



## **Capturing the Whole Story: Expanding Metrics [*Beyond the Numbers*] to Strengthen the Graduate Student Success Ecosystems**

**Conference of Southern Graduate Schools  
February 20, 2026**



## Presentation Flow:

- Welcome, Introductions, & Overviews
- Who's in the Room?
- Graduate Student Success Metrics...So What?
- Introduction to Ecosystems Buckets
- Ecosystems Buckets Activity
- Reflections & Questions



# Welcome, Introductions, & Overviews

## Your Presenters & Colleagues



**NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL  
AND TECHNICAL STATE UNIVERSITY**  
*THE GRADUATE COLLEGE* **INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION.  
ADVANCED KNOWLEDGE.**



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**UNIVERSITY OF  
GEORGIA**  
Graduate School



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# NORTH CAROLINA A&T STATE UNIVERSITY

## PUBLIC

Land Grant; HBCU

## 4-YEAR

NUMBER OF COLLEGES/SCHOOLS: 9

## RESEARCH 2

HIGH RESEARCH ACTIVITY

AS OF SPRING 2026

**TOTAL  
ENROLLMENT**

**14,420**

**GRADUATE STUDENT ENROLLMENT:  
1,891**

BREAKDOWN:

MASTERS: 1,245

DOCTORAL: 646

## PROGRAM BREAKDOWNS

MASTERS: 34

DOCTORAL: 14

CERTIFICATE: 27

ONLINE DEGREES &

CERTIFICATES: 28

## GRADUATE COLLEGE STAFF

NUMBER OF STAFF: 14

DIVISIONS INCLUDE: Academic Affairs (Graduate Writing Services, Graduate Records), Enrollment Management (Admissions, Marketing, Recruiting), Student Engagement, Business and Finance



# UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

## PUBLIC

FLAGSHIP, LAND- AND SEA-GRANT

## 4-YEAR

NUMBER OF COLLEGES/SCHOOLS: 18

## RESEARCH 1

VERY HIGH RESEARCH ACTIVITY

AS OF SPRING 2025

**TOTAL  
ENROLLMENT**

**43,887**

## GRADUATE STUDENT ENROLLMENT:

**9,354**

### BREAKDOWN:

MASTERS: 5,293

DOCTORAL: 3,576

## PROGRAM BREAKDOWNS

MASTERS: 155+

DOCTORAL: 90+

CERTIFICATE: 75+

ONLINE DEGREES &

CERTIFICATES: 35+

## GRADUATE COLLEGE STAFF

NUMBER OF STAFF: 35

DIVISIONS INCLUDE: OFFICE OF THE DEAN, AWARDS/FELLOWSHIPS/SCHOLARSHIPS, DEVELOPMENT, ENROLLED STUDENT SERVICES, ADMISSIONS, BUSINESS OFFICE, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND DATA ANALYTICS, INTERDISCIPLINARY GRADUATE STUDIES, STUDENT SUCCESS AND WELLBEING



**UNIVERSITY OF  
GEORGIA**

**Graduate School**

## Learning Outcomes

- Discuss challenges in collecting, standardizing, and reporting graduate student success metrics
- Examine the complexity of graduate student success by identifying gaps in commonly used metrics
- Explore how commonly used measures may fail to capture the full graduate student experience
- Identify best practices for capturing both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of student success
- Return to home institution with broader set of metrics better prepared to monitor our graduate success ecosystems



# Who's in the Room?



# Graduate Student Success Metrics...So What?

## Graduate Student Success Metrics...So What?

- Traditional metrics often fall short in capturing the complexity of graduate student success, focusing narrowly on completion rates or time-to-degree.
- We gather together to look *beyond the numbers* to consider the broader ecosystem of the full graduate student experience.
- We posit by examining the challenges and gaps in current metrics and exploring best practices that balance quantitative and qualitative dimensions:
  - We can strengthen our capacity to create policies and strategies that reflect the full graduate experience.
  - We can return to our institutions with a more robust set of tools to monitor and strengthen our graduate success ecosystem.
  - We as graduate schools can better tell our stories; for alumni, legislatures, donors, etc.
- The lofty (*and hopefully shared*) vision is a more adaptive, resilient graduate success ecosystem that supports continuous improvement and cultivates endurance for student success.

## Graduate Student Success Metrics...Connection to Student Success

- Graduate student success is now a focus (“buzzword”)
- Limited or unknown tools to measure metrics at the graduate level
- Tools used to measure undergraduate student success don’t necessarily translate to the graduate level

What Does *Graduate* Student Success Look Like?

