



Complete College Ohio

**University of Cincinnati
College Completion Plan**

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University of Cincinnati College Completion Plan

**Approved by the UC Board of Trustees
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I. Executive Summary

University of Cincinnati

College Completion Plan

Executive Summary

For more than a decade, the University of Cincinnati (UC) has focused on an aggressive expansion of its student success initiatives within the framework of a high-quality education. Since 2002, UC has significantly increased student success, demonstrated by a 12.6% increase in student retention for first-time, full-time students and a 15.6% increase in 6-yr. graduation rates. The University (main campus) has earned recognition for its distinct programs that enhance student retention and completion and has been nationally acknowledged as number one for best educational value. UC's two regional campuses serve an important role in providing access to higher education, and, while strongly committed to student success and completion, these colleges with open admission face additional challenges in improving retention and completion rates.

The development and execution of this Campus Completion Plan provides an excellent opportunity for the University of Cincinnati to refine existing strategies and to develop new initiatives to increase timely degree attainment and rates of completion. With this purpose, a task force of 17 faculty, staff, students and administrators from the three UC campuses was charged in December 2013 to develop this plan.

Completion Goals

The university will build upon the UC Academic Master Plan, "UC2019," and the currently emerging 15-year vision, "Creating Our Third Century," which outline specific retention, graduation, and time-to-degree goals to attain by 2019. For the Campus Completion Plan, we have adjusted these goals for the two-year timeframe. By 2016, we will increase the current retention rates (84.6% baccalaureate and 58.3% associate) and graduation rates (63.6% baccalaureate and 22% associate) each by 1% per year.

Strategies to Accomplish the Goals

To accomplish these goals, we identified 16 current and proposed strategies under the overall goal to "Advance a Culture of Success" on the main and regional campuses. Within three groupings—(1) Advising and Technology, (2) Financial Support and Literacy, and (3) Curriculum and Culture—we identify the current strategies to be enhanced and new strategies to be implemented. In addition, the signature initiative in each group is a "big idea" that brings together many of the smaller strategies proposed within a section and is one that will require significant cross-unit planning and resources.

1. Advising and Technology

UC's goal of providing high-quality, personalized academic advising to all students is expected to significantly improve completion rates. While many best practices already exist, enhancements to advising include the following:

- appropriate student-to-advisor ratios
- intrusive, outreach-oriented advising for all students
- expanded advisor training
- specialized advising for major selection and transition pathways
- new technologies to improve documentation and tracking of student progress
- implementation of a university-wide early warning system.

The signature initiative is “The UC Graduation Promise,” which is both a communication strategy and pact with students that outlines specific steps required to be on-track for timely graduation.

2. Financial Support and Literacy

Unmet financial need of undergraduate students and affordability issues are the greatest impediments to student retention and degree completion. To address these, fundraising activities are underway for increasing need-based scholarships. A textbook affordability committee is investigating and promoting cost-reduction strategies. The university will create a comprehensive financial aid literacy initiative that involves education and coordinated messaging to staff, faculty, and students.

The signature initiative is to create a Financial Literacy Coalition that will engage separate university offices in collaboration to offer financial counseling, coaching, and literacy education for all students.

3. Curriculum and Culture

Curricular enhancements will address key gateway courses, particularly math and STEM courses, and those with the highest rates of D, F and W grades (DFW rates.) New assessments and review of required course placements will enable program modifications where needed. Posting mid-term grades and expanding the use of mid-term course evaluations will address student success at the course level. Full implementation of UC’s Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Task Force recommendations will increase the award of alternative forms of earned credit and advanced standing, moving students more efficiently to degree completion.

UC’s student life and academic community, based upon a commitment of “inclusion of all,” is well positioned to advance a culture of success. Building on the existing offerings, the university will promote inclusion through virtual communities and strategic messaging. UC’s award-winning and highly successful Learning Communities program will be expanded, both to provide more available seats and to include colleges not currently participating.

The signature initiative is the creation of a Center for Student Success that will align academic resources to help all students integrate their academic and career planning, their coursework and learning, and their curricular and co-curricular student experiences from admission to graduation.

