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2021 Virtual Case Study

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Presentation Outline

A. Land & Labor Acknowledgement
B. Committee Members
C. Background Information
   a. Institutional Background
   b. COVID-19 Adaptations
   c. Current Issues
D. Program Proposal
   a. Overview and Goals
   b. Learning Outcomes
   c. Rationale
   d. Grounding Theory & Literature
   e. Detailed Program Outline
E. Technology & Accessibility
F. Program Promotion Plan
G. Future Planning & Recommendations
H. Promotional Video

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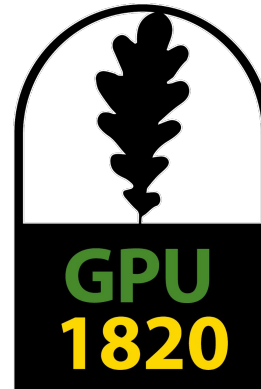
GEORGIA PUBLIC
UNIVERSITY

Land & Labor Acknowledgement

Related to our mission of supporting and fostering learning through the generation and dissemination of knowledge, we would like to acknowledge that the land we are presenting from today is the original homelands of the Muskogee Creek, Hitchiti, and Oconee tribal nations. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from this territory and recognize our role in the continued displacement of indigenous communities and culture. We will continue to incorporate indigenous knowledge into our work, and establish meaningful, reciprocal connections with indigenous people and communities. We honor and respect the many diverse Indigenous peoples still connected to this land on which we gather.

We also acknowledge the labor of enslaved peoples, primarily of African descent, who were forcibly removed from their homelands and whose labor was exploited to build many of the institutions and spaces in which we exist today. We are indebted to their labor and the labor of many people who continue to work in the shadows for our collective benefit.

(adapted from statements by Dr. Cori Bazemore-James and Dr. Jason Wallace)
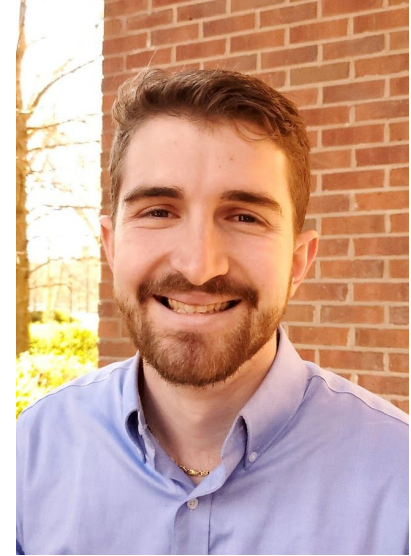
Committee Members

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Director of New Student Orientation

Institutional Background: Georgia Public University

- Location: Clarke, Georgia
- Type: 4-Year Public, Research Institution
- Size: Large (~39,000 students)

- Student Demographics
  - Student Academic Profile: 33k Undergraduate; 6k graduate
  - PWI: 70% White; 10% Asian; 9% Black; 1% Indigenous; 4% selected two or more races
  - Gender Makeup: 57% Women Identified; 42% Men Identified; 1% non-binary
  - Residency: 85% In-State; 6% out-of-state; 9% international

The Mission of the Georgia Public University Division of Student Affairs is to support a learning-oriented campus community by promoting meaningful engagement, intellectual growth, holistic wellness for career-oriented and equity minded leaders.

COVID-19 Institutional Adaptations

Georgia Public University (GPU) has made the following changes in lieu of the COVID-19 pandemic, in accordance with federal and state guidelines:

- Assorted hybrid and virtual classes
- On-campus living and dining is open, but with social distancing measures in place
- In-person programming must be designed with social-distancing in mind, and requires a virtual option for attendance
- Campus buildings have been adapted to follow social distancing guidelines, including placing floor markings, plastic shields, hand sanitizer, and limiting room capacity
- Facial coverings are required inside all campus buildings
- Each student, staff, and faculty member has been mailed 2 masks, free of charge
- Student Fees have been adjusted to reflect the lessened current usage of facilities and services

