

SECTION 3. ASSESSMENT OF NEED AND PROGRAM PLANNING/APPROVAL

Briefly discuss the rationale for the change, including an assessment of need; evidence of inclusion of the change in the institution's ongoing planning and evaluation processes; and documentation that faculty and other groups were involved in the review and approval of the change, where appropriate.

Rationale for Institutional Consolidations in the University System of Georgia (USG)

The confluence of four major developments led the University System of Georgia's new chancellor and its Board of Regents (BOR) to conclude early in fall 2011 that they needed to give serious consideration to the consolidation of some of the USG member institutions. Chief among those four factors was the deep 2008 national recession's continuing negative impact on Georgia's economy and the resulting sustained loss of state appropriation funding for the USG and its member institutions. Another involved the Georgia Governor's and Legislature's repeated calls annually for more cost-efficient operations within all state agencies, including the technical college system and the USG, which had been compounded by the state and federal government's calls for slowing and restricting college tuition increases. A third was continued significant growth in public demand for higher education opportunities and services throughout the State as the Regents had projected and were mission-bound to support. The fourth was the emergence in 2009 of a foundation-funded Complete College America initiative to improve post-secondary degree completion and educational attainment levels in the nation's workforce for meeting projected employment demands in 2020 and maintaining global competitiveness, which spawned the parallel Complete College Georgia initiative in 2011.

In short, there were ever-increasing public demands for expanded and increased higher education opportunities in Georgia and, at the same time, reductions and constrictions in state funding available to support those programs and services. Pressures to do more with less had become a common refrain, with no relief in sight in the near future. The Chancellor and Regents concluded that business as usual in the USG was not sustainable in the long run and had to change if the BOR's vision, mission and goals were to be realized.

Institutional consolidation represented one strategic solution to meeting some of those challenges, especially if it would lead to the reallocation and reinvestment of administrative cost-savings into strengthening and expanding educational services in areas of state need that might otherwise not be funded. Several years earlier, institutional consolidations had been accomplished in Georgia's technical college system. With so many colleges and universities in the USG (i.e., 35), a number of which are relatively small and operating in close proximity to others with similar or complementary educational programs, institutional consolidation emerged as a logical and reasonable course of action for the Regents to pursue under the circumstances.

Consistent with the mission and goals of the USG, the Regents' recent decisions to consolidate eight member institutions into four institutions are intended to: (a) increase institutional and, therefore, System efficiency through economies of scale, reductions in duplicative programs and streamlined administrative services (Goal 6); (b) leverage the existing resources of partner System institutions to expand and enhance their collective programs and services to the citizens of Georgia in the future (Mission excerpt); (c) combine complementary institutional strengths to enhance regional economic development and undergraduate education to meet the needs of 21st century students (Mission excerpt and Goal 1); and (d) create a more educated Georgia by raising educational attainment levels (Vision excerpt and Complete College Georgia).

Assessed Potential for NGCSU and GSC Consolidation

In his September 14, 2011 report to the USG Board of Regents, Chancellor Huckaby announced that a study would be conducted to determine if “any campus consolidations would further our teaching, research, and service missions in a more fiscally prudent way.”

Chancellor Huckaby and his entire staff, but principally, Shelley Nickel, Associate Vice Chancellor for Planning & Implementation and Steve Wrigley, Executive Vice Chancellor, in consultation with the Regents Special Consolidation Committee composed of Regents Larry Walker, Phillip Wilheit, and Kessel Stelling, used the Board’s principles of consolidation and System data to systematically assess the profiles of potential candidates for institutional consolidation. Four pairings of institutions for consolidation were subsequently identified and recommended for the governing board’s approval. The consolidation partner institutions are operating in four different regions of the State (i.e., southern, middle, northern and eastern regions of Georgia) and involve all categories of USG institutions (i.e., two-year colleges, four-year state colleges, state universities and research universities). The NGCSU/GSC consolidation involves a 4-year state university and a 4-year state college approximately 30 miles apart, and serving the North Georgia region with a long history of collaborative efforts.