Further Investigation

The task force identified other strategies that require further investigation. One recommendation is to expand student learning portfolios so that this practice becomes a signature of the UC undergraduate experience. More study is needed to determine the various initiatives, student behaviors, and university policies that affect student completion, along with the potential benefits of investing in a comprehensive data analytics system to support our commitment to student success.

II. Introduction

*University Mission, Barriers to Persistence and Completion Goals
UC Recognition for Student Success and Quality Education
Advancing the Culture of Success
Guiding Principles*

The University of Cincinnati has long been focused on providing students with quality educational experiences that result in the awarding of degrees and certificates. There is in place an established suite of strategies and services designed to enhance student retention and success, and the commitment to providing such services, paired with UC's growth in retention and graduation of students over the past 12 years, are testaments to this. At present, UC graduates 63.6% of our first-time, full-time baccalaureate students and an additional 15.5% transfer to other colleges and universities. Legislation included in H.B. 59 allows us to look more closely at our opportunities to refine current strategies and pursue innovative approaches to further ensure timely degree attainment and increased rates of completion.

A task force of 17 faculty, staff, students and administrators (see Appendix B) was charged in December 2013 to provide UC's "Campus Completion Plan." To fully accomplish this plan, we will build upon the UC Academic Master Plan, "UC2019," and the currently emerging 15-year vision, "Creating Our Third Century," which outline specific retention, graduation, and time-to-degree goals for 2019. For the Campus Completion Plan, we have adjusted these goals for a two-year timeframe. By 2016, we will increase the current retention rates (84.6% baccalaureate and 58.3% associate) and graduation rates (63.6% baccalaureate and 22% associate) by 1% per year. In addition to focusing on the campus completion plan requested by the state, the task force also provided three "big ideas" called "Signature Initiatives" that can move the dial on UC student completion.

University Mission, Barriers to Persistence, and Completion Goals

University of Cincinnati Mission

Most of the 42,600 students who enrolled at the University of Cincinnati this year did so with the intent to graduate. As a major, urban research university with a medical school, professional schools, and two regional two-year campuses, we are positioned to provide an accessible educational environment embedded in exceptional and unique learning opportunities. Our mission is:

The University of Cincinnati serves the people of Ohio, the nation, and the world as a premier, public, urban research university dedicated to undergraduate, graduate, and professional education, experience-based learning, and research. We are committed to excellence and diversity in our students, faculty, staff, and all of our activities. We provide an inclusive environment where innovation and freedom of intellectual inquiry flourish. Through scholarship, service, partnerships, and leadership, we create opportunity, develop educated and engaged citizens, enhance the economy, and enrich our University, city, state, and global community.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of the university is our student body profile. We are attracting increasing numbers of National Merit Scholars and international students. Few research-extensive national universities also enroll such high percentages of both Pell-eligible and first generation students, whose college persistence and completion rates are generally far lower than other students.

Many of these students find access to higher education through UC's two regional colleges, which admit any student with a high school diploma or GED. Serving nearly 10,000 students from diverse backgrounds and with varied levels of preparedness, the regional colleges create life-changing opportunities for students who often face particular challenges in acclimating to the rigors of college or in managing life issues while pursuing their educational dreams. With small class sizes, dedicated faculty, and support mechanisms in place, the regional colleges serve a major role in preparing students directly for the workforce or for providing clear pathways from the associate degrees into the third year of UC's baccalaureate programs. While presenting challenges to overall retention and completion rates, this access mission is an important and highly worthy endeavor of the university.

Barriers to Persistence and Completion

The U.S. Department of Education's College Affordability and Transparency Center issues a College Scorecard on public higher education institutions (see Appendix C.) This tool allows students and parents to see comparisons across universities to assess college affordability. Scorecards for the University of Cincinnati can be found by campus:

[University of Cincinnati – Main Campus](#)

[University of Cincinnati – Clermont College](#)
[University of Cincinnati – UC Blue Ash](#)

Based on institutional type, UC's main campus is reflected in the "medium" range for costs and the "high" range for graduation rates. UC's regional colleges are in the "medium" range for costs, but in the "low" range for graduation rates. Student loan default rates are at 8.9% versus the national average of 13.4%. Median borrowing for undergraduate study is displayed at the low end of the "medium" category.

