtfully, but still faces a substantial deficit. As enrollment

continues to grow, the deficit should shrink with the graduation of the Fall 2015 freshman class,

which was abnormally small.

A substantial number of GCU's plans are in the planning stages. The IT Master Plan (2013)

runs through 2018 and is in the process of revision. The Facilities Master Plan needs to be

completed before GCU proceeds with a Campus Master Plan (CMP) update. There also is a

feasibility study for a capital campaign. The Strategic Compass, which will guide all of this

planning, was being finalized during the writing of this self-study. These areas are also addressed

in the GCU Self-Recommendation #1, Plans for Continued Viability, based on the findings of this

self-study (see Appendix C).

Finally, GCU should endeavor to replace more IT assets ~~that are~~ past their lifecycles. A

current inventory of over 700 computers that are much too old to maintain effective performance

needs to be addressed. Likewise, network switches and the phone system should be replaced

soon. Campus emergency phones count among the most important telephone assets to replace.

Alignment with Strategic Compass

Planning, resources, and institutional improvement are essential to the success of GCU.

There are thoughtfully revised procedures for financial planning that have led to success even in

these uncertain fiscal times. Enrollment, in particular, has been a serious area of attention and concern at Georgian Court, and its operations and changes show recent positive results. In addition, many substantial initiatives are under way to reshape and reinforce IT, facilities, and HR, so it is anticipated that the ability to achieve the institutional mission will be strengthened moving forward. Most significant is the emphasis on planning and infrastructure addressed in GCU's Strategic Compass Points #3, Mission Fulfillment Through Revenue Generation and Diversification, and #4, Mission Fulfillment Through Operational Efficiency and Resource Utilization.

> . . . efficiency, coupled with effectiveness, applies to all aspects of the university, and entails regular and comprehensive review of unit effectiveness within academic, administrative, student services, and operational support services (Georgian Court University, October 12, 2018, p. 12).

Tactics that explicitly state alignment with planning, resources, and institutional improvement are 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 (all), 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.9, 4.10, and 4.13. See Table 6.7 below.

The data show that GCU can improve its results in the area of Standard VI, Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement, through the suggested tactics included in the GCU Strategic Compass Action Plan as well as Self-Recommendation #1, Plans for Continued Viability, and Self-Recommendation #3, University Effectiveness and Planning. The university's Assessment Plan was approved in January 2018, and immediately implemented. The SAP was completed in Spring 2018, and the Capital Campaign Feasibility Study was conducted in Fall 2017. The Strategic Enrollment Plan began committee work in Spring 2018. Standard VI will continually be evaluated through an iterative process. The ability of GCU to meet Standard VI is

strongly supported by the evidence presented in this chapter. Additional documentation for this

standard may be found in the documentation roadmap for this self-study.

Table 6.7

GCU Strategic Compass Tactics Aligned with the Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

Tactic	Strategic Compass Tactic Statement
1.2	Plan for appropriate degree and certificate programs based on GCU Mission, current and future student demographics, and market research for future employment.
1.3	Find the right balance of majors at Georgian Court University to support the university's Mission, strategic enrollment planning, and financial viability.
1.4	Evaluate and develop the physical and virtual environment for GCU's academic programs.
2.2	Student-centered spaces through master planning
2.3	Design new academic spaces with student needs in mind.
2.4	Identify available spaces for possible renovation and repurpose as student-centered spaces.
3.1	IT Services: The Information Technology and Assessment offices will develop and implement a process of continual improvement at current off-campus sites that will involve the following actionable steps:
3.2	Expansion Programs Committee (EPC): Put a process in place that determines internal consistency (e.g., cost/benefit analysis) for taking on expansion programs.
3.3	Fundraising Tactics: Capital campaign; donor relations, fund-raising connections
4.1	Develop an integrated and consistent process for campus planning and unit effectiveness to achieve operational efficiency. Establish a regular schedule and procedures to evaluate overall campus operational effectiveness that includes curricular, noncurricular, and administrative units.
4.2	Campus space planning
4.3	Campus Master Plan
4.4	Continue to develop the annual budgeting process to allow for a three-year operational plan based on assessment data, strategic initiatives, and the resource inventories conducted as part of Tactic 4.2.
4.5	Assess and plan restructuring of Academic Affairs based on growth in programs such as nursing.
4.6	Develop an Enrollment Management Strategic Plan that aligns with compass points and resources.
4.7	Identify, review, and improve inter-unit processes that appear to be inefficient or need redundancy and resilience.
4.9	Plan annual space usage more effectively though coordinated event planning.
4.10	Effective human resources and employee development
4.13	Continually assess and improve units.

