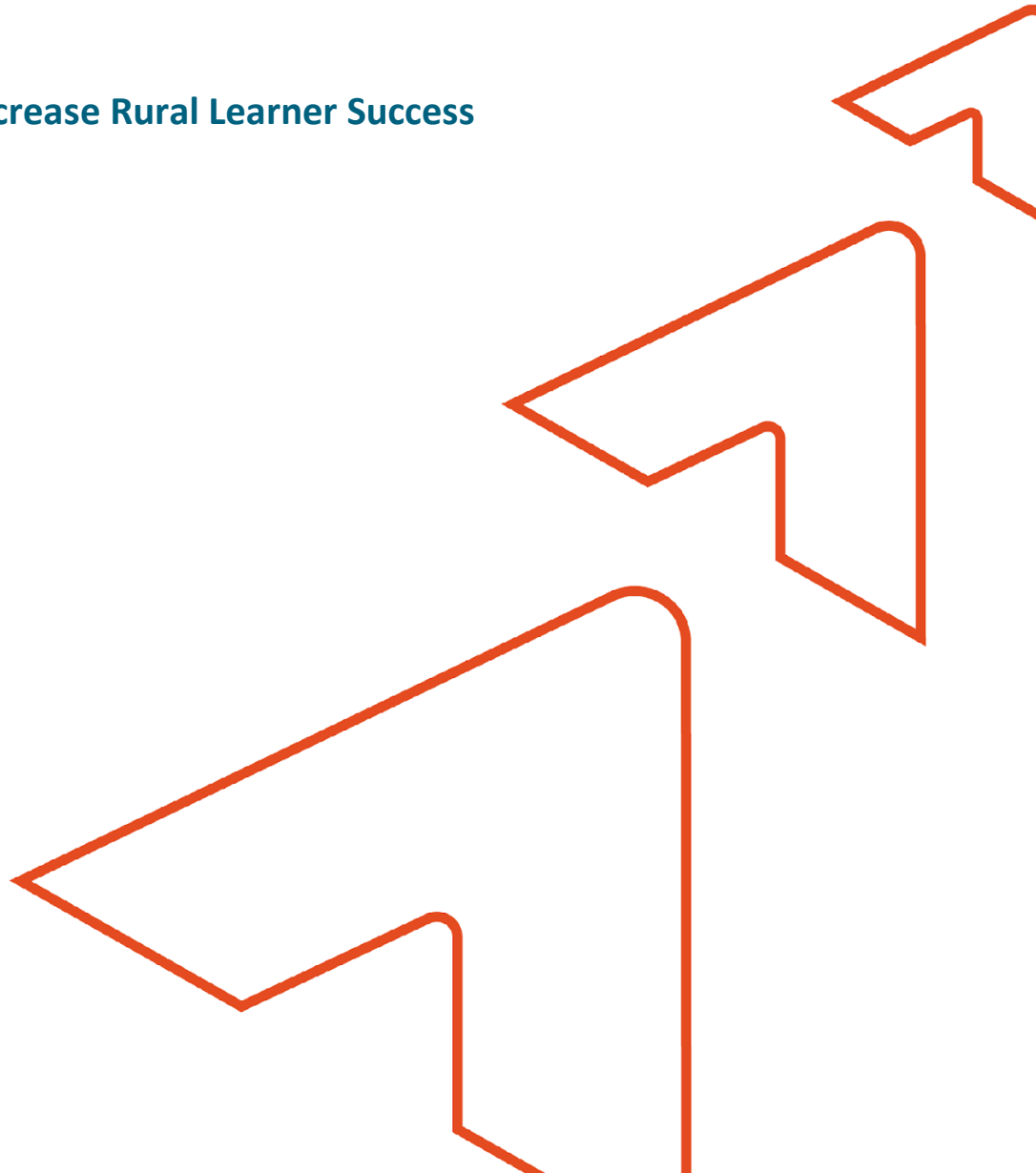


Project Summary

Expanding College Access for Rural and Underserved People in Georgia

Building Evidence to Increase Rural Learner Success



Expanding College Access for Rural and Underserved People in Georgia

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Young people in rural areas enroll in and complete postsecondary programs at lower rates, in part because they face long travel distances and limited course offerings. The Technical College System of Georgia's eCampus initiative aims to close these gaps by giving students online access to courses and programs across all institutions in the system.

