



2016 Governor's Honors Program Annual Report

By: Nnenna Ogbu

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Introduction

Created in 1963, the Georgia Governor’s Honors Program (GHP) is a four-week, residential summer program for gifted and talented, rising juniors and seniors in high school.ⁱ The program strives to offer instruction that is significantly different from the typical high school classroom, and that is designed to provide students with the academic, cultural, and social enrichment necessary to become the next generation of global critical thinkers, innovators, and leaders.

GHP provides selected gifted and talented high school students with a safe and challenging academic and social summer residential experience. At GHP, students attend classes in the mornings and afternoons in specific areas of study, which include communicative arts, engineering, mathematics, science, agricultural science, social studies, world languages, visual arts, and the performing arts. In the evenings, students participate in a wide variety of social and instructional opportunities. Housing and meals are provided by GHP to its students, faculty, staff, and residential advisors. The only expected costs for students are travel expenses to and from the interviews, a few basic supplies for classes and dorm rooms, and spending money as desired during the program.

Participation in GHP is highly competitive. From the roughly 3,000 students nominated for the program in 2016, 653 finalists were invited to participate after a state-level application and interview process. Finalists represented 77 out of 159 counties from across the state. Fifty-five percent of students invited to participate hailed from metro Atlanta public schools, while 35% were from non-metro Atlanta public schools, and 10% attended private schools or homeschool during the school year. The 2016 program was held at Valdosta State University from mid-June to mid-July.

Strategic Goals

As part of its ongoing program improvement, GHP adopted a series of strategic goals that align with the program’s mission and vision in 2015. The three-year and annual goals are outlined below in Table 1 and Table 2. The annual evaluation surveys given to students, faculty and staff, residential advisors, and coordinators

ⁱ <https://gosa.georgia.gov/frequently-asked-questions>

in summer 2016 serve as the data sources for each of the indicators below, unless otherwise noted.ⁱⁱ

Table 1: Three-Year Strategic Goals

Fiscal Year 2016-2018 Goals	2015 (Baseline)	2016	
		Did not present	Not Yet Met
1. GOSA staff will present at one national educational conference regarding GHP.	N/A	Did not present	Not Yet Met
2. 100% of student data will be housed in an online and secure database.	100%	100%	Met
3. 90% of students indicate, “My GHP instructors appropriately challenged me.”	91.5%	89.5%	Met
4. 90% of students indicate, “The GHP faculty was appropriately diverse.”	83.9%	88.1%	Not Yet Met
5. 95% of staff agree/strongly agree that GHP training appropriately trained them in gifted education and differentiation. ¹	No data	No data	N/A
Source: GHP Program Overview and Strategic Planning, 2016			
¹ Data for this goal are not currently being collected.			

In 2016, GHP met two of its five three-year strategic goals: storing student data in an online, secure database (Goal 2) and student perceptions that instructors appropriately challenged them (Goal 3).

Two other three-year strategic goals (Goals 1 and 4) were not yet met in 2016. GHP has not yet attended a national conference (Goal 1) but plans to present the program at a national conference by 2018. The program narrowly missed the strategic goal related to students’ perceptions of faculty diversity by two percentage points (Goal 4), but it showed improvement over 2015 by 4.2 percentage points. If this trend continues, GHP is on track to meet this goal by 2018.

Data for Goal 5, whether instructors agree that GHP’s training prepared them for gifted education and differentiation, was not collected during the 2016 program. Therefore, this goal could not be evaluated. The program will collect those data during the 2017 program.

ⁱⁱ Response rates for the student, faculty and staff, residential advisors, and coordinator surveys are 69%, 81%, 44%, and 53%, respectively.