CHAPTER 7 OF GEORGIAN COURT UNIVERSITY'S MSCHE SELF-STUDY:

STANDARD VII. GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, AND ADMINISTRATION

The purpose of Chapter 7 is to state clearly how Georgian Court University (GCU) complies with Standard VII, Governance, Leadership, and Administration, and to demonstrate how this standard was related to the mission of GCU, integrated across all campus activities, and how campus constituencies cooperate in assessing operations and in making decisions. This standard is integrated into Compass Point #4 of GCU's strategic planning process, the Strategic Compass.

Statement of Compliance

Standard VII, Governance, Leadership, and Administration, of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2014) requires that

> the institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituencies it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, religious, educational system, or other unaccredited organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy. (p. 13)

Georgian Court University is in compliance with Standard VII, Governance, Leadership, and Administration, as evidenced in this self-study and as shown in detail within the documentation roadmap for this self-study. In addition, GCU also complies with the four Requirements of Affiliation for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education that align

with Standard VII:

- *Requirement #7:* The institution has a mission statement and related goals, approved by its governing board that defines its purposes within the context of higher education. (2014, p. 2)

- *Requirement #12:* The institution fully discloses its legally constituted governance structure(s) including any related entities (including without limitation systems, religious sponsorship, and corporate ownership). The institution's governing body is responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution and for ensuring that the institution's mission is being carried out. (2014, p. 3)

- *Requirement #13:* A majority of the institution's governing body's members have no employment, family, ownership, or other personal financial interest in the institution. The governing body adheres to a conflict of interest policy that assures that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution. The institution's district/system or other chief executive officer shall not serve as the chair of the governing body. (2014, p. 3)

- *Requirement #15:* The institution has a core of faculty (full-time or part-time) and/or other appropriate professionals with sufficient responsibility to the institution to assure the continuity and coherence of the institution's educational programs. (2014, p. 3)

This chapter highlights specific strengths of governance, leadership, and administration at GCU, the rules by which management of the university functions, and states how the institution will continue to meet the requirements of Standard VII.

Strengths of Georgian Court University in Standard VII

Georgian Court University has cultivated a clearly defined and rigorous governance structure that includes all campus constituencies and has also substantially enhanced its leadership and administrative positions at the executive and Cabinet level. These improvements have occurred during a crucial period in GCU's history, as it moved to a fully coeducational institution in Fall 2013. The processes by which these entities operate allow the university to produce a values-based, value-added education for its students. The successes of governance are apparent in the development of campus resources that have helped GCU realize its goals as a Mercy-driven institution.

Structure and Mission Alignment

Criterion 1 requires that an accredited institution possess "a clearly articulated and transparent governance structure that outlines roles, responsibilities, and accountability for decision making by each constituency, including governing body, administration, faculty, staff, and students" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 13). Georgian Court University is in compliance with Criterion 1, as evidenced by the university's governance policies. This governance structure is described in detail in Volume 1 of the university's Policy Manual (Georgian Court University, 2017k), which is maintained by the university secretary and available on the university's website (http://georgian.edu/wp-content/uploads/GCU-Vol-1.pdf). Amendments to the sections of Volume 1 that pertain to faculty governance (Section 1.5.2) and Faculty Assembly committees (Section 1.6.5) are voted on regularly by the Faculty Assembly, sent to the provost and president by the Policy Manual Subcommittee of the Faculty Assembly for approval, and incorporated into Volume 1 with the approval of the Board of Trustees as appropriate. The bylaws of the university (Section 1.2.2) were most recently amended in

December 2016 and became effective in May 2017. The rest of Volume 1 underwent extensive

updating in 2015–2016 with the aid of the outside consulting firm [Stevens Strategy](#) (2017) A

Policy Manual Steering Committee chaired by then Assistant Provost Mary Chinery worked to

oversee that process.