Those consolidation assessments yielded the following list of potential opportunities and challenges, both of which were considered in the BOR’s consolidation decision:

Opportunities for NGCSU/GSC Consolidation

- Creates an institution of nearly 15,000 students that provides a strategic approach to meeting the higher education needs of students in the northeast Georgia region.
- Provides a broad spectrum of academic programs from associate to graduate degrees in a student-friendly, seamless system. Students from both institutions already share a similar geographic origin and transfer between both institutions.
- Increases access to educational attainment and enrollment opportunities in significant growth and population area of the state.
- Efficiently expands baccalaureate and graduate offerings in Gainesville while allowing for increased enrollment, e.g., teacher education, foreign languages.
- Capacity for on-campus growth is limited at North Georgia. The consolidation provides additional capacity in Gainesville.
- Builds on a strong foundation of collaboration and partnership that already exists as reflected in North Georgia’s and Gainesville’s program offerings in Cumming and Gainesville.
- Increases opportunities to hire for specialized needs. Through economies of scale, there is the capacity for needed higher education enterprise professionals with appropriate expertise and experience levels.
- Combines resources to enhance responsiveness to regional economic and community development needs.

Challenges for NGCSU/GSC Consolidation

- The institutions currently serve student populations with differing levels of college readiness. Balancing access and college completion will be a challenge to address during implementation.
- Watkinsville campus will be maintained; however, implementation will need to consider how to best optimize the role of that campus.

Evidence of Consolidation's Inclusion in Ongoing Planning and Evaluation Processes

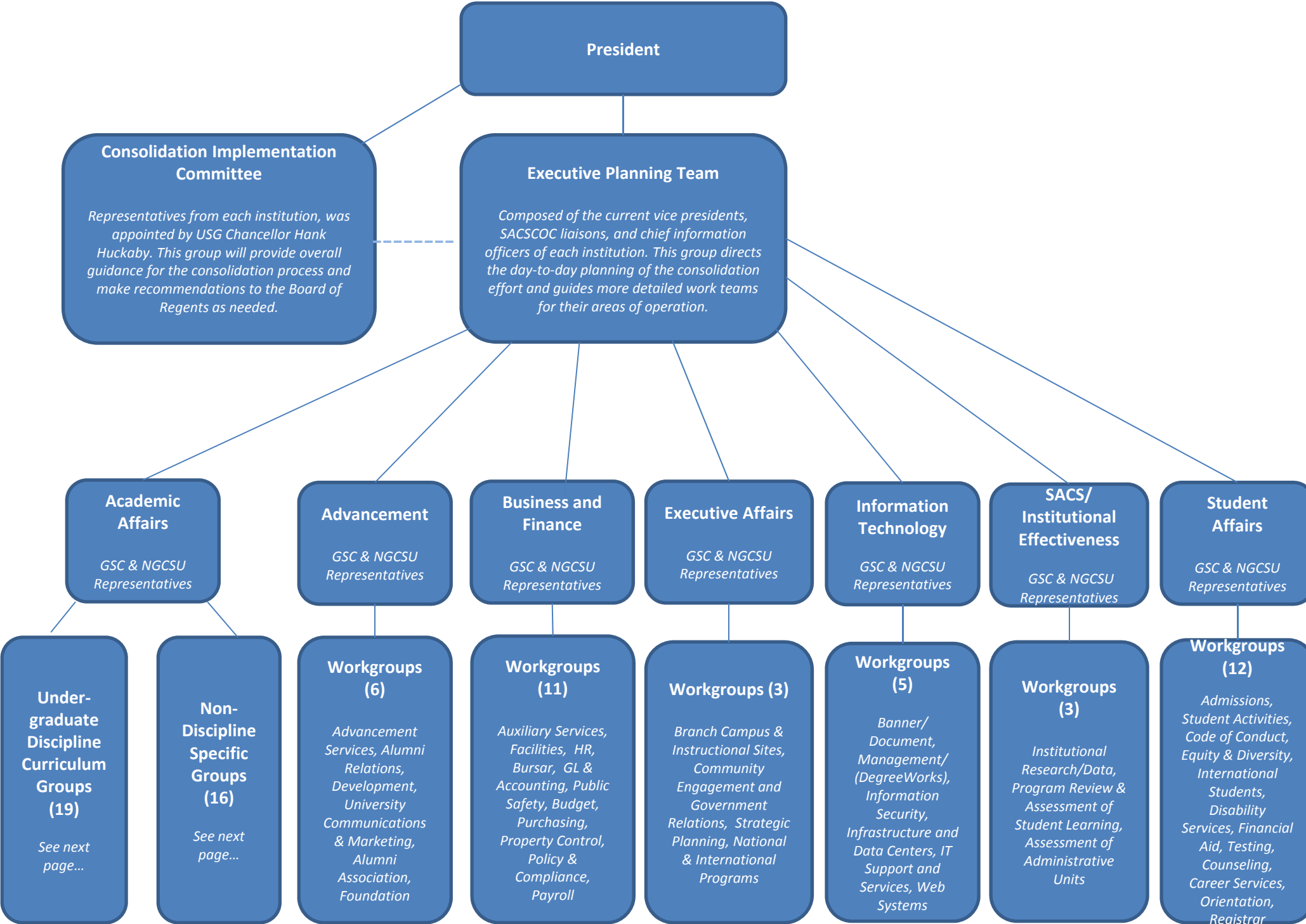
The consolidation of NGCSU and GSC is included in ongoing planning and evaluation processes at several levels — the governing board, the system office, and the institution.