This demonstrates that the relative value of a degree earned at the University of Cincinnati is very high as compared to the costs. In fact, an article issued by PolicyMic.com in August of 2013, which was based upon the Department of Education's Transparency initiative, ranked UC as having the highest educational value in the nation: ["Top 12 Colleges Where Students Get the Best Bang for the Buck".](#)

However, the key student profile and campus context factors that continue to most impede persistence and completion of UC students remain significant. They include: unmet financial need, Pell-eligibility status, first generation status, and under-preparedness in math.

Unmet Financial Need

As of 2013-14, undergraduate students' unmet financial need based on total costs of attendance (or total budget) at UC is an overwhelming 250.6 million dollar total for nearly 19,000 students. This includes costs of tuition, fees, room and board, books and supplies, and miscellaneous expenses. At UC, this sum has increased by 65.8% in the past six years. This number is important because it reflects the full costs associated with the ability to continue and complete a degree.

Students' unmet financial need based only on UC tuition and fees, however, is a much smaller sum: \$5.6 million. This sum accounts for 1,472 students, which is 6.4% of the students who filed a FAFSA (see Appendix D.) This total has actually reduced over the course of a six-year period by 0.4% and is the lowest that it has been since before the 2008-09 academic year.

Pell-Eligibility Status

The percentage of students who are eligible to receive federal Pell grants is significant. At 32.8%, this rate is unusually high for a research-extensive, national university. Beyond students' often compromised ability to pay for higher education, many of these students are helping to manage heavy financial and personal demands within their low-income families as well. The associated impacts to student success are often based on the financial issues, but also include personal challenges and work demands that may require additional student support.

First Generation Status

UC has become known as a leader in support of first generation students. With more than 24% (a low estimate) of our students coming from families whose

parents did not attend college, there are special challenges in helping to educate a student whose personal supports are not familiar with the college environment or how to most effectively support a college student. UC's [Gen-1 Theme House](#) has received national attention and awards for the success of the program to overcome some of these obstacles and help students to succeed. However, the program is small and expensive. More scalable means of supporting these students must be employed to support the university's enrollment of this high-need population.

Math Under-preparedness

Of the 31.2% of UC undergraduates who need remedial education, almost all need it in mathematics. Curricular innovation and support to help students become college-ready and succeed in math as quickly as possible is necessary. Math is the most significant curricular barrier that impedes positive degree progression and graduation. It is also the most significant factor in limiting student ability to choose an otherwise desired course of study.

Completion Goals for 2014-2016

The UC Academic Master Plan UC2019 and the currently emerging 15-year vision, Creating Our Third Century, have outlined specific goals that we aspire to achieve in student retention, progression and graduation. The university's shared vision places "students and learning at the center."

UC2019 Academic Master Plan and Creating Our Third Century goals to accomplish by 2019 include:

- Raise retention rate to 90% for baccalaureate and 70% for associate's
- Raise graduation rate to 75% for baccalaureate and 50% for associate's
- Raise graduation rate for Black and African-American students to meet university goal of 75%
- Improve time-to-degree measures by 10% for graduate students and undergraduates in non-coop required programs

Adjusted goals for the Campus Completion Plan two-year timeframe include increasing the current retention rates (84.6% baccalaureate and 58.3% associate) and graduation rates (63.6% baccalaureate and 22% associate) by 1% per year towards 2016. These goals will be assessed and evaluated through standardized reporting for retention and graduation by campus from UC's Office of Institutional Research.

Emerging goals in Creating Our Third Century as currently proposed include:

- Create a Center for Student Success
- "Right-sizing" our enrollment to 47,000 students (9% increase)
- Scholarships to attract and retain competitive, diverse students
- Curricula and experiences to increase cultural competence and career pathways
- Expanded co-op, experiential, and interdisciplinary learning
- Enhanced diversity via increases in under-represented minority (URM), international and out-of-state students

UC Recognition for Student Success and Quality Education

For more than a decade, the University of Cincinnati (UC) has been focused on aggressive development of its student success initiatives within the framework of a high-quality education. Since 2002, there has been a significant increase in student success including a sharp rise in first-time, full-time student retention from 72% to 84.6% and increased graduation rate from 48% to 63.6%.

