

A Fresh New Perspective on
Graduate Student Success:
The Introduction of Graduate
Student Success Coaches at
Jackson State University

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Student Success at Jackson State University

*Jackson State University Strategic Plan:
ELEVATE 2021-2026*

- **GOAL 1: STUDENT SUCCESS**

- Jackson State University will become one of the most student-centered universities in the country by implementing relevant and appropriate student success strategies, developing students holistically and ensuring student Return on Investment (ROI).

Student Success at Jackson State University

*Jackson State University Strategic Plan:
ELEVATE 2021-2026*

Objectives and Key Strategies:

- Student Success through Student-Centered Programs
 - Promote a student-centered university that enhances student experiences and provides enriched support systems and related programs which provide increased opportunities for student success (retention, persistence, degree completion).
- Personal Development and Wellness Services
 - Enhance and improve overall student wellness services through a multidimensional and holistic approach.
- Personal Development Services
 - Engage students in co-curricular activities to explore career aspirations and promote career development.

Division of Graduate Studies' Alignment with the Strategic Plan

Focus Areas

- Integrate support services to foster graduate student engagement, academic success, and degree completion.
- Improve retention and graduation rates for graduate students.
- Provide enhanced resources for student academic and emotional support, thereby recognizing the interdependence and importance of academic and emotional support services.
- Execute an array of programs and activities that allow students to explore career aspirations.

Strategies to Address Focus Areas

- The creation of the Graduate Student Success Coach (GSSC)
- GSSC student assignments
- GSSC collaborations with campus resources
- GSSC sessions and workshops

What is a Graduate Student Success Coach?

Graduate Student Success Coaches (GSSCs) are experts in student success. They promote a positive and successful learning experience for graduate students so they can achieve their educational and career goals. GSSCs meet with students throughout the semester to discuss a broad range of topics related to a graduate student's success, to help students overcome obstacles impeding success, and help graduate students develop the skills, habits, and resources needed to persist to graduation.

Recruitment & Selection

- Advertised position and included a very specific position description and qualifications
 - A Master's Degree in any area with a preference for graduate degrees in education, psychology, and counseling.
 - Experience in student success initiatives such as advising, counseling, mentoring
- Conducted Interviews
 - Please briefly tell us about yourself and your background working in education, especially any experience working in higher education.
 - What does “student success” mean to you?
- If hired, you would be working with students who have had academic trouble (received a grade of C or below and/or dropped below the required 3.00 grade point average for a graduate student). How has your experience in education equipped you to assist these students.
- Selected Applicants Who...
 - Have graduate degrees and lived experiences as a graduate student
 - Experiences working with diverse learners
 - Experiences managing a caseload
 - Are resourceful

Who can work with a GSSC?

- Coaching from a GSSC is available to all graduate students at all stages of the graduate school experience.
- All students on academic warning and probation are assigned to a GSSC and are required to regularly meet with a GSSC.
- GSSCs help students who are on academic warning and probation identify strategies to succeed in their graduate program and to return to good academic standing with the University.

How can students work with a GSSC?

Graduate students can meet individually
– in-person, via telephone or virtually –
with a GSSC.