As discussed previously in this section and in Section 2, the decision by the USG Board of Regents to consolidate NGCSU and GSC is linked to the mission, vision, and strategic goals of the University System of Georgia. The Board's actions were heavily influenced by long-term and ongoing environmental scanning of past, current and prospective economic and governmental conditions as well as state-level and national concerns about key issues such as degree completion rates, educational attainment levels of the workforce, public demand for higher education opportunities, tuition costs, cutbacks in governmental expenditures, and increased governmental efficiency. Institutional data on students, faculty, staff, academic programs, finances, and facilities are submitted on a regular and ongoing basis by institutions to the System Office, and were available to the Board of Regents. The establishment of a Special Consolidation Committee of the Board to oversee and participate in the advancement of this new initiative and advise the Board in its related decision making is additional evidence of Regent involvement in ongoing planning and evaluation processes.

Following the January 2012 vote by the Board of Regents to consolidate NGCSU and GSC, the Chancellor immediately took action to incorporate consolidation preparations into the ongoing planning and evaluation processes of the USG System Office and their counterpart processes at the institutional level for the eight affected institutions. Chief among those actions were the identification of a "Lead President" for each of the four expected institutional consolidations and the assignments of Shelley Nickel, Associate Vice Chancellor for Planning and Implementation, and Steve Wrigley, Executive Vice Chancellor, to co-lead the institutional consolidation coordination efforts of System Office administrators in support of the presidents and administrative counterparts at the institutional level. The USO (University System Office) Consolidation Implementation Team was subsequently formed and is comprised of all lead functional area System administrators and other key USO individuals, led by Shelly Nickel. That working group meets weekly to review consolidation preparation progress and make plans for resolving consolidation problems and issues that require System-level attention. Examples of key activities of this group are coordinating with US Department of Education for seamless transfer of financial aid accounts to the newly consolidated institutions in the period between the DOE's financial aid fiscal years in summer 2013, arranging for October 2012 completions of required audit reports for FY 2012, negotiating with Banner and PeopleSoft vendors for assistance in consolidating institutional student, financial and personnel databases on those systems, and coordinating BOR and USO approvals of institutional name and mission changes, re-organization plans, presidential appointments, institutional budget allocations, etc.

