

# Impact 2008

Georgia Perimeter College Impact Report:  
Making a Difference in Georgia



**Impact:** *n*: The power of making a strong, immediate impression.

“Georgia Perimeter College plays a crucial role in higher education, not only serving as the gateway to opportunity for individuals, but also as a key player in building a stronger economy.”

— Michael Thurmond  
Commissioner, Georgia Department of Labor



*Two Years That Will Change Your Life*

# Impact

on citizens and  
the economy

Georgia Perimeter College, the third largest institution within the University System of Georgia, is both an economic catalyst and an educational and cultural hub for the communities it serves. As one of 35 USG institutions, GPC plays a central role in the economic growth and vitality of Georgia and in the education of a diverse student body of more than 23,000 students. Students come to GPC to seek a quality education, obtain new skills, increase career options and gain the opportunity to become more productive and involved citizens.

In 2008, Georgia Perimeter was ranked the 28th fastest growing two-year public college in the nation, with four campuses located in Clarkston, Decatur, Dunwoody and Newton County plus a growing site in Alpharetta, which doubled its student enrollment in one year.

**Eight counties east of Atlanta got an economic and educational boost when Georgia Perimeter opened its Newton Campus in 2007. "GPC is an important part of our present and is going to be a more important part of our future," said John Boothby, president of the Covington/Newton Chamber of Commerce. "It's a definite business-recruiting advantage and helps differentiate us from other cities."**

## Improving Processes

Also in 2008, GPC initiated a continuous improvement process called Lean Six Sigma to better meet the educational needs of its students. Facing historic enrollment growth and limited budget dollars, the college streamlined operations and improved student registration, admission, advising and financial aid with the following results:

- Cross training admissions staff resulted in an additional 564 registered students, generating almost \$500,000 in additional revenue, 2,885 additional applications over the same time period in the previous year and decreasing overtime hours by 2,343 in admissions alone.
- The financial aid office showed improved efficiency by processing 19 percent more financial aid applications over the previous year.

- Implementing document imaging for admissions and financial aid saved 9,375 admission processing staff hours, thereby allowing staff to focus on admitting more students.
- Centralizing college data collection produced a cost savings of \$37,190, with the establishment of a college data dictionary. Centralized report production increased work productivity by 42 percent.

Customer service also improved during this period: in 2008 the college received the Governor's Commendation and Chancellor's Gold Level Awards for Customer Service.

## Great Value

Increased efficiency and improved customer service allow Georgia Perimeter College to maintain one of the least expensive tuitions in Georgia at less than \$2,300 per year for a full-time, in-state student. More than 8,000 students in 2007-08 had all their tuition paid for by the state's HOPE scholarship program, totaling \$6.4 million. In addition, students received more than \$38 million in federal and other sources of financial aid with the Pell grant topping the list at \$19.2 million.

Financial aid, including grants and scholarships, was awarded to 73 percent of all GPC students, allowing them to focus on their studies. In 2008, GPC faculty, staff, alumni, retirees and friends donated \$225,000 to the GPC Foundation scholarship program.

## Community and Culture

Traditionally, colleges act as a cultural hub for their citizens. Georgia Perimeter is no exception. Since 1969, the DeKalb Symphony Orchestra and the Theatre Arts Guild have provided quality productions for the community. Art shows, concerts and lectures are offered on all campuses and are open to the public.

GPC also offers a unique asset with its Botanical Garden, which houses one of the rarest and largest collections of ferns in the United States and provides a teaching greenhouse for students, garden clubs and botany enthusiasts throughout metro Atlanta.

Georgia Perimeter's economic footprint is large: providing **4,500 jobs** that result in **\$201.1 million** in labor income and generate more than **half a billion dollars** in total annual economic impact.

# Impact

## on students

Student success is the business of Georgia Perimeter College. With its 465,000 alumni and more than 23,000 students, GPC plays a major role in educating Georgians.

### Access to Education

The University System of Georgia has charged its two-year colleges, including Georgia Perimeter, with the role of serving as access points for higher education. At GPC, access is defined in multiple ways: streamlined admissions, affordable tuition, multiple locations, varied class times, online classes, learning support and scholarship and financial aid. GPC also recently implemented a guaranteed admission plan for high school graduates.