Volume 1 of the Policy Manual (Georgian Court University, 2017k) clearly

demonstrates the alignment of GCU's governance, leadership, and administrative policies with

the university's mission. This is in compliance with Criterion 2a, which states that a governing

body "ensures that the institution clearly states and fulfills its mission and goals" (Middle States

Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 13). Indeed, Volume 1 opens with a section called

"History, Mission, and General Information" that includes the university's official mission

statement (Section 1.1.4), identifies the five Mercy core values of respect, integrity, justice,

compassion, and service (Section 1.1.5), and explains what these values call on all members of

the university community to do. For instance, concerning the core value of "respect," Section

1.1.5 states:

> We reverence the dignity of all persons and all life as gifts of God and strive to promote
>
> community in our world. Choosing to accept what may be perceived as different without
>
> passing judgment—choosing to appreciate social and cultural differences as strengths that
>
> enable people to work together. (p. 3)

Volume 1 of the Policy Manual (Georgian Court University, 2017k) also includes the

university's original charter and incorporation documents as an appendix and establishes that the

university operates under a two-tiered governance structure, the first tier of which is the

Conference for Mercy Higher Education, Inc. (the "Member") and the second tier is the Board of

Trustees (BOT). The primary roles and responsibilities of each of these bodies are described in

the university's bylaws. The Conference for Mercy Higher Education maintains a sponsorship role in its relationship with the university, with input on the appointment of the president, changes to bylaws, and spending limits.

Conflict of Interest Policies

The bylaws, which can be found in Volume 1 of the Policy Manual (Georgian Court University, 2017k), contain a conflict of interest policy and an accompanying questionnaire for BOT members and BOT subcommittees, all of which help to ensure that the university operates in accordance with its mission and without a conflict of interest. According to Section 1.2.2, Article XIV, a board member has a conflict of interest if

> he or she, or persons or entities with which he or she is affiliated, has a direct or indirect financial or other interest that may (1) impair or may reasonably appear to impair his or her independent, unbiased judgment in the discharge of his or her responsibilities to the University; (2) may result in personal gain, or gain to the Board member's family (spouse, child, stepchild, or the respective spouses of the foregoing, and any other person residing within the Trustee's household) by apparent use of the Trustee's role at the University; or (3) adversely affects the University's reputation or the public's confidence in its integrity. (p. 17)

These bylaws show compliance with Criteria 2c ("neither the governing body nor its individual members interferes in the day-to-day operations of the institution") and 2h ("a written conflict of interest policy designed to ensure the impartiality of the governing body by addressing matters such as payment for services, contractual relationships, employment, and family, financial or other interests that could pose or be perceived as conflicts of interest") (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 13). The accompanying questionnaire requires BOT

members to disclose any potential business dealings, financial interests, or gifts that connect with Georgian Court.

Strength of Leadership Roles at Georgian Court

Although the university has had several leadership changes in the past five years, because of clear articulation of roles and responsibilities as well as focus on mission, highly qualified leaders have been supported and quickly integrated into campus life. This is in compliance with Criterion 2b, which requires a legally constituted governing body that "has sufficient independence and expertise to ensure the integrity of the institution" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 13).