Examples of Topics a Student May Discuss with a GSSC

Time management

How to stay motivated

How to connect to resources on campus

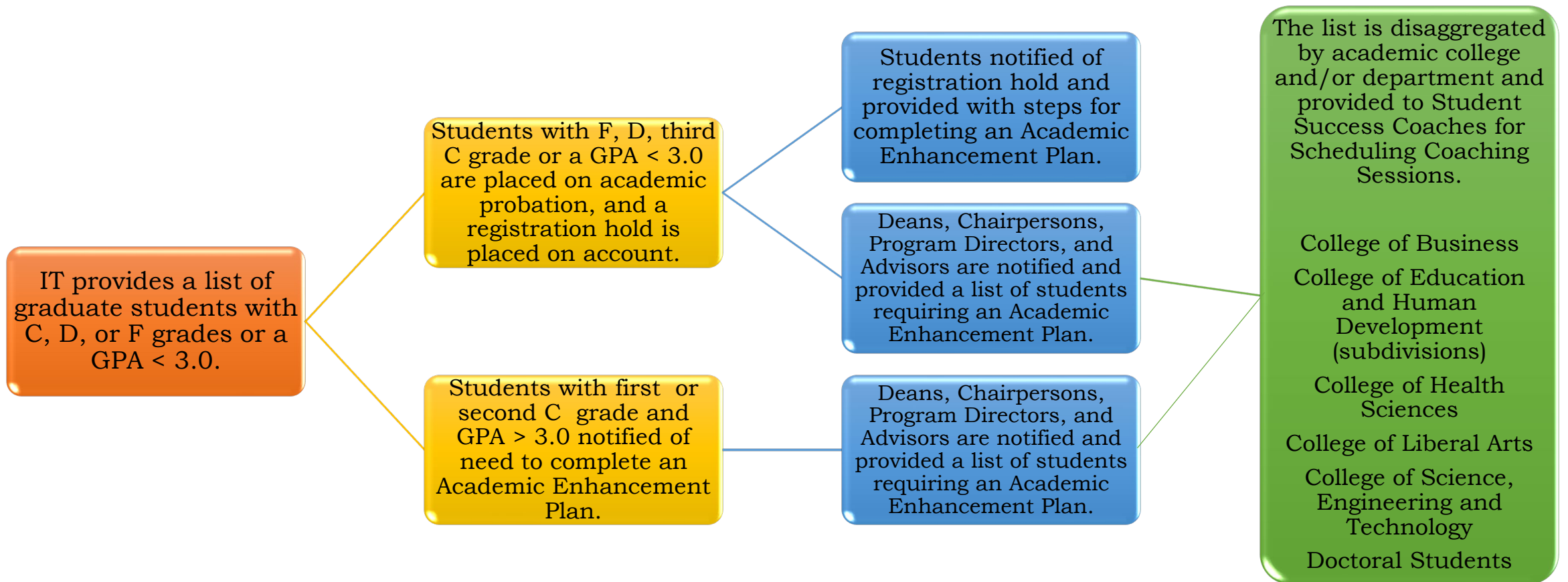
Stress management

Career planning

Developing study skills

Discovering interests, strengths, and motivation

Student Case Load Selections: Identifying Students



Student Case Load Selections: Fall 2023

Case Load Assignment	Students	Graduate Student Success Coach
College of Business (Master's Programs)	25	Coach 1
College of Education and Human Development (Master of Arts in Teaching, A-M)	53	Coach 1
College of Education and Human Development (Non-MAT Master's Programs)	39	Coach 2
College of Health Sciences (Master's Programs)	15	Coach 2
College of Liberal Arts (Master's Programs)	22	Coach 2
College of Education and Human Development (Master of Arts in Teaching, N-Z)	28	Coach 3
College of Education and Human Development (Specialist Programs)	32	Coach 3
College of Science, Engineering, and Technology (Master's Programs)	15	Coach 3

Academic Enhancement Plan (AEP)

- Designed to support the student to return to or remain in good academic standing.
- The student meets with their departmental academic advisor to discuss their graduate academic history and strategies for moving forward.
- Student and Advisor collaborate to determine causes for performance and possible treatments.
- At least two options under plans to improve academic performance must be selected while more robust intervention may be required for some students.
- Enhancement activities should be detailed and documented on the AEP.
- All students with AEPs must have regular contact with the faculty member/advisor who is responsible for the plan.

Academic Enhancement Plan (AEP) Activities

Academic enhancement activities should be created based on the needs of the student and the areas in which they had difficulty. **Plans to improve academic performance include:**

- Write a paper on a topic
- Independent study of a topic
- Complete a literature review for a topic
- Complete additional assignments
- Receive individual or small-group instruction on a topic
- Complete supervised observations for practicum
- Participate in a professional development experience (e.g., conference or seminar)
- Decrease course load
- Enroll in a lower-level course to strengthen knowledge base
- Repeat course
- Required sessions at the Writing Center
- Required sessions for statistics/research support
- Required sessions with a librarian
- Create a study schedule
- Attend scheduled study sessions
- Assign the student a mentor (faculty, peer)
- Attend regular meetings with advisor (schedule required)

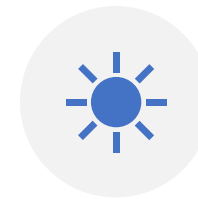
GSSC Workshops



Productivity and motivation



Overcoming writer's block and other writing topics



Using winter and summer breaks effectively



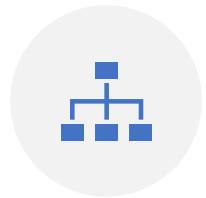
Reading, focusing, and studying strategies



Discovering your learning style



Planning



Organization strategies



Note-taking strategies

GSSC Workshops

Time management

Test anxiety

Stress, self-care, and dealing with burnout

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Alternatives to degree plans to promote success

