



Near Peer College and Career Advising Program Overview

Savannah Graduates *mission* is to lead and implement a collaborative action plan to align resources and advocate to increase the number of individuals with degrees and credentials for workforce development in Savannah-Chatham County.

Savannah Graduates *vision* is that Savannah-Chatham County is a community where every individual earns professional credentials to participate fully in a thriving economy.

Savannah Graduates *goal* is to increase the percent of Savannah-Chatham County residents who hold a post-secondary degree or credential to 48% by 2025. Currently 39% of residents hold a degree beyond high school.

Savannah Graduates is a cross-sector community partnership with representatives from the business, education, government, and nonprofit sectors championing education attainment and workforce development.

Our partners have pledged to work collaboratively to help create a more educated local workforce. Partners include Armstrong State University (ASU), Savannah State University (SSU), Savannah Technical College, Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce, Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA), Savannah Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS), Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition (CGIC), United Way, Georgia Power, Coastal Workforce Services (CWS), City of Savannah, Chatham County, and Gulfstream.

What We Know

- Savannah-Chatham County educational attainment levels are not aligned with future workforce needs
- 65 % of U.S. jobs will require some form of post-secondary education by 2020
- 18.5% of SCCPSS students are not meeting the high school graduation requirements necessary to be successful when entering post-secondary education and the workforce (SY 2014-15, DAS-REMI)

- 10.4% of SCCPSS high school students receive referral for ISS, OSS, or expulsion (SY 2015-16, DAS-REMI)
- Student to counselor ratio is 749:1.5
- Low income, underrepresented, and first time college students lack the guidance and support needed to explore career choices and navigate the college admissions process.
- Families of these students lack the knowledge to advocate for their children to succeed at their chosen pathway
- Only 40.7% of students completed FAFSA forms (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

The Need

We know that a 4 -year college degree is not for every student but it is essential that every student be prepared for life beyond high school, and aware of the options available to them -college, vocational school, trade programs, entrepreneurship, or the military. Studies show that students graduating high school with a plan, have higher self-esteem, feel more confident in pursuing a career, and are prepared for productive futures.

In order to achieve this, students and their families require additional assistance navigating their way to educational success. They need one-on-one advising to help them make better informed educational, and career choices so they can succeed in their chosen pathways.

Pathway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees

Savannah Graduates, in close partnership with ASU, SSU, SEDA and SCCPSS, launched the Near Peer College and Career Advising Program for SY 2016-17. The program integrates three (3) recent college graduates to serve as full-time advisors in three (3) targeted high schools (Jenkins, Groves and Windsor Forest). The advisors serve in cooperation with high school counselors and other school professionals, and provide the high-touch support needed to equip students and their families with the ability and knowledge to access post-secondary educational opportunities and to successfully graduate with the skills necessary for meaningful employment.

Advisors become part of the school's community working with teachers and administration to encourage lifelong learning and infuse college-going culture into the day-to-day operations of the school. In addition, through the Program Manager, they work with community organizations/individuals to provide the support and services needed for each student and family unique needs.

Advisors provide students with regular and timely one-on-one guidance and support including extensive discussions about their plan beyond high school, career options, and best college match. Through this process, advisors listen, ask thoughtful questions, and provide feedback to students, which communicate the belief and confidence in the student.

Advisors meet one-on-one, and in group settings, with a cohort student over the course of the school year and assist with career exploration, college and career planning, test preparation, workforce readiness, oral and written communication skills, discipline and character, tutorial support, financial literacy, mentoring, college campus and workplace visits, and involvement with community events.

Goals and Assessment

The Near Peer College and Career Advising Program primary goal is to increase the number of students who enroll in postsecondary options. Program objectives driving the goal include; (1) increase the number of students who take a college entrance exam (2) increase the number of students who submit a college application (3) increase the number of students who complete the FAFSA.

In addition, we expect to see the following student outcomes: students will have high expectations for themselves; reduction of ISS, OSS, and expulsion; increase in the number of students taking college entrance exams, attending dual enrollment classes, graduate from high school with a clear plan, apply to and receive acceptance to at least two local and one state post-secondary institution.

Savannah Graduates has formed a data team consisting of data experts from SEDA, Armstrong, and SCCPSS along with the three principals. A data tracking system to evaluate progress towards the program goals is being used. Tracking is done by the advisors on an ongoing basis and the program manager, with the assistance of data team, compile and analyze the data regularly. Results are reported to Savannah Graduates partners and community stakeholders on a regular basis.

Savannah Graduates is working with SCCPSS Data and Accountability department on a senior survey that will provide accurate student contact information and allow us track students as they progress into post-secondary or the workplace.

Who the Program Serves

The Near Peer cohort consists of more than 135 seniors who were recommended by school counselors and principals as “the movable middle”. Students and families were required to sign a “contract” at the beginning of the year which outlined the expectations of their commitment and the need for their full participation.

Preliminary Results

Preliminary data suggests the near peers are effectively reaching students in our target populations, as 84% of the students are minorities, 57% receive free and reduced lunch, and 48% have been identified as first generation students.

Near peers have conducted 280 one-on-one meetings, approximately 8 bi-monthly group meetings and two college tours. In addition, 30% have met with a college recruiter, 49% were assisted with college entrance exam waivers. As a result, 54% have applied to at least one college and 35% have applied to at least three colleges. Overall, students in the program are actively thinking about and preparing for their future (see attached data).

Executive Committee

Dr. Linda Bleicken
President
Armstrong State University

Mark Bennett
Senior Manager Government Relations and Community Investments
Gulfstream

Dr. Cheryl Dozier
President
Savannah State University

Cathy Hill
Regional Vice President
Georgia Power

Bill Hubbard
President & CEO
Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce

Mike Kemp
Chair
Coastal Georgia Indicator Coalition and Synovus Bank
Senior VP, Regional Trust Manager
Synovus

Dr. Ann Levett
Deputy Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer

Thomas Lockamy
Superintendent
Savannah Chatham County Public School System

Dr. Kathy Love
President
Savannah Technical College

Gregg Schroeder
President & CEO
United Way of the Coastal Empire

Lee Smith
Count Manager
Chatham County

Trip Tollison
President & CEO
Savannah Economic Development Authority

Mike Tucker
Executive Director
Coastal Workforce Services