These recent additions to leadership include a new president (Summer 2015), provost (Spring 2014–2018), vice president for mission integration (2014–2018), vice president for institutional advancement (2016-2017), interim vice president for institutional advancement (2017–2018), dean of admissions (2016–2018) and dean of students (2017). These leaders have all guided key initiatives. The president has led a Strategic Compass initiative and, with support from academic affairs and admissions, has made several academic partnerships that have extended the reach of Georgian Court academic programs. The provost has led the development of retention and on-time graduating programs as well as a U.S. Department of Education Title III Grant. The vice president for Mission Integration founded the new Cabinet position; strengthened mission-focused programming, including Critical Concerns Week; supported increased emphasis across student, faculty, and staff on our value of service; supported integration of mission into the general education curriculum; and ensured that members of the Board of Trustees and all employees received an orientation on the mission of the university. The vice president for institutional advancement attracted speakers, expanded alumni outreach, and

led the process of integrating Homecoming, Alumni Weekend, and Open House activities in Fall

2017. The dean of admissions (promoted to vice president for enrollment management,

beginning July 1, 2018) developed new partnerships with Catholic high schools and community

colleges throughout New Jersey, such as dual admission and degree-completion agreements. The

dean of students began a process of improving soft spaces for students, increased student

activities programming and use of the Casino building and increasing club participation. These

new leaders, as well as the members of the President's Cabinet who also served under the

previous president, Rosemary Jeffries, RSM, Ph.D., namely the vice president for finance and

administration (2014), and the executive director of marketing and communications (2009),

brought appropriate educational backgrounds and years of relevant experience to their positions.

While GCU has seen a significant amount of turnover of executive administrators in the

past five years, the president and provost have acted to mitigate the effects of these transitions. In

several cases, personnel already in place at the university were promoted to interim, and then to

permanent positions. In some cases, positions were eliminated, and administrators were

promoted with expanded responsibilities. In other cases, a defined search process that usually

included a representative spectrum of staff and faculty was implemented to fill vacancies and

bring in prepared personnel to meet the current needs of the university and add a new perspective

and expertise. The comprehensive inclusion of the GCU community in both the Strategic

Compass development and the self-study for the MSCHE reaffirmation of accreditation has

increased the transparency of GCU's current state and has enabled all constituents to share in the

mission.

The position of president (chief executive officer) meets all of Criterion 3 and its sub-

criteria a–d. The Board of Trustees appoints and evaluates the president (Criterion 3a).

Specifically, Joseph R. Marbach, Ph.D. (Temple University, 1993), is in compliance with Criterion 3b, which requires that the president "has appropriate credentials and professional experience consistent with the mission of the organization" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 14). Dr. Marbach became Georgian Court's ninth president on July 1, 2015, after a distinguished career as a professor of political science, and, later, as a provost and vice president for academic affairs at La Salle University. In developing the Institute for Lasallian Education and Engaged Pedagogy (I-LEEP), his experience is certainly consistent with the mission of Georgian Court. Also, as a professor of political science, and later dean for the College of Arts and Sciences at Seton Hall University, Dr. Marbach served as acting chair of the Department of Africana Studies and as co-founder and director of the Center for Community Research and Engagement. Public service and civic engagement are crucial to Dr. Marbach's identity as an educator and align with the mission of Georgian Court University. At Georgian Court, Dr. Marbach complies with Criterion 3c, as he

> has the authority and autonomy required to fulfill the responsibilities of the position, including developing and implementing institutional plans, staffing the organization, identifying and allocating resources, and directing the institution toward attaining the goals and objectives set forth in its mission. (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 14)

> Finally, as demonstrated above, Dr. Marbach "has the assistance of qualified

administrators, sufficient in number, to enable the Chief Executive Officer to discharge his/her duties effectively; and is responsible for establishing procedures for assessing the organization's efficiency and effectiveness" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 14). He therefore is in compliance with Criterion 3d.

