Middle Georgia State University

Academic Affairs Provost Fellow 2018 – 2019

II.   Data Gathering

Focus Group Format:

(a) Beginning in late-February and through late-early May, 2019, small groups of students were convened on all five campuses using a focus group format. Each focus group consisted of four to six students. Participation in the focus groups was voluntary. The five following core categories of questions, presented in Table 1, were used in formal focus group settings with students on all five campuses.

Table 1. Focus Group Questions

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Category1: Decision to Attend MGA)	• What was the most attractive factor in your decision to attend MGA? • What was the least attractive factor regarding MGA, that you had to overcome to attend MGA?!
Category 2: Community Perception of MGA)	• How does your broader community perceive

Table 2. Analysis of Student Focus Group Conversations: Emerging Themes

Campus	# of Focus Groups	Emerging Themes: Strengths	Emerging Themes: Opportunities
Cochran	5 (n = 24)	Affordability Campus size and location Supportive faculty and staff	• Housing – living spaces • Cafeteria hours • Inter-campus transportation to Macon and Warner Robins • Technology (especially for video conferencing and bandwidth) • Student Activities -lack of visibility for inter-campus activities
Dublin	2 (n = 8)	Affordability Campus size Supportive faculty and staff	• Cafeteria – need to consider including one • Inter-campus transportation to Macon and Warner Robins • Technology (especially for video conferencing and bandwidth) • Class format – increase face-to-face instruction • Student Activities – lack of visibility for inter-campus activities
Eastman	2 (n = 12)	Affordability Campus size Supportive faculty and staff	• Housing – living spaces • Cafeteria hours • Inter-campus transportation to Macon and Warner Robins • Technology (especially for video conferencing) • Student Activities – lack of visibility for inter-campus activities
Macon	3 (n = 15)	Affordability Campus size and location Supportive faculty and staff	• Housing - availability • Cafeteria hours • Technology (especially for video conferencing)
Warner Robins	2 (n = 8)	Affordability Campus size Supportive faculty and staff	• Cafeteria – need to consider including one • Library – study rooms • Technology (especially for video conferencing) • Student Activities – lack of visibility.

Across all five campuses, students noted that faculty and staff were helpful and caring thereby enhancing that feeling of "a home away from home." While students are appreciative of improvements being made to campus life, they wanted to draw attention to certain challenges they face with technology, transportation, and the on-campus physical environment in which they function as students.

The themes noted in Table 2, both *the strengths* and *the opportunities* are not unique to our institutional community. Furthermore, a branding study previously conducted by the Center for Applied Research and Education (CARE) reported that in comparison to institutions of higher education in our local region, MGA lies in the middle-of-the-pack on academic quality values but scores high on affordability (CARE, 2017). Additionally, the FY19 MGA Student Affairs Annual Strategic Plan incorporates a focus on learning communities through expanding student engagement, expanding experiential opportunities,

III.   Applied Insights and Recommendations

Insights:

As our university community moves forward embracing the restructured framework of professional schools, it becomes an institutional imperative to build capacity for our restructured learning communities. This white paper suggests a starting point in providing a common vision for promoting transformational change.

Julie Wollman's article (2019), A Burst Pipe Brings a Flood of Insights for a University President enhances the student experience. Three of these aspects are also echoed in the common themes that emerged from student focus group conversations across our five campuses. First, the importance of