

# **Gordon College Quality Enhancement Plan: *Enhancing Academic Literacy in the First Year***

## Executive Summary

As increasing numbers of academically and socially under-prepared students enroll in college, many fail to accomplish their goal of completing a college education. As a two-year, open enrollment institution, Gordon College serves a significant population of such at-risk students. Our primary institutional goal as a gateway into four-year degree programs within the University System of Georgia should be to maximize the potential for our students to successfully complete their associate degrees and move onward in their educational experience.

We have focused upon “academic literacy” as the umbrella term for the myriad academic and social characteristics that maximize a student’s potential for successful completion of a college course of study. We define academic literacy as the necessary skills, practices, and attitudes for successfully engaging oneself within the academic community and ensuring continued academic progress. For Gordon College, we specify that definition to address the development of key behaviors and attitudes which will enhance the potential for student success, including developing better knowledge of Gordon College’s policies, procedures, and resources; developing an awareness of the interconnectedness of academic knowledge and fields; developing an appreciation for diversity; developing confidence and maturity within the classroom; and developing an appreciation for and connection to Gordon College’s history and its community.

To initiate and enhance the development of academic literacy skills, we have created four Action Plans which will engage the entire campus community in the service of enhancing the academic literacy skills of our students and maximizing their potential for academic success. First, we will charge a Task Force for Academic Literacy in the First Year which will oversee the initiation and development of the other three Action Plan programs. Second, we will begin to administer the College Student Expectations Questionnaire as part of our New Student Orientation program in order to better understand the expectations of our incoming students and adjust our programs (particularly the third and fourth Action Plan elements) to reflect them. Third, we will initiate a Learning Community program in order to better address elements of academic literacy such as community formation, cross-curricular understanding, and student-faculty interaction. Finally, we will initiate a First-Year Experience Course to further address elements of academic literacy such as study skills, identity formation, classroom conduct, and awareness of institutional resources.

These four programs will be gradually phased in and developed over the course of three years beginning 2006-2007, with a goal of seeing full implementation and integration into the campus community of Gordon College by the end of five years.

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