In line with this 12.6% increase in student retention and 15.6% increase in graduation rates, the University has earned the following recognition of our commitment to educational quality and success:

1. Listed as #1 nationally for return on educational investment: "[Top 12 Colleges Where Students Get the Best Bang for the Buck](#)" (policymic.com, 8/26/13). This article was based specifically on the measures being advanced by the U.S. Department of Education for college completion.
2. Public University of the Year (The Washington Center, 2013).
3. Top tier of The Country's Best National Universities (U.S. News and World Report, 2013).
4. Received the inaugural award from the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (AAPLU) as the overall Economic Development and Innovation University (2013).
5. Top 13 Colleges with the Best Internship or Co-op Opportunities (U.S. News and World Report, 2013).
6. Listed third among "Up and Coming Schools" (U.S. News and World Report, 2013).
7. Recipient of the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award (Insight Into Diversity, 2013.)
8. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data reflects that students are more satisfied with academic advising at UC than other large, Ohio 4-yr. publics and our identified peer institutions.
9. UC's Center for Exploratory Studies was published as an exemplary practice for undecided students in the National Academic Advising Association monograph, *Advising Special Populations* (2007).
10. UC's Gen-1 Theme House has been highlighted in national news outlets including the New York Times, NBC Nightly News, Inside Higher Ed, and USA Today for its innovations in supporting first generation college students.
11. Cited in Vincent Tinto's recent book *Completing College: Rethinking Institutional Action* (2012) for quality practices in our work with underprepared students.

Advancing the Culture of Success

Consistent messages around high expectations for success as well as engaged and supportive faculty and administrators create a university environment in which students can thrive academically and develop the core foundational skills that lead to persistence and graduation.

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) cited “attentive leadership” and “focus on the individual student” as the “two important characteristics that create and define” institutional cultures of success (“Promoting a Culture of Student Success,” April 2010.) Implementation of a coordinated, university-wide “Culture of Success” initiative for the University of Cincinnati would include several specific changes to university policy, structure, marketing, and resourcing. Critical to the implementation of this university-wide initiative are shared partnership between student-centric faculty, professional staff and administrators, and well-informed students. The key components of this philosophical approach are summarized below:

“Timely Graduation” or “Stay on Track” Messaging

UC marketing experts would develop a campaign to be expansive and encompass associate and four- and five-year baccalaureate degree programs with recommendations of faculty, advisors and student support personnel reinforcing behaviors and strategies that promote timely degree completion and graduation.

Faculty and Administrator Commitment to Completion

Faculty and staff at all levels of leadership should consistently communicate their commitment to student success and degree completion, congruent with maintaining standards of academic excellence, both outwardly and in the allocation of resources and policy decisions. Important stakeholders of this “culture of success for students” initiative should include everyone from the Provost and senior leadership through faculty and front-line professional staff.

Inclusive Best Practices and Messages

Programs and messages that resonate with targeted populations at-risk for stopping out or not completing such as students from regional campuses, exploratory students, veterans, commuter students, students with disabilities, first generation students and under-represented minorities.

We anticipate that many pervasive and less structured shifts in culture should also occur as a result of the 16 discrete strategies and three signature initiatives proposed in the remainder of this document.

Guiding Principles

There are several principles that must guide our decision-making as we plan university activities and allocate resources to further foster an environment of college completion. These principles will provide a sound framework to ensure the integrity of our efforts.

Students at the Center

The student-centered university is an environment that fosters the success of a diverse body of individual students and provides them with an actively responsible role in their successes. In this environment, faculty provide student-centered resources and instruction to maximize learning outcomes. We will seek and establish best practices in our application of university-level protocols, as well as being appropriately responsive to the needs and challenges of our students as individuals.