Shared Governance

The university is committed to shared governance, with the specific roles and responsibilities reserved for faculty, staff, and students articulated in Section 1.5.1 of the Policy Manual, Volume 1 (Georgian Court University, 2017k). This section begins by affirming, in particular, the important role that faculty play in "recommending and evaluating admissions policies and degree requirements, appropriate curricula, methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life, which relate to the educational process." To that end, faculty members serve alongside administrators on several institutional committees, including the Human Resources Committee, the Research Review Board (IRRB), the Technology Committee, the Mission Advisory Committee, the Safety and Security Committee, the Retention Committee, and the Sustainability Committee (all described in Section 1.6.4). Faculty members also serve on such judicial committees as the Student Life Judicial Committee and the Undergraduate Admissions Oversight Committee (described in Section 1.6.6), and on the Academic Affairs, Advancement and Public Affairs, Mission, and Strategic Planning committees of the GCU Board of Trustees.

Students appointed by the Student Government Association (SGA) serve on several institutional and BOT committees as well, as listed in the Student Handbook (Georgian Court University, 2017p, p. 57), which is revised annually by the Office of Student Life and posted online (http://georgian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/GCU-Student-Handbook.pdf). The SGA, as of the 2016–2017 academic year, revised its structure from a "class officers" model to a "senate" model, and is led by an Executive Board consisting of a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and speaker of the senate. Its primary responsibilities are articulated in the Student Handbook (Georgian Court University, 2017p, p. 56). The full committee structure of

the university, which articulates roles and responsibilities for administrators, faculty, staff, and

students working together in accordance with the policy on shared governance, is listed in

Volume 1 of the Policy Manual, Section 1.6 (Georgian Court University, 2017k).

The administration engages regularly with faculty and students to advance the

institution's goals and objectives. The president shares highlights of the university's

accomplishments at the opening fall Convocation ceremony and at a fall State of the University

address, both of which are open to the entire university community. The State of the University

address includes an opportunity for questions and answers. In the spirit of shared governance and

transparency, faculty and student representatives have multiple opportunities to engage with the

trustees, the president, and his Cabinet members throughout each academic year, including three

meetings of the Board of Trustees, two Board of Trustees dinners, and three meetings each of the

Board Academic Affairs Committee, Advancement and Public Affairs Committee, Mission and

Identity Committee, Strategic Planning Committee, and Student Life and Athletics Committee.

In addition, the president meets monthly with the executive officers of the Faculty Assembly, as

well as once early in the academic year with the SGA officers. The provost and deans regularly

attend Faculty Assembly. The president and other members of the Cabinet are occasionally

invited to attend as well. The president and provost attend many of the year-end honor society

induction and award ceremonies, reinforcing our goal of recognizing student leadership.

The president also encourages communication and engagement with leaders throughout

the university. Section 1.6.3.2 of the Policy Manual, Volume 1 (Georgian Court University,

2017k), states that "the President's Leadership Council meets on the call of the President on a

Scheduled basis." The Council includes managers from all departments including deans, faculty

representatives, and the Cabinet. The president also meets monthly with the Strategic Advisory

Group, which includes the Cabinet, the deans, the CIO, and the assistant vice president for

athletics and recreation. These groups were put in place during the first year of the president's

administration to improve communication and decision making. To date, these groups have

helped shape the structure of the Open House/Homecoming/ Alumni Weekend (2016–2017), the

transition of operations from the Wall location to the Hazlet location, and the addition of

operations to the Cumberland location (2016–2017), the organization of a revised website

(2015), and the decision to move Commencement off-campus (2017–2018).

Leadership Assessment and Continual Improvement

Criterion 5 requires that compliant institutions undergo "periodic assessment of the

effectiveness of governance, leadership, and administration" (Middle States Commission on

Higher Education, 2014, p. 14). Georgian Court is in compliance with this criterion, and has

integrated assessment into Strategic Compass Point #4, Mission Fulfillment Through Operational

Efficiency and Resource Utilization. In particular, Compass Point #4 states that assessment

requires "regular and comprehensive review of unit effectiveness within academic,

administrative, student services, and operational support areas" (Georgian Court University,

October 12, 2018, p. 12). In accordance with Criterion 5 and Compass Point #4, all members of

the administration and their staff complete an annual performance review in which goals for the

previous year are assessed and new goals are continually developed to improve the performance

of the administrators and their organizations in line with the mission and values of the university.