- GPC enrolls eight percent of the total number of students in the USG and 25 percent of the system's new students.
- GPC enrolls more freshmen (13,736 in fall 2008) than any institution in the University System.
- GPC Online, the largest distance learning program in the state, has almost tripled its enrollment in the past three years; it currently enrolls nearly 6,500 students.
- Twenty-three percent of GPC students are in learning support courses, demonstrating the college's role in providing access to higher education.
- GPC annually accounts for approximately one-fifth of all transfers within the University System.

### Transfer Admission Guarantees

To allow students seamless transfers, Georgia Perimeter is pioneering a Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG) program; to date, TAG agreements have been signed with 33 four-year public and private colleges. Colleges have been quick to sign TAGs with Georgia Perimeter because of the success GPC transfers have had at their institutions over the years.

### Award-Winning Faculty

Georgia Perimeter's faculty members can take much of the credit for preparing students to move on and earn bachelor and graduate degrees. The college's average class size of 24 allows professors to closely interact with students.

"I will forever be grateful to my faculty mentors at GPC," said alumnus Ryan Cooper who is continuing his education at the University of Maryland. "They helped me gain confidence in my writing and critical thinking."

Students aren't the only ones who recognize the excellence of GPC's professors. Thirty-six faculty members have received Teaching Excellence Awards from the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development since 2005. Also, GPC has the largest number of Governor's Teaching Fellows (18) in Georgia since 2001.

"Our primary focus is to help students develop the confidence to believe in themselves and in their ability to learn," said math professor Dr. Marjorie Lewkowicz.

### Special Academic Initiatives

GPC's Gateway to College Academy, which operates as a DeKalb County charter school housed at Clarkston Campus, assists students who have dropped out of high school. Students get tutoring and academic counseling and then are mainstreamed into college classes where they can simultaneously earn their high school diploma and college credit. In its five years of existence, Gateway has helped more than 550 students.

"It's all about the supportive environment," says Darryl Davis, who became an A and B student before graduating from Gateway in December 2007. "The teachers make sure you understand the material. They care about our education."

Other early-college and support programs at GPC include:

- DeKalb Early College Academy, also a partnership with DeKalb schools, that enrolls freshmen high school students and enables them to complete their high school degrees and two years of college in five years. DECA's first class of 54 students completed high school and became full-time college students in 2008.
- Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation, a bridge program for recent high school graduates interested in earning a degree in the STEM fields of science, technology, engineering or mathematics that has served 180 students in its first three years.
- Math, Engineering and Science Achievement program, which prepares educationally disadvantaged students to transfer to and graduate from a four-year college in one of those fields. More than 70 students were enrolled in MESA in 2008, and three MESA students each received \$10,500 scholarships to Georgia Tech. They include Joel Touissant, now an aerospace engineering major at Tech, who credits the program with fueling his passion for rocket science.

**Georgia Perimeter graduate Chris Davis** got first-hand knowledge of GPC's excellent reputation when he attended a transfer admissions session at Georgia Tech, which has graduated more than 350 engineering students from GPC since 2000. **"The speaker made us all identify our previous institution,"** he explained. **"Several very serious university names, including some from the Ivy League, had already been dropped before she asked me. After I gave my response, she said: 'GPC's students perform the best. You are very welcome here.'"**

- Leadership Academy, a scholarship and mentorship program geared toward increasing the success of African-American males in higher education. In 2008 the academy boasted a retention rate of 77.8 percent of its first-time, full-time freshmen African-American males, compared with a national average of just 50 percent. Currently, 35 students are Leadership Academy members.
- Two TRIO programs, funded through grants from the U.S. Department of Education. TRIO Upward Bound annually provides college preparatory services to 100 low-income or potential first-generation college students, including tutoring, advising and counseling, college tours and career and cultural explorations. TRIO Student Support Services promotes the academic success of first-generation, low-income and/or disabled GPC students. Last year the project provided academic support, counseling and financial assistance to 164 students.