Strategic Leadership

The efforts associated with UC's college completion goals must be strategically planned and wisely led. This includes an invested senior leadership team, thorough consideration of effective organizational structures and communications, empowerment of faculty and staff, and careful programmatic design to elicit specific educational outcomes. Alignment of university resources, unified services, streamlining and coordination are a priority when of benefit to students.

Sustainability

We must establish and maintain adequate administrative infrastructure to deploy the university's expanding college completion initiatives in a sustainable manner. Organizational alignment, prioritization and technology can help to accomplish this to some degree. Across the university and centrally, personnel time will be demanded in new ways to build systems, provide services, and maintain operations associated with student academic records, analysis, and degree progression.

Cutting Edge Innovation

We will advance the university's existing cutting edge innovations in student success and experiential learning to further permeate our institutional efforts. We will also continue to actively investigate and develop new models and technological applications that increase college completion and success in employment and life after college. UC aspires to be a first-choice destination for students, faculty and staff.

Ethics & Educational Quality

UC will enrich the educational environment by reinforcing quality and diversity of the student body in our admission practices, student engagement and satisfaction, strategically targeted enrollment growth, and enhanced retention and graduation rates. We will ensure that our approach to student success enhances student access and continues to reinforce the high quality of a degree earned at the University of Cincinnati.

III. Strategic Practices & Initiatives

*Advising and Technology
Financial Support and Literacy
Curriculum and Culture
Conclusion*

Advising and Technology

Existing Strategies

Strategy 1: Provide Robust, High-Quality, Personalized Academic Advising

Current standing: All UC colleges provide academic advising support, but the level of support varies considerably from passive to robust and “intrusive” or outreach-based. This inconsistency has resulted in some UC advising programs receiving national recognition for best practice, and other programs showing little to no compliance with best practices. For example, half of the 10 UC colleges now have undergraduate student caseloads in alignment with national best practice (average 300 students per advisor¹), yet the other half are far out of alignment with advisor caseloads well over 500 students². Some do not require students to participate in academic advising. Some require advising only of first-year students and/or probationary students. While faculty serve as effective mentors in each college, formal faculty advising is deployed in few UC colleges due to the growing complexity, training and time demanded of advisors.

At present, it is possible for some UC students to move through their entire education without the benefit of personal academic advising. Current advisor staffing levels in some colleges cannot actually accommodate personal advising of every individual student. Even in those where personal advising is possible, it is common throughout the year for students to wait up to two weeks or longer to get an advising appointment. Although our student satisfaction with advising at UC outpaces our peers³, there could be greater impact for more students, and particularly on retention and graduation rates with a stronger and more intentional advising program.

Proposed Enhancements: The following enhancements will help us to move from a model of inconsistent quality and resourcing to a high-quality, intrusive advising model:

- i. Achieve and maintain appropriate advising ratios.⁴
 - Establish truly intrusive advising models with outreach from advisors to their students across all colleges.

¹ Recommendation of the National Academic Advising Association.

² The hire of 20 new advisors in Spring 2010 met only 57% of the advisor deficit (35 positions at that time) based on enrollment.

³ National Survey of Student Engagement, 2013.

⁴ This is an action item in the UC2019 Academic Master Plan.

- Ensure timely student access to advising appointments and guidance.
- ii. Ensure that every UC student has an identified, trusted and coordinated academic support network.
 - Assign every UC student at least one academic advisor and one faculty mentor. Include a peer leader and/or other campus supports as appropriate.
 - Ensure that every UC student's advising experience is highly personalized and coordinated. The new Student Information System can help with clear, shared documentation and support role assignments.
 - Advance a relationship development model between students and their advisors to establish a sense that someone students know and trust is "watching out for them."
 - Establish these relationships via early outreach before freshman orientation. Students can meet and be advised by their "permanent" advisor at Freshman Orientation.
- iii. Systematize specific intrusive advising interventions for all students.
 - Every undergraduate student will develop and continually update a personalized advising plan (see technology-based tools strategies).
 - Implement a mandatory academic review each semester for every student which is created by advisors and sent to the student. This must be facilitated by efficient technologies.
 - Implement a mandatory pre-graduation review process during the junior year or in the penultimate semester of associate degree programs.
 - Require students to meet with advisors during at least their freshman year (existing in various formats in most, but not all colleges).
 - The success of underrepresented minority (URM) students and first-generation students are impacted most of all by intrusive advising and mentoring. Include Student Affairs program staff (ex. Ethnic Programs and Services, Gen-One, etc.) as part of the student's assigned support network.
- iv. Align with best practices.
 - Ensure that all UC advising programs are high-quality models based on established national and internal best-practices in units such as Honors, Athletics, Center for Exploratory Studies, College of Nursing, Lindner College of Business, etc.).
 - Establish a common plan of touch points for every student's advising across the 2-years (associate), 4-years (baccalaureate) or 5-years (co-op) of the students' programs.
 - Practice active teaching to reinforce learning outcomes of advising, with infusion as possible in course-based formats. Develop an advising syllabus.