This assessment instrument provides strong evidence of Standard VII's alignment with GCU's

mission, since it begins by asking both the employee and his or her supervisor to assess whether

the employee "understands and supports core values" of respect, integrity, justice, compassion,

and service. For the current cycle, 70% of evaluations have been submitted to the Office of

Human Resources (T. Owens, personal communication, December 13, 2017). The director of

human resources reviews the evaluations and works with managers to assist with the creation of

development plans, as well as corrective action performance improvement plans, as necessary.

The Office of Human Resources also maintains a tracking system that records which divisions

have submitted the evaluations. Reminders to submit the evaluations are sent from HR to

Cabinet-level positions and from there to the various managers. Currently, the goals and

objectives are created by individual managers of each division, based on the individual positions.

The Strategic Compass will ensure that GCU's annual performance evaluation process takes into

account campus-wide goals as well.

All members of the President's Cabinet (the university administration) perform

continual assessment of their organizations (see examples in the documentation roadmap of this

self-study). These activities are in compliance with Criterion 4f, which calls for an

administration possessing or demonstrating "systematic procedures for evaluating

administrative units and for using assessment data to enhance operations." (Middle States

Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 14). In particular, the Office of Mission Integration

conducts programs across the university and is part of the assessment of student learning goals

to ensure that mission is part of every aspect of the university. This passion for mission has

been integrated into Compass Point #4, which states that "the university will develop a strong

brand that promotes its mission, outcomes, and shared experiences such that Georgian Court

becomes a first-choice university for an increasing number of ambitious students" (Georgian

Court University, October 12, 2018, p. 10). A review of the effectiveness of these programs and

activities is conducted every year and informs changes as well as introduction/discontinuation

of programs and activities. The Office of the Provost conducts assessment of academics,

registration, student life, and athletics and discusses the findings as appropriate with the

Provost's Council, the Dean's Council, and/or with faculty leadership (executive officers of the

Faculty Assembly). Quarterly reports are also provided to the Board of Trustees. The Office of

Institutional Advancement conducts a regular assessment process, resulting in improvements,

examples of which are provided in a report. The Office of Marketing and Communications

conducts regular, department-level assessments to monitor its impact and reach. Select findings

are reported three to four times a year at trustee-level meetings (Advancement and Public

Affairs Committee), and in annual reports submitted to the university president. A variety of

unit-level performance indicators—qualitative and quantitative—is considered. The regular

assessment process and recent improvements made are provided in a report. The Office of

Admissions conducts a regular assessment process, with example improvements provided in the

documentation roadmap of this self-study.

The Office of Finance and Administration, which interfaces with the Board of Trustees,

conducts regular assessment activities, which comply with Criterion 2d as well as Criterion 2e,

which requires that the governing body "plays a basic-policy making role in financial affairs to

ensure integrity and strong financial management. This may include timely review of audited

financial statements and/or other documents related to the fiscal viability of the institution"

(Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 13). Materials that demonstrate

compliance include monthly budget reports and variance analyses, capital projects and deferred

maintenance reviews, periodic financial statements that include review by the Board of

Trustees, selected operating trends, and monthly endowment performance reports from SEI

Investments, the organization that manages Georgian Court University's endowment funds.

The president meets with the President's Cabinet on a biweekly basis to make decisions

based on the above assessment data. In addition, monthly meetings are held with the Strategic

Advisory Group, consisting of the vice presidents and deans, and with the President's Leadership

Council, consisting of the vice presidents, deans, and directors. At these meetings, issues

identified through assessment are put on the agenda, discussed, and addressed.