Current Issue

Since the onset of COVID-19 and the institution's move towards virtual learning, GPU has been struggling to meet student needs in the following areas:

- <u>Making Meaningful Peer Connections:</u> As students take social distancing precautions and stay away from campus, many traditional means of building lasting, meaningful connections have been eliminated, through both formal programming and informal gatherings in study spaces, residence halls, and social scenes.
- <u>First-Year Connection to the Institution:</u> The traditional "college experience" has been warped, particularly for first-year student beginning their college career virtually. Students are unable to have the first-year experience that they might have expected, including gaining independence, living on-campus, attending social events, sports, and in-person classes, and participating in university traditions.
- <u>Technology Adaptation:</u> Students, staff, and faculty have all struggled to learn and utilize new technology.

Current Issue (cont.)

- <u>Lack of Engagement:</u> Students' energy is limited as they cope with life in a pandemic and many are fatigued by being online all day. As a result, participation in cocurricular programs outside of class has decreased significantly. When students are present in virtual events, they are often disengaged, muted, and have their videos off.
- <u>Program Development:</u> Student Affairs professionals are struggling to adapt existing programs to virtual settings effectively, and to create new virtual programs which spark interest and engagement.
- <u>Mental Health:</u> Students are facing a wide variety of pressures impacting their mental health and well-being, including isolation, fatigue, health concerns, financial concerns, food and housing insecurity. Campus and community support resources have been overwhelmed.

This committee aims to create a meaningful and engaging virtual program that consistently addresses these concerns.

Program Proposal: GPU GPS

Modeled after First-Year Experience and Extended Orientation courses, GPU GPS is a one-semester seminar targeting first-year and transfer students to provide a pipeline to ongoing campus engagement, retention, and success. GPS is designed to help students "navigate" their way through the transition to college, understand th GPU culture, connect them to campus resources, prepare them to combat potential challenges, explore their interested, and empower them to make important decisions.

The goals of GPU GPS are to:
- Orient students to the university structure, traditions, and values
- Connect students to resources related to personal wellness, career advising, and academic support
- Encourage personal reflection on interests, goals, and major and career alignment
- Prepare students to navigate the challenges of the transition to college
- Develop meaningful relationships between students, staff, and faculty
- Build an inclusive campus culture that values and promotes diversity

GPU GPS: Structure

- Open to full-time first-year and transfer students
- One semester, biweekly commitment (8 sessions)
- Open-access (no application or interview)
- Free for students (funded by the Department & Student Activity Fees)
- Cohort model: Maximum of 60 students
- Facilitated by a staff member from the Office of Student Transitions, who supervises 8 Student Facilitators
- Split into 4 Small Groups
  - 15 students each
  - 2 Student Facilitators each
  - Allows for deeper engagement, greater participation, closer connections, and different activities not possible in the large group.
- Assignment of Faculty & Peer Mentors
- Designated for Experiential Learning credit for students who successfully complete all 8 sessions
- GPU GPS will *currently* be hosted virtually on Zoom to accommodate COVID-19 social distancing guidelines.

GPU GPS: Learning Outcomes

As a result of participating in GPU GPS, students will be able to:

1. Navigate and persevere through common challenges facing students during the transition to college
2. Access campus resources related to academic support, career advising, and personal wellness
3. Engage with curricular and co-curricular activities in the campus and community that align with their personal, academic, and career goals
4. Contribute to a thriving campus culture that promotes ethical conduct, respect, inclusion, and furthers the mission of the institution
5. Build meaningful, lasting connections with peers, staff, and faculty
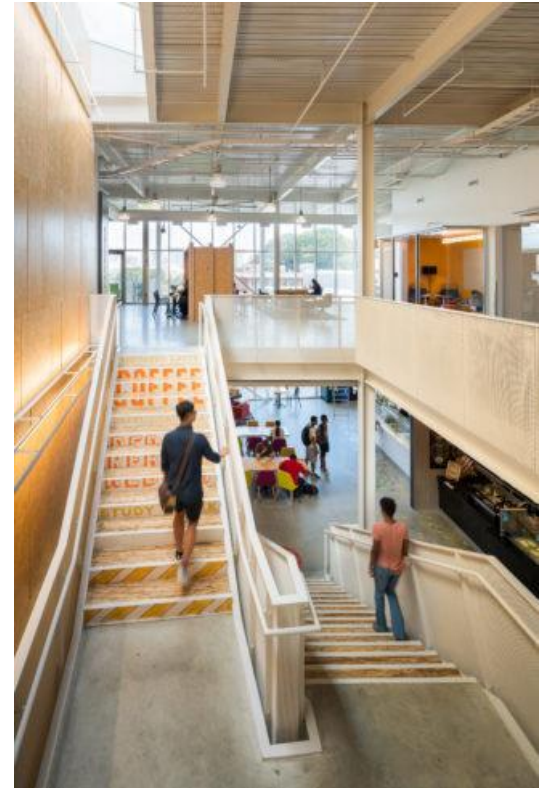
Rationale: Needs Assessment

Our committee conducted a needs assessment to establish an understanding of student needs during this challenging time. Below is as summary of the results:

- Population: All students currently attending GPU
- Instruments:
  - COVID-19 Response Committee Open Comment Sessions
  - Survey Data (n= 900, 3% of population responded)
  - Student Representative Comments
- Themes of results:
  - Mental Health Concerns: loneliness, lack of motivation, anxiety
  - Lack of a Sense of Belonging: missing connection to other students, perceived lack of support from GPU, academic anxiety
  - Impact of the cost of attendance

Rationale: Grounding Theory & Literature

Sense of Belonging *(Strayhorn, 2019)*
- 7 Core Elements based around a students' cognition, affect, and behaviors
- Context, time, and other factors determine its importance
- A sense of belonging in college leads to positive outcomes and success
- Especially important during COVID-19 pandemic and after, where many are isolated and struggling
- One key aspect of GPU GPS is connecting students to other community members and build connections
- Sense of Belonging remains important in virtual settings *(Peacock & Cowan, 2019)*

Schlossberg's Transition Theory *(Anderson, et al., 2012)*
- Students' transition success is impacted by: Self, Strategies, Support, and Situation
- GPU GPS provides opportunities to develop self-awareness, education about strategies, social support, and changes the situation

Rationale: Grounding Theory & Literature

Program Alignment
- Effective institutions align messages about success with pathways to success *(Kuh, et al., 2011)*
- Students experience the university as a holistic experience, not an academic or student affairs experience, implying that coordination and partnership is important *(Keeling, et al., 2007)*
- By creating GPU GPS, GPU is employing key partnerships and a holistic approach to help students' achieve goals from their first semester in college

Working in a Virtual Environment
- Virtual spaces look similar and to create institution affiliation, universities must make their experiences stand out *(Rosowsky & Hallman, 2020)*
- Creating platforms or spaces for new students to connect with others virtually can promote student success *(Deandrea, et al., 2012)*
- Creating a sense of place or connection to a place helps organize human behavior in a virtual space and engage students *(Ryberg & Ponti, 2005)*

GPU GPS: Program Outline

Session 1: Welcome to GPU!	Session 2: Navigating College Life
- Introductions and initial community-building - Seminar Overview - Virtual format - Content summary - Accessibility and accommodations - Experiential Learning credit requirements - Set expectations for engagement and respect as a group - Understanding the University - Mission and values - History - Structure - Traditions - Developing a sense of connection to the university culture - Small Group Assignments - Pre-Assessment	- Weekly Check-In - Discussion of hopes and fears about students' college experiences - Student Leader Panel - Student leaders pulled from a diverse background of campus involvement experiences - Advice on navigating your first semester of college - Descriptions of impactful experiences - Q&A Opportunity - Small Group Time - Each group joined by a member of the Panel - Discussion about Panel takeaways, further thoughts, and other questions - Develop a plan for consistently engaging with each other outside of the session