Our study used mixed methods to assess early impacts on course access, eCampus participation, and student outcomes, as well as student and instructor experiences. We analyzed student-level data from all 22 TCSG colleges (Fall 2020–Summer 2024) and conducted interviews with 10 instructors and 37 eCampus students, with particular attention to rural colleges and rural learners.

– Georgia State University

Project Overview

The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) implemented the eCampus initiative, which has extended course offerings traditionally available for rural learners by providing access to online courses in other TCSG institutions outside students' home campuses. This project examined the impact of the eCampus initiative on rural learners' access to courses, course and program enrollments, and course performance and academic success. Through qualitative interviewing, it also examined students' experiences taking eCampus courses and instructors' experiences teaching those courses.

Research Objectives Achieved

1. Assessed the impact of eCampus course and program availability on academic outcomes for rural learners.
2. Compared outcomes for rural learners enrolled in eCampus courses with those in other online and in-person courses.
3. Analyzed differences in outcomes between rural and nonrural learners associated with eCampus participation.
4. Examined features of the eCampus implementation, characteristics of instruction, the availability of technological and instructional supports, student success services at local campuses, aspects of students' experiences, and characteristics of students' local contexts (e.g., broadband availability) that contributed to differential impacts of eCampus for rural learners.

Research Methodology

This project utilized a mixed-methods approach to better understand the impact of the eCampus initiative on rural college students' learning opportunities and outcomes. The quantitative impact analyses used student-level administrative records for technical college students in TCSG institutions to compare course-specific outcomes, term-by-term outcomes, and credential-earning for students in eCampus courses as compared with other

students. The team also collected and analyzed qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with students and instructors of eCampus courses.

Key Findings

- The number of eCampus courses and enrollments across TCSG have grown over time but have remained modest. The average number of eCampus courses available each term at each college grew from 4.9 in academic year (AY) 2022 to 7.3 in AY 2024. Enrollments in eCampus courses have generally accounted for less than 1% of all course enrollments. Course availability and enrollments have been lower at colleges with rural main campuses and among rural learners.
- Enrollments in eCampus courses are higher at colleges that offer more eCampus courses. Lower rates of eCampus enrollments among rural students appear to be attributable to the reduced availability of eCampus courses at their colleges.
- Instructors of eCampus courses are relatively experienced and use a variety of methods and strategies to engage students. Instructors observed that eCampus expands access to courses and broadens faculty perspectives by increasing the diversity of students that they teach. However, instructors noted challenges teaching students at colleges other than their own, including limited student–faculty connection, differences in institutional policies and infrastructure, and difficulty accessing student information.
- Students in eCampus courses are less likely to complete or pass their courses and have lower grades than students in other online courses or students in face-to-face courses. The disparities are larger for eCampus courses taken across campuses and for rural students. However, students who take eCampus courses attempt more credit hours, earn more credits, and earn associate’s degrees at higher rates than students without eCampus experiences. Outcomes were generally more favorable when students enrolled in eCampus courses at their host institutions rather than non-host institutions.

Implications and Recommendations for Policy and Practice

- Offering a wide range of eCampus courses could support higher enrollment and retention among all students, especially among those in rural areas. Offering eCampus courses may also help address faculty shortages in rural areas.
- The limited availability of eCampus courses suggests that steps could be taken to increase the number of courses available through eCampus. A key administrative barrier is that colleges currently must take an active step to accept each course and make it available to students. Removing or lowering this barrier could increase the availability of courses. Additional incentives may also be needed to encourage instructors and colleges to offer courses.
- Better training for instructors, clearer communication with other colleges, and integration of an eCampus learning management system with the colleges’ own systems could improve eCampus experiences for students and faculty.
- Given the higher eCampus participation rates among some groups—including older students, Pell grant recipients, transfer students, and students residing in counties with high unemployment—partnering with institutions and degree programs most popular with these student groups could support eCampus expansion in a manner targeted to students most likely to enroll.
- Closer examination is needed of the associations of eCampus courses with negative course and term outcomes.

Resources

For more information on this project, please see:

- [Project website](#)
- [eCampus Course Offerings and Enrollments in the Technical College System of Georgia: How Well Does eCampus Serve Rural Students?](#) (2026)
- [Student Experiences in the Technical College System of Georgia's eCampus Initiative](#) (2026)
- [Instructors' Experiences in the Technical College System of Georgia's eCampus Initiative](#) (2025)