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Chair Owens, Ranking Member Wilson, and Members of the Subcommittee:

We all know that personalized attention is critical to student learning. The reality, though, is that historically higher education has done a poor job of delivering such personalized attention where it is most needed. Think about it for a moment. Year after year, students with the strongest academic credentials and the best financial resources are sent to elite colleges and universities with large endowments, small class sizes, and state-of-the-art facilities. Students with the weakest academic preparation and those from low-income backgrounds disproportionately attend community colleges and regional public universities—institutions often strapped for resources with large classes and overwhelmed staff. Is it any wonder that, as a nation, we have struggled to close the gap in post-secondary attainment between upper- and lower-income Americans?

For much of my 30-year career at Georgia State University, I lived this reality. Georgia State is one of the largest Minority Serving Institutions in the country. Among our 52,000 students, 78% are non-white, almost 60% are Pell-eligible, and about 80% work jobs while attending school. With a limited endowment and low tuition fees, Georgia State struggled for decades to provide students with the personalized supports they needed to succeed. For the first half of my career, Georgia State's graduation rate never rose much above 30%, and we were losing almost 6,000 students every year to attrition.

The last decade, though, has seen transformative innovations in the field of student success. Georgia State has led a vanguard of institutions leveraging big data, AI, CRMs, chatbots, and other technologies to level the playing field by delivering systematic, personalized supports to students at scale.

What does this look like in practice?

- Since 2012, Georgia State has used predictive analytics to monitor every student every day for 800 academic risk factors, with advisors reaching out to students proactively when an alert is triggered.ⁱ
- Since 2016, we have used an AI-enhanced texting platform to answer student questions, 24/7—coaching them through FAFSA completion and helping them connect with tutoring, counseling, and aid.ⁱⁱ

- Our largest institutional aid program, Panther Retention Grants, uses predictive data to identify students who are at risk of dropping out for financial reasons and awards them micro grants to keep them enrolled, no application required.ⁱⁱⁱ
- We're using data scraping tools to collect and share live career data about 170,000 Georgia State alumni with our first-year students, empowering them to make more informed decisions about and majors and careers.^{iv}

In other words, Georgia State has begun to deliver personalized attention to its students at scale. The collective impacts have been profound. Georgia State's graduation rate has increased by 70%, and we are graduating 3,500 more students annually than we were in 2010. Black, Hispanic, and low-income students are graduating at or above the rates of the student body overall.^v And Georgia State has become an engine of social mobility, ranking among the top institutions in the country for moving students out of poverty and into the upper half of American wage earners.^{vi}

The interventions not only work across student demographics; they also work across institutions. In 2016, Georgia State was consolidated with the largest community college in Georgia, and we began to customize the initiatives for the new setting. Since then, graduation rates at the Perimeter College have more than tripled, and equity gaps have closed. These same approaches have produced similar results at a wide range of institutions including Morgan State, UT San Antonio, Florida International, Towson, and Indian River State College, among others.

These data-informed approaches can be self-sustaining, even revenue generating, by helping institutions hold on to millions of dollars in tuition-and-fee revenues that previously were being hemorrhaged.^{vii} But just as importantly, they are helping to transform communities and their economies.

There are challenges. The technical expertise to implement these cutting-edge approaches is scarce among higher-ed leaders. In my capacity as Executive Director of the new National Institute for Student Success (NISS), my team and I work every day with dozens of other campuses, helping them adapt these new approaches to their institutional contexts and providing practitioner-led training for periods ranging from 6 months to 3 years.^{viii}

Another challenge is that we are mounting this work against historically fierce headwinds. Due to the impacts of the pandemic on student learning, many NISS partner institutions are seeing 20%-30% increases in failure rates in first-year college courses, with corresponding spikes in SAP issues. We are currently working with 9 institutions in the University Innovation Alliance to pilot a "sophomore" summer bridge program that works with rising college sophomores who have failed critical first-year courses, providing them with wrap-around, evidence-based supports as they re-take courses in the summer after the freshman year.

Finally, we need to find ways to make the new technologies fueling this work more accessible to even less well-resourced institutions. Many of the breakthroughs in the field of student success over the past decade spring from public-private partnerships. Georgia State was among the first clients of some of the key tech providers in the space—EAB, Mainstay, Steppingblocks—allowing us to make quick gains in technical capabilities that would have been impossible through in-house efforts alone.

The past decade has given us a roadmap for how higher ed can deliver personalized support to all students at scale. It's time to follow it.

Thank you. I look forward to answering your questions.

ⁱ [Approaching Student Success With Predictive Analytics \(gsu.edu\)](https://www.gsu.edu/learning-discovery/center-for-data-analytics/insights/2019/01/23/approaching-student-success-with-predictive-analytics)

ⁱⁱ [How Georgia State University Used an Algorithm to Help Students Navigate the Road to College \(hbr.org\)](https://hbr.org/2019/01/how-georgia-state-university-used-an-algorithm-to-help-students-navigate-the-road-to-college)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Panther Retention Grants | Georgia State Student Success Initiatives \(gsu.edu\)](https://www.gsu.edu/learning-discovery/center-for-data-analytics/insights/2019/01/23/panther-retention-grants)

^{iv} [Data-Driven Career Roadmaps | Taskforce on Higher Education and Opportunity](https://www.collegeboard.org/insights/data-driven-career-roadmaps) [College To Career | Georgia State Student Success Initiatives \(gsu.edu\)](https://www.collegeboard.org/insights/college-to-career)

^v [Georgia State Tackles Racial Disparities with Data-Driven Academic Support | EdTech Magazine](https://www.edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2019/01/georgia-state-tackles-racial-disparities-with-data-driven-academic-support)

^{vi} [Georgia State, Leading U.S. in Black Graduates, Is Engine of Social Mobility - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/23/us/politics/georgia-state-black-graduates-engine-social-mobility.html)

^{vii} [ROI Study: Panther Retention Grants – The National Institute for Student Success at Georgia State \(gsu.edu\)](https://www.gsu.edu/learning-discovery/center-for-data-analytics/insights/2019/01/23/roi-study-panther-retention-grants)

^{viii} [The National Institute for Student Success at Georgia State – The NISS helps colleges and universities identify and resolve institutional barriers to equity and college completion by increasing their capacity to implement proven student-success systems and data-driven interventions, and enact systemic change. \(gsu.edu\)](https://www.gsu.edu/learning-discovery/center-for-data-analytics/insights/2019/01/23/the-national-institute-for-student-success-at-georgia-state)