Panther Excellence Program
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Program Overview
The Panther Excellence Program is a two semester (fall and spring) selective bridge program which supports Georgia State University’s retention initiative of increasing student retention and progression by fostering academic success and personal development among students and helping them successfully transition from high school to college.

Mission
The mission of the Panther Excellence Program is to provide guidance and coordinated support to establish, sustain, and further enhance the student’s success at Georgia State University by the following:

- Academic Assistance
- Social Development
- Personal Development
- Leadership Development

Program Benefits
PEP provides students with a unique and exciting opportunity to quickly establish and set them up for success at Georgia State University by:

- Establishing early campus connections
- Developing strong study habits and academic skills
- Learning to successfully navigate campus
- Increasing the likelihood of attaining or maintaining the HOPE Scholarship eligibility
- Providing a wealth of resources for support and guidance
- Developing enduring relationships

Selection Process
- Students are invited to participate in the Panther Excellence Program based upon their Freshman Index Score
- Georgia State University Uses the FI score to determine admissions to the university
- It is based upon a combination of SAT/ACT score and high school GPA in college prep courses

Program Structure (Fall)
Throughout the fall and spring semesters each student will do the following:

- Participate in PEP FLC
- Meet once (1x) a month for cohort group meetings
- Attend academic and soft skills workshops twice (1x) a month
- Dedicate at least 10 hours a week to studying
- Attend supplemental instruction sessions at least once a week
- Meet with their assigned academic coach during the semester check-in points (3x)
- Meet with their assigned academic advisor at least twice (1x) during the semester
- Participate in social, personal, leadership development opportunities available to PEP participants
Program Structure (Spring)
Throughout the fall and spring semesters each student will do the following:
- Participate in PEP FLC
- Meet once (1x) a month for cohort group meetings
- Attend academic and soft skills workshops twice (1x) a month
- Dedicate at least 10 hours a week to studying
- Attend supplemental instruction sessions at least once a week
- Meet with their assigned academic coach during the semester check-in points (3x)
- Meet with their assigned academic advisor at least twice (1x) during the semester
- Participate in social, personal, leadership development opportunities available to PEP participants

Program Support
- Individualized Study skills and learning styles assessment
- Academic Workshops
- Peer Mentoring
- Academic Coaching
- Leadership Development Opportunities
- Introduction to Key Faculty
- Access to Campus Resources
- Supplemental Instruction
- iCARE-Early Alert
- Scholarship

Student Responsibilities
- Be present for each class session
- Communicate concerns (academic, financial, personal, etc.) that may interfere with the learning process
- Attend success workshops, leadership development workshops, and Atlanta-Based Learning service events
- Invest time and energy into learning material for class
- Adhere to the Student Code of Conduct
# Program Timeline

## Fall 2014 Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome correspondence sent to new PEP students</td>
<td>Mid May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incept</td>
<td>July 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome Event</td>
<td>August 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes Begin</td>
<td>August 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Cohort Meeting</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 1 with Academic Coach Completed</td>
<td>September 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Success Workshop Completed</td>
<td>September 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Cohort Meeting</td>
<td>October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 2 with Academic Coach Completed</td>
<td>October 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with Academic Advisor Completed</td>
<td>October 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester Midpoint</td>
<td>October 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Registration</td>
<td>October 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Success Workshop Completed</td>
<td>October 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Cohort Meeting</td>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Success Workshop Completed</td>
<td>November 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 3 With Academic Coach</td>
<td>December 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Monthly Cohort Meeting/Closing Session</td>
<td>Early December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades Review</td>
<td>End of December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notify Students on the Academic Recovery Plan (ARP)</td>
<td>End of December</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Spring 2015 Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome Back Correspondence</td>
<td>Early January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes Begin/ ARP Begins</td>
<td>January 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEP/ SA Welcome Back Reception</td>
<td>Mid-January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Cohort Meeting</td>
<td>Mid/End of January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 1 with Academic Coach Completed</td>
<td>End of January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Success Workshop Completed</td>
<td>End of January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Cohort Meeting</td>
<td>Mid February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 2 with Academic Coach Completed</td>
<td>End of February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with Academic Advisor Completed</td>
<td>March 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer/Fall Registration</td>
<td>March 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester Midpoint</td>
<td>March 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Alert Grades Notification</td>
<td>Beginning of March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Cohort Meeting</td>
<td>End of March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Success Workshop Completed</td>
<td>End of March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Success Workshop Completed</td>
<td>Mid April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Monthly Cohort Meeting/ End of the Year Celebration</td>
<td>Mid April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades Review</td>
<td>Beginning of May</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Panther Excellence Program

Commitment Statement

As a participant in the Panther Excellence Program, I understand that I am joining a two-semester long program (fall 2014 and spring 2015) and that I am expected to fulfill specific requirements for the duration of the program in order to maintain my eligibility as a student at Georgia State University.