Trustees include distinguished attorneys, educators, executives, and financiers. The

Board of Trustees meets no less than three times annually, as stated in the bylaws. The trustees

"bear full legal and fiduciary responsibility for the governance of the University and to be

ultimately accountable for the academic quality, planning, and fiscal well-being of the

University" (Georgian Court University, 2017k, p. 8). They delegate tasks to the president and

university officers, and provide basic oversight and guidance on policy decisions. The Board of

Trustees oversees its own set of committees that interface, review, and address policy issues on a

quarterly basis. These committees include the following:

Table 7.1

Standing Committees of the GCU Board of Trustees

Committee Structure of the GCU Board of Trustees		
Academic Affairs	Advancement & Public Affairs	Audit & Compliance*
Compensation*	Executive	Finance & Investment*
Governance	Mission and Identity	Strategic Planning
Student Life & Athletics		

These committees make their meeting minutes available for the full Board of Trustees

and escalate issues that need full Board of Trustees discussion. The starred committees (*)

conduct an annual self-evaluation of the performance of the committee and the effectiveness and

compliance with their charter. The Executive Committee is responsible for oversight of all other

committees. The committee charters can be found in Appendix C of the bylaws. The Board of

Trustees has also requested creation of a dashboard of metrics to help them monitor progress on

the strategic planning goals. This dashboard is available on IRIS (Institutional Research

Information Service), which is a compilation of institutional research information available to

members of the GCU community from on-campus computers.

Each trustee completes surveys on a yearly basis, switching between a survey on the

performance of the Board of Trustees as a whole and a survey on one's performance as an

individual trustee. Results are reviewed by the board chair and then discussed at a board meeting.

Each of these surveys is robust. For example, the Trustee Performance Survey (Georgian Court

University, 2017q) is 10 pages long and adapted from Richard T. Ingram's *Handbook of College

and University Trusteeship* (1980). There are questions pertaining to one's understanding of

fund-raising, advocacy, and mission. The survey's introduction states that "A 'perfect score' is

an unreasonable expectation." Honest responses are expected. The Board Performance Survey

contains questions that comprise 10 topics: institutional mission and educational policy, strategic

plan, physical plant, financial management, financial support, board membership, board

organization, board/president relations, board/faculty relations, and board/student relations

(Georgian Court University, 2017a).

Key Findings for Continuous Improvement in Relation to Standard VII

Although assessment of all units is done on an annual basis with improvements tied to its

results, there is little direct evidence or data available. For example, although all Cabinet members

conduct and were able to provide evidence of unit-level assessment processes which they review

with the president, there was little data provided, and it was inconsistent in the level of detail across

units. A more consistent and transparent reporting mechanism and process is needed.

Likewise, regarding Criterion 3d, which stipulates that the president is responsible for

"establishing procedures for assessing the organization's efficiency and effectiveness," this self-

study found that Georgian Court University is compliant in its assessment activities but needs

more direct evidence of changes made as a result of those activities. There should also be a more

cohesive assessment process for employees beyond the general requirement in Section 5.6 of the

Policy Manual, Volume 5 (Georgian Court University, 2014b), that all supervisors conduct

formal performance evaluations of their employees annually. The policy states that

> Supervisors and employees are strongly encouraged to discuss job performance and goals
>
> on an informal, day-to-day basis. Formal performance evaluations are conducted annually
>
> to provide both supervisors and employees the opportunity to discuss job tasks, identify
>
> and correct weaknesses, encourage and recognize strengths, and discuss positive,
>
> purposeful approaches for establishing and meeting performance and professional
>
> development goals. (p. 5)

While the Office of Human Resources collects performance evaluations regularly, much of the

work is to acquire the evaluations rather than to develop policies based on an assessment of the

data provided by the evaluations. At present, the goals and objectives for employees are created

by their managers, and there is room to improve the extent to which this work connects to the

Strategic Compass. As the process continues to develop, the key GCU goals and tactics of the

Strategic Compass should cascade to the Cabinet members and then to their direct managerial

reports, and then finally to all employees.

As for the performance evaluations of the Board of Trustees, only some board

committees have as part of their charter that they "conduct an annual self-evaluation of the

performance of the Committee and the effectiveness and compliance with their charter." Not

only would their annual review improve the work of the committees, but it would also model

behavior for the rest of the university.