Financing and budgeting for graduate school

Dealing with rejection in academia

Tackling obstacles that are impeding success

GSSC's Primary Responsibilities

- Assist students in navigating academic matters including admission, registration, course attendance, academic performance, and academic policies and graduation requirements;
- Proactively engage graduate students to provide guidance and support for their academic and professional goals;
- Regularly reach out to and meet with graduate students to provide guidance, discuss resources, and provide accountability and support around 5 focus areas (well-being, academics and graduation, campus community and engagement, managing commitments, and career preparation);





GSSC's Primary Responsibilities, continued

- Support graduate students through personal impacts that can happen during a graduate education and direct students to the appropriate resources;
- Collaborate with units across campus (e.g., Student Affairs, Writing Center, Career Center, Financial Aid, and ADA) to plan and host regular seminars that are designed to support graduate students;
- Monitor assigned caseload of students' academic enhancement plans and support students to return to or maintain good standing in the Division of Graduate Studies;



GSSC's Primary Responsibilities, continued

- Use the Learning Management System to maintain an electronic repository of support resources for students;
- Provide pre-withdrawal counseling to graduate students who are planning to withdraw from courses or the University;
- Maintain detailed and appropriate records for assigned caseload of graduate students; and
- Assist in composing relevant reports for the Division of Graduate Studies.

GSSC's 5 Focus Areas

Well-Being



**STRESS
MANAGEMENT**



**SCHOOL-LIFE
BALANCE**



MOTIVATION

Academics and Graduation

- Study Strategies and Schedules
- Test-taking strategies
- Learning styles and habits
- Graduate Writing
- Writing Center visits and workshops
- Graduate Studies policies

Campus Community and Engagement

- Campus involvement opportunities
- Connecting with campus resources
- Connecting with community resources
- Community service opportunities

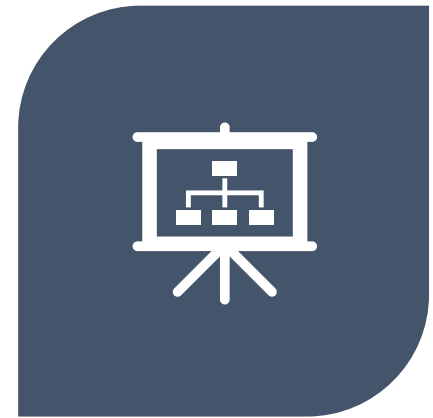
Managing Commitments



TIME MANAGEMENT



BUDGETING AND
FINANCIAL LITERACY



ORGANIZATION

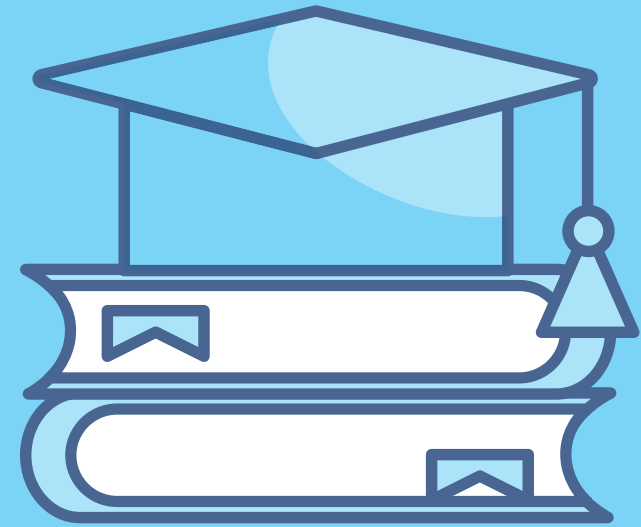
Career

- Future and career planning
- Networking opportunities
- Career fairs
- Career Center use
- Internships and externships

Touch Points

- After application submission
- During course registration period
- Prior to 1st day of semester
- After attendance grading
- Prior to mid-term week
- After mid-term grading
- Prior to final exam week
- After final grading
- As often as appropriate

AEP STUDENT SATISFACTORY SURVEY RESULTS



Get Started →

What level of degree are you pursuing?

Student Classification	%	#
Master's	82.14%	23
Specialist	17.86%	5
Doctorate	0.00%	0
Non-Degree Seeking	0.00%	0
Total	100%	28

What is your college of study?

Academic College	%	#
College of Business	3.57%	1
College of Education and Human Development	60.71%	17
College of Health Sciences	14.29%	4
College of Liberal Arts	10.71%	3
College of Science, Engineering, and Technology	10.71%	3
Total	100%	28

Please describe how useful you found the resources that your Success Coach provided.