These requirements have been outlined to help you transition to Georgia State and to set you up for academic and interpersonal success.

- Achieve a GPA of at least 2.5 upon completion of the summer 2013 semester (*failure to do so will result in a reduced course load for fall semester*)
- Meet with an academic coach at least three times a semester
- Meet with an academic advisor at least twice a semester
- Dedicate at least 10 hours of study per week
- Attend and participate in academic and co-curricular activities
- Attend and participate in at least two (3) university academic workshops every semester
- Attend and participate in weekly supplemental instruction sessions
- Seek out and utilize campus resources (MAC lab, Writing Studio, Counseling Services, etc.)
- Enroll in designated Core Curriculum courses in summer, fall, and spring semesters
- Complete the Connection Reports with their peer mentors
- Commit to your success

By signing below, I agree to the above requirements and commit to actively participate in Success Academy for the entire duration of the program.

Signature________________________________________ Date________________________

Print Name________________________________________ Panther ID____________________
Success Academy/ Panther Excellence Program
Academic Requirements
Spring 2014

Academic Requirements

As a result of not maintaining the Success Academy or Panther Excellence Program required 2.0 minimum or 2.5 preferred GPA at the conclusion of the Fall 2014 semester, a recovery plan has been prescribed for your Spring 2013 academic experience. Specific requirements have been outlined to help you obtain good or preferred academic standing at Georgia State University. Please adhere to the following requirements during the spring 2013 semester:

- Obtain a semester GPA of at least a 2.0 upon completion of the Fall 2014 semester
- Meet with an academic coach (2x) (Office of Undergraduate Studies; 224 Sparks Hall)
- Meet with an academic advisor (Students Advisement Center; 255 Sparks Hall)
- Attend (at least 3) university academic workshops
- Meet with a SA/PEP professional staff member (2x) (Ms. Collier (SA) or Ms. Palm (PEP))
- Commit to at least 10 hours of study per week
- Attend weekly supplemental instruction sessions, in classes that offer SI (Office of Supplemental Instruction)
- Utilize campus resources (math lab, writing studio, counseling services, etc.)
- Participate in monthly SA/PEP activities

By signing below, I understand and agree to all the above requirements. I understand that I will

Signature________________________________________ Date__________________________

Print Name_______________________________________ Panther ID_____________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Facilitators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:45pm – 1:20pm</td>
<td>Student Check In/Arrival</td>
<td>Peer Mentors/ Ms. Kate VanDerSchaaf/ Ms. Joan Collier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:20pm – 1:35pm</td>
<td>Welcome &amp; Introductions PEP Expectations <em>(Program Overview)</em></td>
<td>Ms. Jolayna Palm/All PEP Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:35pm – 1:55pm</td>
<td>College Life Reality/ Panel of Students <em>(College Life From A Student’s Perspective)</em></td>
<td>Ms. Jolayna Palm/ Peer Mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00pm – 2:45pm</td>
<td>Conversation on Diversity <em>(Diversity Awareness)</em></td>
<td>Dr. Holloman, Asst. VP, Multicultural Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00pm – 3:40pm</td>
<td>Academic Resource Jeopardy <em>(Identifying Campus Resources)</em></td>
<td>Ms. Jolayna Palm/ Ms. Kate VanDerSchaaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:50pm – 4:30pm</td>
<td>FLC Group Activity-Who Are You? <em>(Building a sense of community)</em></td>
<td>Peer Mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30-4:40pm</td>
<td>Recap Activity</td>
<td>Ms. Jolayna Palm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00pm – 5:45pm</td>
<td>Dinner/With FLC Group</td>
<td>PEP Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00pm – 7:30pm</td>
<td>Playfair <em>(Teambuilding)</em></td>
<td>PEP Staff and Housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment

1. A narrative description of the activities undertaken during the fall 2013/2014 school year.

This past 2013/2014 school year, Georgia State University admitted 189 students into the Panther Excellence Program. Through PEP students were given additional academic support and guidance (than what most incoming first year students receive), which contributed to their academic success. Each student was placed in a PEP Freshman Learning Community, assigned an academic coach, as well as an academic advisor. Participants were introduced to campus resources and various academic and soft skills.