Concurrent with the work described in the preceding paragraph, consolidation preparations have been incorporated into the planning and evaluation processes at the institutional level. The consolidation implementation process has included broad participation across all academic and administrative areas by faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders at both institutions. Diagrams of the many different workgroups involved at the campus level in the implementing the consolidation are presented on the next two pages.

University of North Georgia Implementation Team and Consolidation Workgroups



Academic Affairs

*GSC & NGCSU
Representatives*

Undergraduate Discipline Curriculum Groups (19)

*Biology,
Business Administration/ Paralegal/Information Technology,
Communication/Media Studies/Journalism,
Criminal Justice,
Education,
English/Gender Studies,
Health/Wellness/Physical Education/Athletic Training,
History/Anthropology/Philosophy,
Learning Support/University,
Math & Computer Science,
Military Science,
Modern Languages,
Music/Applied Music/ Music Education,
Nursing,
Physical Sciences/Chemistry/Physics/Geosciences/Astronomy
Engineering,
Political Science and Religion,
Psychology/ Sociology/Social
Work/HSDA/Gerontology/Leadership,
Theatre,
Visual Arts/Art Education*

Non-Discipline Specific Groups (16)

*Academic Advisement and Transfer,
Academic Calendar/Course Schedule/Final Exam Schedule,
Academic and Faculty Review/Approval Process,
Academic Policies: Students,
Academic Structure,
Academic Support,
Ceremonies and Recognitions,
Core Curriculum,
CTLL and Service Learning,
Distance Education/Learning Management System,
Faculty Senate and Statutory Committees,
First Year Experience,
Honors and Research,
Libraries/GIL,
Pre-tenure/post-tenure, promotion and tenure,
Workload and Compensation*

The Consolidation Implementation Committee (CIC) was appointed by USG Chancellor Huckaby and consists of representatives from all constituencies at both institutions. Dr. Bonita Jacobs, President of NGCSU and President-Designee of the consolidated University of North Georgia, chairs the CIC, which is tasked with providing overall guidance for the consolidation process and making recommendations to the Board of Regents as needed. A listing of CIC members is contained in [Appendix 3.1](#). Using techniques to gather input from large numbers of people, the CIC developed the mission statement and the name for the University of North Georgia.

To direct the day-to-day planning of NGCSU and GSC consolidation, Dr. Jacobs appointed the Executive Planning Team (EPT), which is composed of the current vice presidents, SACSCOC liaisons, and chief information officers of each institution. The EPT meets regularly and has been particularly active in developing admissions and tuition policies that align with the multiple components of the mission of the University of North Georgia. In addition, EPT members guide more detailed workgroups for their areas of operation.

There are more than 70 workgroups of faculty, staff, and students that are identifying the best policies and procedures in all academic and administrative areas for the consolidated institution. Each workgroup is co-chaired by a representative from each institution. Generally, there are 6 to 10 members in a workgroup with equal numbers from the two institutions. These workgroups include strong representation of faculty. The 19 undergraduate discipline curriculum workgroups within Academic Affairs are composed entirely of faculty. Examples of their work include reviewing and aligning course listings (including course descriptions, prerequisites, and learning outcomes) and developing consolidated plans of study for degree programs. The 16 non-discipline-specific workgroups within Academic Affairs are composed largely of faculty members, and faculty are represented on many other workgroups outside of Academic Affairs. Curricular changes related to consolidation are being reviewed and approved through the appropriate governance structures in the existing institutions.

The website dedicated to the NGCSU/GSC consolidation (<http://www.gscngcsu.org/>) contains additional evidence of the ongoing planning for consolidation. Section 9 of this Prospectus addresses more specifically the strategic planning and assessment processes for the consolidated University of North Georgia.

[Link to Section 3 Appendix](#)

[Appendix 3.1 Consolidation Implementation Committee](#)

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