GPU GPS: Program Outline

Session 3: The Campus Community	Session 4: Personal Wellness
- Weekly Check-In - What kinds of things make you feel valued as a member of a community? - Inclusive Practices: What does it mean to be an inclusive member of the community? - University ethical and conduct standards - Small Group Time - Bystander Intervention case study role-play - Debriefing discussion - Avenues for reporting discrimination, harassment, and comduct violations (Title IX Office, Equal Opportunity Office, Student Conduct, Campus Police - Exit Ticket: What is one daily habit you can do to contribute to a welcoming and inclusive campus community?	- Weekly Check-In - Small Group Time - Activity: Dimensions of Wellness Wheel - What dimensions of wellness are you practicing effectively? Which are you not? - How has college changed your abilities to maintain your wellness? - Speaker from Student Care & Outreach: Developing Resilience - What is resilience? - How do we build resilience? - Tools & Coping Skills - Support Resources - Mental Health (Counseling Center, Community Resources) - Physical Health (Campus Recreation Center, University Health Center) - Food & Housing Insecurity (Food Pantry, Student Care & Outreach) - Reporting your concerns for someone else (CARE Line) - Faith Development (Office of Spiritual Life) - Academic and Career Support to come in later sessions

GPU GPS: Program Outline

Session 5: Academic Support	Session 6: Getting Involved
- Weekly Check-In - Small Group Time - How have you been handing your academic workload? - What has been challenging? What have you enjoyed? What are you excited for? - Do you have an idea of what major you want to pursue? - Split group in half and rotate for 2 presentations - Speaker 1: Student Success Center - Disability Services - Testing Support - Tutoring - Q&A - Speaker 2: Academic Advisor - Picking a Major - Academic Planning - Navigating Change of Major/College/etc. - Q&A	- Weekly Check-In - Students will rotate through a "mini" Virtual Involvement Fair, with representatives from different areas of campus involvement to hear about opportunities, ask questions, and connect with each other over shared interests - Identity-Based Offices and Organizations - Registered Student Organizations (Social/Academic/Career) - Leadership and Service Programs - Community Organizations - Greek Life - Intramural Sports - Exit Ticket: Students will identify two potential engagement opportunities and make a plan to connect with members or attend an event

GPU GPS: Program Outline

Session 7: Career Advising	Session 8: Closing
- Weekly Check-In - Activity: Visioning - Where do you see yourself in 1 month? 6 months? 1 year? 5 years? - Set two career-related goals. What is one things can you do at each of those time steps to make that happen? - Emphasis on the fact that student have a great deal of time to adapt or have career aspirations - Speaker: Career Center - Career Advising - Finding internships - Mentorship - Resume and interview advice - Peer resume reviews - Exit Ticket: Identify someone (a staff, faculty, or community member) in a career area of your interest that you can reach out to to learn more about their work.	- Weekly Check-In and Congratulations! - Activity: Text-In Survey - What are your biggest takeaways from participating in GPU GPS? - Activity: Letter to Self - Wrote a letter to future you on your college graduation day. What do you hope for yourself? What do you plan to accomplish? What do you want yourself to remember? - This will be kept my the department and mailed upon your graduation - Announcements - Ways to stay connected to your small group and facilitators - Opportunities for future engagement in GPU GPS as Student Facilitators - Post-Assessment - Distribution of (Digital) Completion Certificates *In an in-person setting, this session would involve a catered meal and social time, with previous speakers and guests invited to join.*

Assessment Plan

The GPU GPS assessment plan is designed with two goals in mind:
1. To determine if GPU GPS responds appropriately to contemporary and ongoing student needs;
2. To improve the alignment of the development and execution of the program with its intended learning outcomes.