The previous strategic plan for 2012–2017, created under the leadership of the

university's former president, was not always kept front and center as the guide for planning and

decision making. Dr. Marbach reviewed and reported on all of the goals it contained, and this

review is contained within the document: *A New Direction, A New Vision: Closing GCU's 2012–*

2017 Strategic Plan (2018a)*.* The new Strategic Compass is an ongoing process with four high-

level guiding principles or compass points. His vision is to develop annual tactics that bring the

university ever closer to high-level goals. Through ongoing monitoring of key performance

indicators, the university will readjust tactics on a continual basis.

Alignment with Strategic Compass

The university completed its strategic planning exercise known as the Strategic Compass

in 2017. Discussions among stakeholders about appropriate compass points resulted in the

assignment of working groups comprising constituencies from across the university. The

Strategic Compass Point aligned directly with Standard VII is Compass Point #4, Mission

Fulfillment Through Operational Efficiency and Resource Utilization. The self-recommendations

of this self-study are included in the Strategic Compass, especially in the areas of strategic

planning and evaluation of its units of service.

> The university will utilize strategic planning in the areas of enrollment, advancement, and
>
> academic program development, as well as the development of a campus master plan and
>
> unit effectiveness in alignment with mission to actualize maximum operational
>
> efficiencies and revenue generation and diversification (Georgian Court University,
>
> October 12, 2018, p. 3).

Tactics that explicitly state alignment with Governance, Leadership, and Administration

are 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.2, 2.6, 3.2, 4.5, 4.7, 4.10, 4.11, 4.12. See Table 7.2 below.

Table 7.2

GCU Strategic Compass Tactics Aligned with Governance, Leadership, and Administration

Tactic	Strategic Compass Tactic Statement
1.1	Support faculty in areas related to research, pedagogy, assessment of learning, and use of technology.
1.2	Plan for appropriate degree and certificate programs based on GCU Mission, current and future student demographics, and market research for future employment.
1.3	Find the right balance of majors at Georgian Court University to support the university's Mission, strategic enrollment planning, and financial viability.
1.4	Evaluate and develop the physical and virtual environment for GCU's academic programs.
2.2	Student-centered spaces through master planning
2.6	Fostering community partnerships
3.2	Expansion Programs Committee (EPC): Put a process in place that determines internal consistency (e.g., cost/benefit analysis) for taking on expansion programs.
4.5	Assess and plan restructuring of Academic Affairs based on growth in programs such as nursing.
4.7	Identify, review, and improve inter-unit processes that appear to be inefficient or need redundancy and resilience.
4.10	Effective human resources and employee development
4.11	Effective human resource utilization/allocation
4.12	Strengthen institutional recognition and the GCU brand

The above data show that GCU can improve in the areas of Standard VII, Governance, Leadership, and Administration, through actions included in the Strategic Compass.

While conducted regularly, the university unit assessments have not followed a unified protocol and reporting structure. With the completion of the university's Strategic Compass 2018, the alignment of unit goals with the Strategic Compass Points and tactics will be more explicit. University-wide assessment is addressed within Self-Recommendation #3, University Effectiveness and Planning, as a result of this self-study. The university is now implementing a unified and cohesive unit assessment across all functional areas of the university.

The suggestions that GCU institute a policy whereby Cabinet members complete a standardized unit-level assessment report on a regular schedule is being addressed. This would

help to (a) rectify the inconsistency across units; (b) ensure the transparency of administrative processes through clear, available, and timely communication concerning all aspects of the university; and (c) aid the president in "establishing procedures for assessing the organization's efficiency and effectiveness." These points are now part of the GCU University Assessment Plan and Guide (2018c), approved by the President's Cabinet in January 2018.

All Board of Trustees committees that do not currently conduct annual self-evaluations should modify their charters to mandate self-evaluation as a requirement. Governance will continually be evaluated through the process of annual reporting and regular review of unit assessment results. Monitoring of the key performance indicators defined in the Strategic Compass will inform strategic planning and budget allocation, and the annual report of the institution will continue to highlight the importance and evidence of governance, leadership, and administration. Additional documentation for this standard may be found in the documentation roadmap for this self-study.

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