## Joint Enrollment

Approximately 900 high school students each year take advantage of GPC's Joint Enrollment program, the state's largest, to simultaneously earn high school and college credit

tuition-free. Some, like 2008 graduate Margaret Jezghani, actually graduate with a college degree from GPC before walking across the stage to accept their high school diplomas.

Joint Enrollment coordinator Donald Singer noted that JE and the other early-college programs "help students make the critical transition from high school to college under circumstances that are more closely monitored than if they waited to begin college after high school."

## Honors Program

GPC's Honors Program enrolled nearly 1,100 students in 2007-2008. "The benefits are smaller classes, lots of individual attention, challenging curriculum and the chance to be in an environment where my opinions were valued," said alumnus Tristan Peters, whose GPC experience set the stage for him to earn his bachelor and law degrees.

## International Education

To prepare students to thrive in an increasingly global society, GPC offers many academic and international-focused opportunities, including English-as-a-Second Language classes, study abroad and immigrant services.

In summer 2008, GPC students studied in nine different countries, and the college provided 50 student stipends and scholarships for study abroad. Back at home, GPC's campuses draw an international population of more than 3,700 students from 150 countries, offering a true global community for students from all backgrounds who are interested in learning more about the world at large.

## Student Life

Attending a two-year institution like Georgia Perimeter also gives students the opportunity to assume leadership roles much earlier in their college careers than they likely could at a four-year university. Those who participate in student life activities learn such life skills as decision making, planning, public speaking and working with a team.

Student activities range from clubs to cultural events, athletics and community service. The college currently has 83 recognized student clubs and organizations. In addition, Georgia Perimeter fields eight intercollegiate athletic teams, several of which have earned national championships including the 2007 men's soccer team.

"We develop community leaders," said Newton Campus Student Life director Kaci Jones. "We make sure students have the tools for their success as students, leaders and, inevitably, success as productive members of our society."

# Impact

on the  
workforce

In today's knowledge and service-based economy, Georgia Perimeter College prepares its students with the education and critical thinking skills needed for a competitive job market. The college is at the forefront in providing career associate-degree programs in nursing, dental hygiene, fire management, homeland security, criminal justice, library information technology and sign language interpreting, as well as educating students for critical healthcare and teaching careers.

"When we hire someone from Georgia Perimeter's criminal justice program, we get someone who thinks—they don't just react," said Major Bart Hulse of the Gwinnett County Police Department.

Nurses are in critical demand in Georgia. In 2008, GPC graduated 89 nurses bringing the total since 1969 to more than 3,900. A spring 2007 survey reports that 90 percent of GPC nursing grads were employed full-time at hospitals or medical offices. GPC nurses command the same competitive salary as nurses who graduate from a baccalaureate program. "Our close working relationship with GPC not only provides great clinical experiences for future nurses, but also helps DeKalb Medical to identify great nurses," said Jan Gannon, DeKalb Medical vice president of patient care services.

Recognizing that healthcare worker shortages extend outside nursing, GPC has begun an allied health science program. And with a \$1.5 million U.S. Department of Labor grant, the college formed partnerships with key employers in the healthcare industry. In 2008, GPC was one of three two-year colleges in the nation to receive a national excellence award from the Department of Labor for the program.

Other top career degree programs at GPC include:

- **Dental Hygiene**—GPC has the largest and most competitive dental hygiene program in Georgia, graduating 38 dental hygienists in 2008. All passed the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination on their first attempt. Active in the community, dental hygiene students provide low-cost and free dental care to more than 5,000 low-income students, veterans and the elderly every year.

- **Sign Language Interpreting**—In 2008, 10 students graduated from the Sign Language Interpreting program. GPC has educated almost 50 percent of all sign language interpreters in Georgia. Students annually volunteer more than 2,200 hours in the community.
- **Fire Management**—The only one in metro Atlanta, this degree program helps firefighters develop critical thinking skills and become eligible for promotion. In 2008, 40 firefighters graduated. "Obtaining this degree at GPC opened doors for me to qualify and be promoted to my current position," said Bridget Mourã, Emory University fire safety director.

