

# Building a Better Map

## USG CONFERENCE ABOUT ACADEMIC MAPS

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It was my pleasure to represent the Georgia College University Senate at this meeting on Friday, January 27 at Gordon State College. The following key points need to be shared with university faculty at all levels.

- An academic program map is a tool that is advocated by Complete College America as a “[guided pathway to success](#)” for college completion within 4 years. The [Complete College Georgia](#) initiative has identified academic program maps as a best-practice tool for adoption.
- The use of maps has demonstrated a number of positive outcomes in higher education. These include:
  - Reduction in the number of students accumulating excess credits prior to completion of a degree.
  - Lower costs for students in attainments of degree
  - Increased institutional retention of students
  - Increased institutional graduation rates
- Academic program maps include several key features:
  - Narrative explaining use of the map and consequences of not adhering to the map.
  - Description of the selected major or area of interest.
  - Course selection driven by a whole program of study, not selection of individual courses based on availability, scheduling, or peer recommendations.
  - Identification of milestone courses by faculty and academic advisors. Milestone course availability is ensured by the institution. Milestone courses must be completed during designated semesters to prevent students from avoiding difficulty courses. These courses are also used to help students determine the realistic chance for success in a given major
  - Use of intrusive, or proactive advising methods to help students identify when they are “off the map” or encountering signs that the student may not be successful in a desired degree program.
  - Designation of more appropriate math courses for a degree program if calculus competency is not needed for the degree.
  - Use of broad academic paths called “meta-majors” for undecided students so that initial courses selected will fit with a specific major, once the selection is made. Within the USG, this would mean that students’ core course selection would be compatible with multiple majors within a broad field.
  - Sufficient credits in each term (usually 15) to ensure completion in 4 years
- The USG advocates students only take college algebra if they must also complete calculus for the degree program. For majors requiring statistics, math modeling or quantitative reasoning are more appropriate in area A2.
- There are many formats that an academic map may take; the key point is the selection of necessary courses for the degree and the identification of milestones for each semester or level.

- Faculty need to be involved in development of academic maps, particularly in the identification of milestones.
- Faculty need to determine how many times a milestone course can be dropped and/or repeated before requiring a change of major. Faculty need to approve the map prior to distribution.

During the luncheon break, I had the opportunity to meet with the other 2 Georgia College representatives. Dr. Denard is in the process of creating an advisory committee of representatives from all colleges to provide insight regarding the development of GC maps. I have requested that she include a representative from the University Senate on this advisory committee.

Thank you for allowing me to serve University Senate in this capacity.