- Solely academic performance/achievement
- Inclusion of outside of the classroom experiences (the cocurricular)
  - **Difference between surviving and thriving\***

## Graduate Student Success Metrics...Connection to Student Success

We posit:

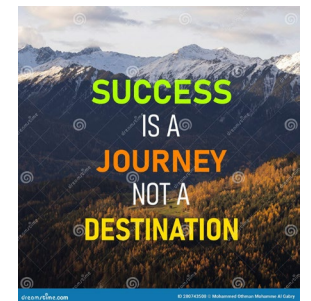
- The goal should be a **THRIVING** graduate student experience
- It is time to:
  - Look at student success comprehensively and holistically
  - Reexamine the “Academy” and its practices
  - Use the above outcomes to make adjustments and improve the graduate student journey
- Graduate Student Journey = the **IN** -> the **THROUGH** -> the **EXIT**
  - Traditional metrics count the exit
  - **HOW** they exit should be a greater focus



the **IN** ->



the **THROUGH** ->



the **EXIT**



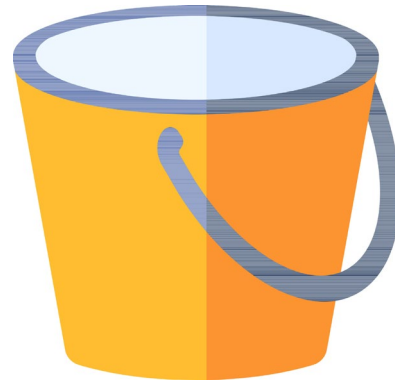
# Introduction to Ecosystems *Buckets*

## Ecosystems Buckets

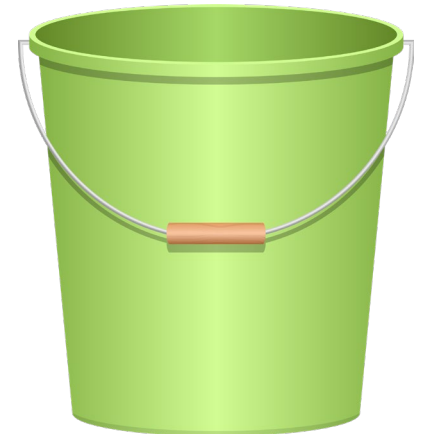
- What are they?
  - You cannot measure what you do not define!
  - How do you measure once defined?



Enrollment & Retention  
Traditional Metric  
Quantitative  
(academic affairs dimension)



Engagement & Belonging  
*"Peak a boo"* Metric  
Qualitative & Quantitative  
(student affairs dimension)



Thriving & Wellness  
*"Say What Now"* Metric  
Qualitative & Quantitative  
(newest dimension)

## Ecosystems Buckets



Enrollment & Retention

Traditional Metric

Quantitative

(academic affairs dimension)

- *What are the metrics?*
  - Time to degree
  - Retention (1 Year, 3 Year)
  - Enrollment (degree type, new, continuing)
    - In State vs. Out of State
    - Online vs. On Campus
  - Graduation Rate
  - New Graduate Programs
- *Who defines these metrics?*
  - Currently...University Systems and the Academy
- *How do you measure the metrics once defined?*
  - *Data Reports from Institutional Research and CSGS (general survey)*
- *Any others?*

## Ecosystems Buckets



- *What are the metrics?*
  - Population (degree level, modality, program, gender, first-gen, etc.)
  - Quality of Support (financial, library, lab/clinical/physical facilities, grad college, career services, counseling services, writing center)
  - Experience
    - Satisfaction
      - **Umbrella (academic, student life, overall)**
      - Categories (training, professional development, social, mental health, career guidance/prep, level of funding)
    - Housing
      - Current housing
      - Challenges (qualitative themes)
        - No options, length of leases, roommates, timing of academic offer related to finding/securing, cost, proximity to campus
      - Measuring Interest (on-campus)
    - Qualitative Themes
      - Points of Aggie Pride
      - Complaints/Recommendations for improvement
  - **Recommendation to others** (agree, disagree, neutral)

### Engagement & Belonging

“Peak a boo” Metric

Qualitative & Quantitative  
(student affairs dimension)

## Ecosystems Buckets



- *Who defines these metrics?*
  - Graduate College Leadership, self (based on experience brought to position)
  - Seeing increased involvement by
    - Institution's Assessment beginning to define; especially as part of accreditation renewals
    - Legislatures
    - Stakeholders
- *How do you measure the metrics once defined?*
  - Surveys, focus groups, **individual stories**
- *Any others?*

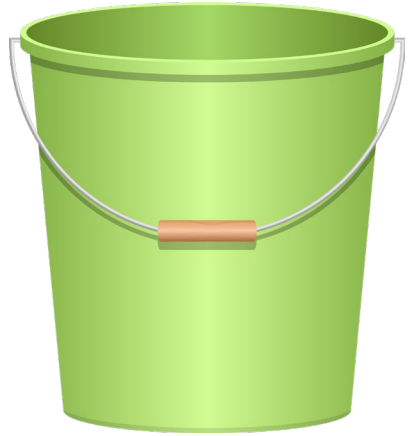
Engagement & Belonging

“Peak a boo” Metric

Qualitative & Quantitative  
(student affairs dimension)