- v. Professional development for professional and faculty advisors.⁵
 - Provide more extensive university-level training and development of professional staff advisors.
 - Create a faculty advisor/mentor training program. Provide faculty with tools to facilitate conversations about life and careers after graduation.
 - Promote the faculty role in individual student completion as mentors and career advisors whose greatest impact is in higher-level and highly personalized conversations with students. Avoid deploying faculty time primarily for routine course planning, unless serving as the student's primary assigned advisor.
 - Develop a faculty mentor resource website and a faculty mentor syllabus.
 - Encourage faculty and professional advisors to work together to promote student success.
- vi. Infuse financial literacy into academic advising.
 - This is explained in the "Signature Initiative" for a financial literacy coalition.
- vii. Ensure quality of graduate student advising resources.
 - Modify the graduate school website to provide greater organization and clarity of processes and expectations.

Strategy 2: Tailor Support to Transfer & Transition Students

Current standing: UC's Transfer and Lifelong Learning Center currently provides admission-based services to incoming transfer students and some students transitioning across UC campuses. However, this model is not primarily oriented to advising students on their wisest choices about academic pathways, time-to-degree completion, graduate vs. undergraduate options, etc. This office is currently planned to be moved to an entirely admissions-based function. There is a need for a dedicated program to smooth transfer and transition pathways.

Proposed Enhancements: The following enhancements will provide better support and guidance for transfer and transition students to ensure timely degree attainment:

- i. Establish a "Campus Transition" program.
 - Establish an implementation team focused on student transition processes.
 - Provide advising specifically designed to create a smooth student transition and degree progression between regional campuses and main campus.
 - The partnership between UC and Cincinnati State, called "Cincinnati Pathways" should be part of this program and has explicit new advising requirements.

⁵ This is an action item in the UC019 Academic Master Plan.

- Begin clearly identifying and tracking goals and target programs of regional campus students who intend to transition to main campus.
 - Formalize advisor assignments and connectivity between campuses.
- ii. Design a new Transfer Student Orientation program.
 - This effort is currently underway to improve the transfer student experience.
- iii. Ensure that degree audit tools are available to prospective students.
 - This effort is also currently underway to improve the transfer experience.

Strategy 3: Reinforce Specialized Advising for Major Selection & Exploration

Current standing: The Center for Exploratory Studies (CES) provides highly personalized, intrusive advising and programming on major selection and academic planning for 1700 exploratory (undecided) students and over 3500 total UC students considering a change of major each year. Major declaration is generally encouraged by the end of the first year. This center's model has been published in the National Academic Advising Association monograph, *Advising Special Populations* (2007), as an exemplary practice for undecided students. This is due to the combination of specialized advising and curricular experiences these students can access for exploration of major and career pathways. Following the establishment of CES in 2003, students who choose to enter as "exploratory" (typically viewed as "at risk") now have higher retention and graduation rates than other declared students with similar profiles (see Appendix F.) Both regional campuses have recently implemented exploratory programs as well. In its new Exploratory Studies program, UC Blue Ash has designated advisors, a specific first-year experience course, and a pilot peer-mentoring component.