Upon completion of the fall 2013 semester, the cohort earned a cumulative GPA of 2.73 (which is .02 points higher than last year’s cohort) and maintained a 93.4% retention rate. At the end of the spring semester the cohort’s cumulative GPA dropped to 2.55. However, their cumulative GPA still remained .11 points higher than last year’s cohort.

One of the major factors that contributed to the success of this year’s cohort is the connection that was established among the students and the resources on campus. Therefore, in an effort to help maintain the group’s high retention rate as well as support and improve their overall academic progress, resources and services will also be provided to continue to support the current cohort as well as the new cohort.

Throughout the academic school year, the PEP program extended the following services and support to each of the program participants:

**GSU Orientation (Incept) and the PEP Orientation**
Prior to the start of the fall semester, students attended Incept as well as a one day PEP orientation, which they were introduced to Georgia State University’s campus and resources and the Panther Excellence Program. During their orientations students established connections with campus departments, faculty and staff, toured the campus, as well as engaged in workshops about campus diversity and involvement, learned about campus safety, and financial aid, academic advising, and academic support.

**PEP Class Schedule**
Students in PEP were assigned to Freshmen Learning Communities. The smaller class sizes fostered enhanced student learning, through more face time with instructors (which led to strong student-teacher relationships), increased student engagement, opportunities for small group work, and more individualized support. Attending classes with the same students, created a sense of community within the group which allowed students to support one another in and out of the classrooms.

**iCARE- First Alert**
Early Alert program was implemented to monitor student academic progress. Early alerts from instructors provided updates of each student that was not adequately progressing in their courses and potentially failing. Early alerts also enabled the academic coaches to work with struggling students to develop an academic success plan.
Students were provided the following services to enhance their skill set and their ability to be successful college students as it relates to creating skills that will sustain them through graduation:

- **Academic Coaching Meetings**
  Each program participant was assigned to a graduate student who served as an academic coach. The coach provided guidance and support to the students by meeting with them regularly, advising student with academic-related issues, monitoring student academic progress, conducting student referrals, and facilitating skill-building workshops.

- **Skill building Workshops**
  Throughout the semester students engaged in workshops which contributed to their academic and social development. Campus representatives provided students with tools and resources regarding time management, health and wellness, academic skills, etc.

2. **Outcomes, interpretation of the degree of success of the program, challenges faced, lessons learned, etc.**

**Fall 2013 Outcomes Fulfilled**

1. 80% of all students enrolled in the fall 2013 semester will matriculate to the spring semester (consisting of any student eligible to enroll in spring).
2. 70% of students who matriculate to the spring semester will obtain at least a 2.5 GPA or better at the end of the fall 2013 semester.
3. 50% of all students will meet with an academic Coach 2x during the fall 2013 semester.
4. 50% of all students enrolled will meet with an Academic Advisor 1x by the end of the fall 2013 semester.
5. 80% of all students who enroll in the fall 2013 semester will understand the purpose and requirements of the PEP program (sign off on the commitment statement).

**Fall 2013 Outcomes Not Fulfilled**

1. 25% (or less) of students who complete the semester will obtain less than a 2.5 GPA at the end of the fall 2013 semester.
   a. Approximately 29% of the students that completed the semester obtained a 2.5 or less at the end of the fall 2013 semester.
2. 10% (or less) of students who matriculate to the spring semester will obtain less than a 2.0 GPA at the end of the fall 2013 semester and be on academic warning.
**Program Success**

- Upon completion of the fall 2013 semester, the group as a whole earned an overall GPA of a 2.73.
- The highest student GPA was a 4.23
- The retention rate (from fall to spring) was above 90%
- Over 80% of the students achieved a “2.0” GPA or above
- Over 40% percent of the students achieved a 3.0 or above
- The cumulative GPAs of this year’s cohort is .10 points higher than last year’s GPA
- Five of the 7 fall outcomes were satisfied. (Spring outcomes will be assessed at the beginning of the fall 2014 semester.)

**Challenges**

- The Panther Excellence Program is a new program and a set budget has not been established for the program. As a result, essential support and resources (tutoring, personalized academic support, etc.) cannot be provided to the program participants.
- Many students were admitted right before the start of the fall semester, or after the start of the semester. As a result, they were not given the same support and attention that other students were given. Consequently, these students did not achieve as well as other students.
- Some students did not have enough financial aid to cover the cost of tuition and were dropped from classes.

**Recommendations/ Lessons Learned**

- To ensure that all students receive their financial aid award prior to the start of the academic school year, program staff should regularly communicate with the students and their families throughout the summer, to assist them with financial aid and to address concerns or issues they may have.
- Allocate a set budget which will allow for necessary program support.
- Incorporate substantial consequences for students who do not follow through with the program guidelines.