

**FIRST-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE  
RETENTION RATE TARGETS  
FOR 2002 TO 2007  
AT KSU**

**Prepared and submitted  
to the USG System Office by the  
Center for Institutional Effectiveness**

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## **FORWARD**

**This report was prepared in response to Chancellor Meredith's directive dated October 8, 2002 to each institution in the University System of Georgia. That request called for each institution to set five-year improvement targets for its first-year retention rates of first-time full-time fall freshmen. As a consequence of focusing only on first-time full-time fall freshmen, these retention targets pertain largely to "traditional" rather than "nontraditional" undergraduates.**

**The distinctiveness of a metropolitan public university like Kennesaw State University is characterized by substantially greater institutional commitment to serving students with nontraditional characteristics and attendance patterns than is typically present at traditional residential universities. Georgia's future economic development and competitiveness require its public university system to provide quality public higher education to nontraditional as well as the traditional students. However, to do that, we must acknowledge and accommodate the fact that retention rates among nontraditional students will be different from and often lower than the retention rates of students who have traditional attendance patterns. Failing to properly take into account the pervasiveness of the nontraditional student culture can lead to unfair comparisons and flawed assessments, especially at metropolitan state universities when examining, comparing, or evaluating institutional retention rates.**

## KSU's RETENTION RATE TARGETS, 2002 TO 2007

### Recent History

	Past		Current
	<u>1999 to 00</u>	<u>2000 to 01</u>	<u>2001 to 02</u>
<b>Institution Specific Retention Rate:</b>	71%	66%	72% (unofficial estimate)
<b>Institution-to-System Retention Rate:</b>	77%	74%	<i>Not yet available.</i>

### First-Year Retention Rate Targets

	<u>2002 to 03</u>	<u>2003 to 04</u>	<u>2004 to 05</u>	<u>2005 to 06</u>	<u>2006 to 07</u>
<b>Institution Specific Retention Rate Targets:</b>	72%	73%	74%	75%	75%
<b>Institution-to-System Retention Rate Target:</b>	77%	78%	79%	80%	80%

**A description of the methodology used to develop these retention rate targets is presented on the following pages.**

## **METHODOLOGY FOR ESTABLISHING RETENTION TARGETS AT KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY**

An Education Accountability Steering Committee was formed at KSU this fall to steer, coordinate, and strengthen the university's diverse strategies and initiatives for meeting a growing number of challenges in education accountability. Key campus leaders from the University Studies Division in Academic Affairs, the Student Success & Enrollment Services Division, and the Institutional Effectiveness Division comprise the membership of the Education Accountability Steering Committee at KSU. That Committee's agenda this fall was to begin reviewing action plans for Goal 4 of the Regents 2002 Strategic Plan, planning for OEA's publication of the upcoming report cards on accountability measures, and facilitating KSU's response to the Chancellor's call for retention targets by 2007.

A combination of benchmarking and projection methods was used to reach valid and attainable retention targets for KSU by 2007. The benchmarking comparators which are particularly pertinent to KSU included other metropolitan state universities. Within Georgia, that comparator group of metropolitan state universities includes Kennesaw State, Columbus State, August State, Armstrong Atlantic State, Southern Polytechnic State, and Clayton State. Because of their metropolitan locations, strong community outreach, and accommodations for nontraditional students, these state universities are substantially influenced by nontraditional student attendance, retention, and graduation patterns, even among their traditional-age (18-25) students. An exceptionally strong "nontraditional culture" exists among students of all ages at the metropolitan state universities, which is typically not manifested to the same degree at the non-metropolitan state universities or at those with a distinctive mission such as the historically Black state universities.

In the research literature on college student retention, nontraditional students typically exhibit lower retention rates than traditional students. In the U.S. Department of Education's recent report, "The Condition of Education 2002," almost three-fourths of the nation's undergraduates were judged to be "nontraditional" to some extent (i.e., were enrolled part-time for part of the year, had delayed enrollment in college after high school graduation, worked full time or at least 35 hours per week while enrolled, and had dependents or were financially independent). One or more of those familiar characteristics apply to the majority of KSU's undergraduates.

In this report, the definition of a "nontraditional student" did not rely on the traditional and simplistic categorization of students according to their ages. Instead, a multidimensional assessment of the degree to which students are behaving nontraditionally, regardless of age, was used. Not surprisingly, retention and graduation rates were highest for students who exhibited no nontraditional behaviors and lowest for those who exhibited many; the retention rates for students who were "minimally" or "moderately" nontraditional fell between the extremes. The typical student at KSU and other metropolitan state universities is nontraditional to some extent, which leads to lower retention rates at such institutions when compared with other types of universities.