## Best Jobs with a Two-Year Degree

Computer Specialists

**\$71,510**

Median Annual Wage

Dental Hygienists

**\$64,740**

Median Annual Wage

Registered Nurses

**\$60,010**

Median Annual Wage

Paralegals & Legal Assistants

**\$44,990**

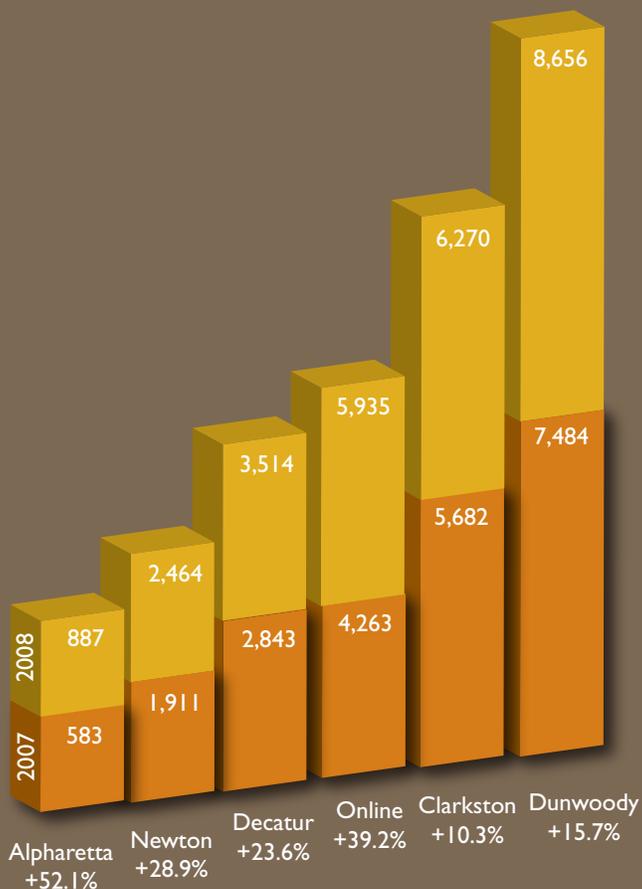
Median Annual Wage

In addition to career programs, GPC's Center for Continuing and Corporate Education provides educational opportunities for individuals and those who are employed by corporations or organizations. In 2008 the center served more than 3,000 people who received certification in healthcare specialties, the legal field, education and entrepreneurship, helping these individuals maintain or find employment in economically viable career fields.

For employers like Robert Currey, founder of Atlanta-based Currey and Company, having an educated workforce makes good business sense. For the past few years, his company has paid tuition for employees to pursue their education with GPC. As a result, productivity of the factory staff has tripled. "I believe that the employees are the heart of any business and their capabilities are the key to taking the company to higher levels," Currey said.

As Currey's words demonstrate, GPC's impact on Georgia's citizens, the economy, education and workforce leads not only to financial gain but also contributes to a higher quality of life for students, and enriches the communities in which they live.

# Georgia Perimeter College 2007 to 2008 Growth



Source: GPC Office of Institutional Research and Planning

“Georgia Perimeter College has an incredible impact on the lives of our students and the community. Students enjoy all the benefits of a large metropolitan college, offered within a small-college atmosphere. Our focus on student success continues to bring us closer to our goal of becoming the best two-year institution in the nation.”

— Dr. Anthony S. Tricoli  
Georgia Perimeter College President

Alpharetta Site  
3705 Brookside Parkway  
Alpharetta, GA 30022  
404-413-7878

Center for Continuing & Corporate Education  
652 North Indian Creek Drive  
Clarkston, GA 30021  
678-891-3000

Clarkston Campus  
555 North Indian Creek Drive  
Clarkston, GA 30021  
678-891-3200

Decatur Campus  
3251 Panthersville Road  
Decatur, GA 30034  
678-891-2300

Dunwoody Campus  
2101 Womack Road  
Dunwoody, GA 30338  
770-274-5000

\*Lawrenceville Site  
1000 University Center Lane  
Lawrenceville, GA 30043  
678-407-5000

\*Joint Enrollment and Nursing only.

Newton Campus  
239 Cedar Lane  
Covington, GA 30014  
770-278-1200



*Two Years That Will Change Your Life*

The University System of Georgia/AA/EOE