Assessment Instruments:
- Pre-Assessment and Post Assessment: Surveys taken by GPS participants. The following themes correspond to learning outcomes and represent question blocks in each survey.
- Themes:
  - Sense of Belonging; Learning Outcomes 1, 4, and 5
  - Student Success Skills: Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 5
  - Organizational Environments: Learning Outcomes 2 and 4
- Students who choose to return as a Student Facilitators
- Student participation in advertising leadership activities during Session 6

Technology & Accessibility

Technology and Accessibility Statement: In accordance with our commitment to inclusion, equity, and universal design, the GPS program has outlined the following considerations:

- GPS will:
    - Utilize digital materials that are accessible through the use of open captioning on videos displayed and will make transcripts available upon request. GPS has reserved funding to hire a ASL interpreter for this program.
    - Utilize Zoom breakout rooms for many portions. Our program is intentionally organized to accommodate learning assistants or interpreters in breakout rooms.
    - Solicit requests for accommodations for disabilities in coordination with the University's Disability Resource Center
- GPS will take place entirely on Zoom for Phase 1. The program will make available computer and location resources for students upon request.

Program Promotion Plan

- Promotion will be tailored to each audience, but as a new and broad initiative, we will want to communicate this new program to each constituency
- Efforts will focus on creating buy-in for new students and program faculty and staff
- Audiences & Primary Communication Channels
  - Students: Social Media, Presentations, Email, Print Materials (ex. Mailers)
    - New students (participants)
    - Current students (potential mentors)
  - Parents, Family Members, & Supporters: Social Media, Email, Print Materials
  - Alumni (potential donors): Social Media, Email, University Publication (ex. Magazine)
  - Faculty & Staff:
    - Program Partners (directly involved in GPS): Presentations, Email
    - Program Supporters (indirect support to GPS): Email, Print Materials
  - Community Members & Other Stakeholders: University Publication

Future Planning & Recommendations

Return to In-Person Programming
- Upon the resolution or containment of the COVID-19 pandemic, GPU GPS can easily be adapted into an in-person program with sessions taking place in physical spaces
- Depending on available funding at that time, it may be possible to have a hybrid online/in-person GPU GPS cohort, or a separate Virtual cohort

Campus & Community Relationships
- The current GPU GPS establishes a relationship with a variety of campus partners, listed throughout the Program Outline
- Future GPU GPS sessions will continue to establish these relationships, especially among community groups, service organizations, and identity-based programs serving marginalized student communities.

Student Facilitators
- The initial GPU GPS seminar will recruit student leaders from diverse involvement experiences across campus.
- Future Student Facilitators will go through an application and interview process to identify individuals who:
  - Are committed to leadership development, learning, and personal growth
  - Have facilitation experience and/or the ability to easily connect with others
  - Are involved in campus life, and have a working knowledge of campus traditions,values, and resources
  - Are in good academic standing (2.5 GPA or above)
  - Have been through the GPU GPS seminar

Future Planning & Recommendations

GPU GPS: Phase 2
- Transition GPU GPS to a first-year seminar course which enrolls all new students
- Secure participation from Academic Affairs

GPU GPS: Phase 3
- GPS becomes a foundation for a scaffolded academic experience for students as a roadmap for continuing student engagement
- GPS includes opportunities that prepare students for summer opportunities, career planning, and life after college

2021	2022	2024	2025
GPS Phase 1 GPS Phase 1 Launches	**GPS Phase 2** Phase 2 expands the program to all interested first year students.	**GPS Phase 2.5** GPS strategic planning includes academic affairs staff to align a common new student curriculum	**GPS Phase 3** GPS Phase 3 provides customizable opportunities for students based factors such as majors, interests, or identities GPS moves toward becoming a division-wide curriculum.

Thank You!

Want to contact any of the team members?

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Video Link:
https://youtu.be/x2wj0HUgBbc

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