Table 2: Annual GHP Strategic Goals

Yearly Goals	2015 (Baseline)	2016	
1. 90% of GHP faculty, staff, and residential advisors agree/strongly agree that spring pre-planning training was high-quality and useful. ¹	No data	No data	N/A
2. 85% of students in summer program agree/strongly agree, "I performed at a level higher than I usually do at my high school."	83.4%	78.0%	Not Met
3. 85% of students in summer program agree/strongly agree, "GHP coursework is more rigorous than what I normally experience."	63.3%	55.8%	Not Met
4. 90% of faculty, staff, and residential advisors agree/strongly agree, "The training that I received in June for GHP helped me throughout the duration of the program." ²	67.5%	67.7%	Not Met
5. 90% of students in summer program agree/strongly agree, "The Residence Life seminars and activities improved my GHP experience."	78.6%	78.4%	Not Met
6. 80% of system/independent school coordinators articulate timely and helpful communication regarding GHP nomination process. ³	No data	89.3%	Met
7. 80% of system/independent school coordinators articulate timely and useful communication regarding GHP state interview process. ³	No data	89.3%	Met
Source: GHP Program Overview and Strategic Planning, 2016			
¹ Data for this goal are not currently being collected.			
² Percentages in this category include responses from faculty, staff, and residential advisors.			
³ The GHP coordinator survey was first administered in 2016; therefore, no data exist for 2015.			

GHP met two of its seven yearly goals in 2016: district coordinators articulate timely and helpful communication regarding the GHP nomination process (Goal 6) and the state interview process (Goal 7).

The program did not meet its two goals related to students' perceptions of their own performance and the program's rigor relative to their high school experience (Goals 2 and 3). In fact, both measures decreased relative to 2015. More than three-fourths of students believe they perform at a higher level than in high school (Goal 2).

Additionally, though many students commented that they “learned a lot” during GHP, only 55.8% of all respondents believe that GHP is more rigorous than their high school experience (Goal 3), including 50% of all respondents in either Science or Agricultural Science.

Comments from Science and Agricultural Science majors suggest that these students, in particular, did not believe that their major was engaging or intellectually challenging. Part of the negative responses from Agricultural Science majors may be attributable to the limited materials and opportunities for practical experience available on the Valdosta State University campus. With the upcoming move to Berry College for the 2017 program, GHP will be able to provide significantly more opportunities for hands-on and engaging experiences for these students. With this in mind, the program should closely monitor 2017 Agricultural Science majors’ ratings and comments for evidence of improvement.

The program did not meet Goal 4, for 90% of faculty, staff, and residential advisors to feel that the training they received in June helped them throughout the duration of the program (Goal 4). Instead, only two-thirds of respondents agreed. Faculty and staff remarked that the pre-planning period, especially time they spent in teams, was best used preparing for students to arrive on campus. Four faculty and staff members cited specifically that the training was not useful to them because they have taught in GHP for a number of years.

For Goal 5, 78.4% of students believed that residence life seminars and activities improved their GHP experience, short of the 90% goal. In their comments, some students liked the seminars and made requests for speakers in specific genres (e.g., origami or high-level state representatives). Other students, however, did not like the seminars at all and were particularly dissatisfied with the seminars being mandatory.

Next Steps

The selection and planning processes for the 2017 GHP cohort of students are currently underway. One of the most significant changes to the program for 2017 is the relocation from Valdosta State University to Berry College in Rome. This opportunity for a new host site arose during the 2013-2014 strategic planning process, which was facilitated by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. Colleges and universities from across the state expressed interest in hosting GHP on their respective campuses. In the spring of 2015, GOSA staff began inviting interested colleges and universities to submit proposals to host the summer residential program. After a year-long evaluation of several proposals, Berry College was

selected to host GHP because of the college's ability to provide appropriate academic and residential space, modern resources, and its strong commitment to partnership in support of the program's continued advancement. The 2017 program is scheduled for June 18 to July 15.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱⁱ A full timeline for the 2017 program, from initial communications to the last day of the summer session, is available online at the GHP website:
https://gosa.georgia.gov/sites/gosa.georgia.gov/files/Governors_Honors_Program/GHP_2016-2017/GHP%202017%20Timeline%20Revised%2010-19-16.pdf.