When Georgia's public universities are grouped into reasonable comparator pools, the retention rates of the metropolitan state universities are noticeably lower than the rates for

other groups. (See Table A.) Retention rates at the research universities lead all others in the State, but that should not be surprising since their standards and selectivity for admission are so high and both UGA and Georgia Tech cater to academically well prepared and traditional college students. In contrast, retention rates at the state colleges are among the lowest largely because of their previous identify as community two-year colleges and very limited conversion to baccalaureate-level instruction recently. Admission standards across the regional and state universities are relatively comparable, but the metropolitan universities have retention rates that are about ten percentage points lower than the average for the regional universities (both non-metropolitan), non-metropolitan state universities, and historically Black state universities. These three groups have a stronger tradition of catering to residential students who are typically less nontraditional than the metropolitan state universities.

Significant employment opportunities and demands in the typical metropolitan community probably constitute the greatest competition for the time, energy, and attention of students who attend the metropolitan state universities in Georgia. That is why when the economy weakens, unemployment rises and working hours contract, enrollments in metropolitan colleges and universities typically rise substantially. Likewise, when the economy is robust, metropolitan university attendance and retention tends to fall off. The sizable downturn that has occurred in Georgia's economy over the past year, especially in the Atlanta metropolitan area, is a major factor contributing to a huge enrollment increase at KSU and an improved retention rate for first-time full-time freshmen.

## Kennesaw State' s First-Year Freshman Retention Rates

<b>KSU First-Year Retention Rates for First-Time/Full-Time Freshmen</b>							
	<b>Fall 1995 to 1996</b>	<b>Fall 1996 to 1997</b>	<b>Fall 1997 to 1998</b>	<b>Fall 1998 to 1999</b>	<b>Fall 1999 to 2000</b>	<b>Fall 2000 to 2001</b>	<b>Fall 2001 to 2002*</b>
<b>KSU</b>	66%	68%	70%	73%	71%	66%	72%

\*Preliminary Analysis, not yet final (after cancellation for non-payment of fees 9/23/02 ).

<b>USG First-Year Retention Rates for First-Time/Full-Time Freshmen</b>							
	<b>Fall 1995 to 1996</b>	<b>Fall 1996 to 1997</b>	<b>Fall 1997 to 1998</b>	<b>Fall 1998 to 1999</b>	<b>Fall 1999 to 2000</b>	<b>Fall 2000 to 2001</b>	<b>Fall 2001 to 2002</b>
<b>KSU</b>	72%	73%	76%	78%	77%	74%	Not Available yet

Regents' Data for First-time/Full-time Freshmen Entering KSU each Fall and Returning the Next Fall Term.

Table B  
**First-Year Retention Rates Fall 2000 to Fall 2001**

Institution	FT/FT Freshmen Cohort Fall 2000	Enrolled Fall 2001	Institutional Percent Retained Fall 2001	3,940	Percent Retained in USG Fall 2001
<b>Universities</b>					
University of Georgia	4,207	3,827	91%	3,940	94%
Georgia Tech	2,244	1,990	89%	2,051	91%
Georgia State University	2,062	1,643	80%	1,769	86%
<i>Total Research Universities</i>	<i>8,513</i>	<i>7,460</i>	<i>88%</i>	<i>7,760</i>	<i>91%</i>
<b>Regional Universities</b>					
Georgia Southern	2,861	2,145	75%	2,397	84%
Valdosta State	788	567	72%	643	82%
<i>Total Regional Universities</i>	<i>3,649</i>	<i>2,712</i>	<i>74%</i>	<i>3,040</i>	<i>83%</i>
<b>Metropolitan State Universities</b>					
Columbus State	794	546	69%	594	75%
<b>Kennesaw State</b>	<b>1,228</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>74%</b>
Armstrong Atlantic	568	363	64%	403	71%
Augusta State	687	416	61%	459	67%
Southern Polytechnic State	365	220	60%	274	75%
Clayton College & State	522	302	58%	342	66%
<i>Total Metropolitan Universities</i>	<i>4,164</i>	<i>2,662</i>	<i>64%</i>	<i>2,977</i>	<i>71%</i>
<b>Non-Metropolitan State Universities</b>					
North Georgia College & State	631	487	77%	540	86%
Georgia College & State	820	590	72%	676	82%
Georgia Southwestern	308	221	72%	243	79%
State University of West Georgia	1,661	1,162	70%	1,289	78%
<i>Total Non-Metropolitan State Universities</i>	<i>3,420</i>	<i>2,460</i>	<i>72%</i>	<i>2,748</i>	<i>80%</i>
<b>Historically Black State Universities</b>					
Albany State	643	503	78%	538	84%
Fort Valley State	360	275	76%	299	83%
Savannah State	370	265	72%	281	76%
<i>Total Historically Black State Universities</i>	<i>1,373</i>	<i>1,043</i>	<i>76%</i>	<i>1,118</i>	<i>81%</i>
<b>State Colleges</b>					
Macon State College	500	326	65%	356	71%
Dalton State College	490	292	60%	307	63%
<i>Total State Colleges</i>	<i>990</i>	<i>618</i>	<i>62%</i>	<i>663</i>	<i>67%</i>
<b>All Four-Year Institutions</b>	<b>22,109</b>	<b>16,955</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>18,306</b>	<b>83%</b>

Regents' Data for First-time, Full-time Freshmen entering KSU Fall 2000.