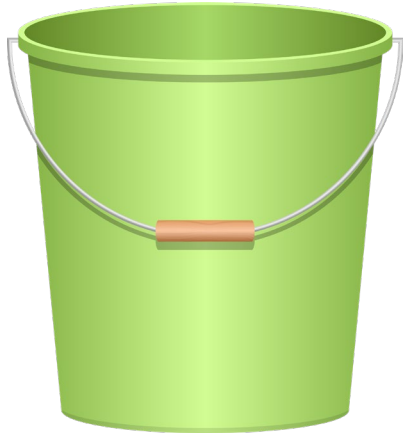
## Ecosystems Buckets



- *What are the metrics?*
  - Still evolving
- *Who defines these metrics?*
  - Still evolving
- *How do you measure the metrics once defined? There's the rub!*
  - **Thriving** and **Wellbeing** are COMPLEX concepts
  - “**Success**” doesn’t have a standard definition *and* will vary depending on the individual

Thriving & Wellness  
“Say What Now” Metric  
Qualitative & Quantitative  
(newest dimension)

## Ecosystems Buckets • *So... Where do we start?*



Thriving & Wellness

*"Say What Now"* Metric

Qualitative & Quantitative

(newest dimension)

- National-level Standardized Surveys:
  - General: Student Experience in the Research University (SERU; UC Berkeley)
  - Profession-wide: CGS/ETS Graduate Enrollment and Degrees
  - Discipline-specific: NSF Survey of Graduate Students and Postdoctorates in Science and Engineering
  - Level/Degree-specific: The Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED)
  - State-wide: University of California Graduate Student Experience Survey (UCGSES)
- University-wide Survey:
  - College/School Level
  - Program-level
  - Timing
- Local-level: Events / Workshops
  - Attendance
  - Registrations
  - Feedback form (sample questions)
    - Did you learn something you wish to apply?
    - What is your preferred mode of engagement? (F2F, Hybrid, Virtual)



# **Ecosystems *Buckets* Activity**

## Ecosystems Buckets-Round Table Discussion

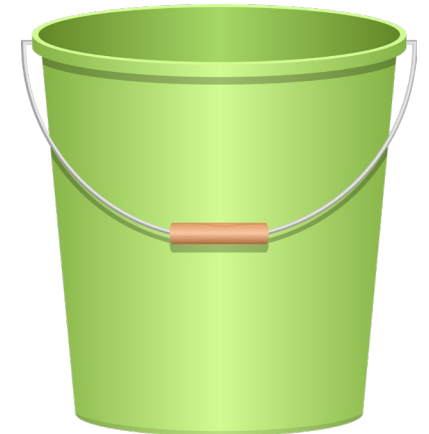
- Join your preferred Bucket Discussion Group
- Discussion prompts (to be answered from each bucket's lens)
- Report out and Discover



Enrollment & Retention  
Traditional Metric



Engagement & Belonging  
“Peak a boo” Metric



Thriving & Wellness  
“Say What Now” Metric



## Ecosystems Buckets-Round Table Discussion

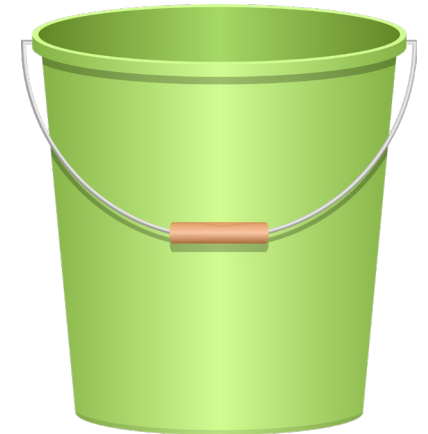
1. What are your Unit's/Institution's student success metrics (if any)?
2. Who defined these metrics? What was the intended purpose for selecting/defining these metrics?
3. Are these metrics helping you towards your strategic goal(s)?
4. Given what we discussed here today,
  - a. Do you feel that your metrics are inclusive of the student success spectrum?
  - b. Do you feel your metrics are culturally responsive based on your student population?



Enrollment & Retention  
Traditional Metric



Engagement & Belonging  
"Peak a boo" Metric



Thriving & Wellness  
"Say What Now" Metric



# Reflections & Questions



## Reflection

- Take a moment to develop at least one actional strategy to reframe graduate students success metrics at your home institution/unit
- How do we keep the momentum going as colleagues with shared purpose and vision?



# Questions???



# Thank You for Joining Us!!!



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