Response	%	#
Extremely useful	88.46%	23
Very useful	11.54%	3
Moderately useful	0.00%	0
Slightly useful	0.00%	0
Not at all useful	0.00%	0
Total	100%	26

My Success Coach is someone I can go to for support.

Response	%	#
Strongly agree	100.00%	27
Somewhat agree	0.00%	0
Neither agree nor disagree	0.00%	0
Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
Total	100%	27

My Success Coach is available when I schedule appointments.

Response	%	#
Strongly disagree	37.04%	10
Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
Neither agree nor disagree	0.00%	0
Somewhat agree	0.00%	0
Strongly agree	62.96%	17
Total	100%	27

The Success Sessions helped address my academic difficulties and challenges.

Response	%	#
Strongly agree	92.59%	25
Somewhat agree	7.41%	2
Neither agree nor disagree	0.00%	0
Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
Total	100%	27

Have your grades improved this semester since attending the Success Sessions?

Response	%	#
Much better	92.59%	25
Somewhat better	0.00%	0
About the same	7.41%	2
Somewhat worse	0.00%	0
Much worse	0.00%	0
Total	100%	27

I want to attend the Success Sessions again next semester if they are offered.

Response	%	#
Definitely yes	59.26%	16
Probably yes	11.11%	3
Might or might not	22.22%	6
Probably not	7.41%	2
Definitely not	0.00%	0
Total	100%	27

How likely are you to utilize your Success Coach next semester?

Response	%	#
Extremely likely	70.37%	19
Somewhat likely	18.52%	5
Neither likely nor unlikely	11.11%	3
Somewhat unlikely	0.00%	0
Extremely unlikely	0.00%	0
Total	100%	27

Attending the Success Coach sessions helped me feel more motivated in my classes.

Response	%	#
Strongly agree	85.19%	23
Somewhat agree	7.41%	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3.70%	1
Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	3.70%	1
Total	100%	27

My coach introduced me to strategies to live a more balanced life.

Response	%	#
Strongly agree	92.59%	25
Somewhat agree	3.70%	1
Neither agree nor disagree	3.70%	1
Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
Total	100%	27

I am satisfied with the experience of my Success Coaching Sessions.

Response	%	#
Extremely satisfied	93.10%	27
Somewhat satisfied	3.45%	1
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3.45%	1
Somewhat dissatisfied	0.00%	0
Extremely dissatisfied	0.00%	0
Total	100%	29

Which topics were most helpful to you? (Select all that apply.)

Response	%	#
Time Management	32.69%	17
Study Strategies	26.92%	14
Test Preparation	17.31%	9
Other	3.85%	2
Career Guidance	19.23%	10
Total	100%	52

What were the most significant moments you remember from this semester's Success Session? (Open-ended Questions)

To always start ahead of time

The encouragement, advice, strategies, and motivation I received from my Success Coach.

Her discussions about my classes and what resources to seek to help me.

Time management

The encouragement!!

To remember to manage my time wisely

Having someone that could point me in the right direction.

Being able to access resources that I never knew about.

Being able to be myself

Study strategies

Our one on one sessions

Are there any suggestions you would like to share to improve the coaching sessions?

I don't have any suggestions at this time because my Success Coach went above and beyond to help me attain my goals.

The supporting material that was provided was very helpful. I'd like for more similar material to be used in the future.

Make the time zone for scheduling zoom meetings a little less confusing.

Everything was great.

I have no suggestions, everything was great.

Please share any additional comments you have about your experience participating in the Graduate Studies Success Coaching Sessions.

Gratitude!

Since starting grad school it has been extremely difficult but Mrs. _____ has been the best person! She listened to me and even took the time to look at jobs in my field. She made me feel very comfortable, she made it easy to communicate and she replied with in a timely manner. She believed in me and helped me more than I could imagine. I honestly believe without her I would have failed again this year.

Mrs. _____ was wonderful. I hope these sessions continue for students like myself that are in need of extra academic support.

_____ was very professional and upbeat about the entire AEP process. I utilized the resources she offered and felt motivated after all of our sessions. I literally decided not to withdraw from this lovely school after a session with her. JSU desperately needs more positive attitudes like Mrs. _____ in both faculty and staff.

My success coach was amazing. She was definitely a great help through the semester. When I needed encouragement, I know I could count on her.

I enjoyed my sessions and my instructor.

Thank you
for coming!

Contact us at
graduate@jsums.edu.