Proposed enhancements: The following enhancements would help to further increase the persistence of exploratory students and major-changers:

- i. Mandate advising for exploratory students every semester, not just first-year students and those with more than 60 hours (most often transfers.) This will require resourcing, as advisors in CES each support nearly 500 exploratory and major-changing students annually. Best-practice for this high-need population of students is closer to 200-250.
- ii. Exploratory students will be strongly encouraged to declare a major by the end of their first year of study. Mandated major declaration timeline policies can simply disguise the students who still most need assistance. Intensive advising intervention and outreach is preferred in lieu of such a policy. Establish major selection counseling at the regional colleges prior to orientation. Students in

two-year programs are seriously delayed if they spend even one semester in a program that is not suited to their interests and abilities.

- iii. Coordinate a university-wide strategy on exploratory pathways to include multi-campus adoption of the CES nationally-recognized best practices. Partner with the Career Development Center and the Division of Professional Practice and Experiential Learning (ProPEL) to offer professional development about career advising for other university advisors across colleges.

Strategy 4: Invest in Technology-based Tools and Systems to Facilitate Completion

Current Standing: Investing in appropriate technologies that facilitate a seamless, cohesive advising system and clarity of curriculum and requirements will maximize UC's personnel investment in student support. UC has been operating with a homegrown student information system (SIS) and DARS degree audits that allow advisors and students to check student progress towards graduation. The prior legacy system was not designed with academic advising as a priority. However, student and advisor usage of degree audits produces up to 44,000 audits per month. We are currently beginning a 46 million dollar, two-year implementation of a new Student Information System (*PeopleSoft*). This system will provide shared documentation that will better coordinate advising efforts. It will also allow for the development of a regularly updated graduation plan for each student, an improved degree audit system, and faculty and advisor portals.

Proposed enhancements: The following enhancements will assure that campus technology resources are being fully leveraged to increase graduation:

- i. Develop a Graduation Plan for every student within their first year and update each semester with an accurate graduation date.
- ii. Encode new degree audits with expanded functionality.
- iii. Maintain accurate curricular pathway information & publications.
- iv. Ensure clearly articulated pathways between regionals & main campus.

Strategy 5: Re-establish a University-wide Early Warning System

Current Standing: Early warning is one of the most effective strategies to enhance student academic success. UC discontinued its previous Early Intervention System due to an unsupported platform and low faculty usage. In the Fall of 2011, we piloted Starfish Early Alert with positive results. The Department of Athletics also has a very effective early alert system in place. However, there is no active university-wide early warning system at present. The UC Blue Ash campus

currently uses a “homegrown” early warning system to provide interventions before the conclusion of the semester. After the conclusion of each semester, the university-wide probation and suspension policy places at-risk students on “academic alert” before placing them on probation, which provides a very limited degree of early intervention opportunity.

Proposed Enhancements: The following steps should be taken when expanding and re-establishing a campus-wide Early Warning system:

- i. Identify the capacity within the new SIS system to address early warning functionality and consider purchase of a software tool (such as Starfish Early Alert, MAPWorks, etc.) to increase student retention and success.
- ii. Re-establish early alert university-wide for key gateway courses at least (especially math).
- iii. Strategize a university-wide protocol for advisor response to early alert “flags.” This will be particularly important in classrooms containing students from multiple colleges (primarily Arts & Science courses).
- iv. Prepare faculty to understand their role as primary in students’ individual course success, compared with the advisors’ role to monitor the student’s overall academic success.
- v. Consider implementing mid-term grades and early-term grades as part of the early alert process.
- vi. Integrate with efforts of peer education, residence halls, and other student supports.
- vii. Enhance recently implemented intervention strategies for early warning students at the regional colleges.

Signature Initiative

The UC Graduation Promise

Proposed Implementation: Prospective college students and their parents want to know that students will have support and structure to graduate on time before choosing a university. Articulating this ongoing promise of partnership with students would be a positive culture shift at UC. Such a strategy was implemented with great success during Semester Conversion in 2011-2012.

The UC Graduation Promise would ensure that students will graduate on time if they:

- Develop and maintain an updated graduation plan with their advisors by the end of the first year.
- Complete at least 30 credit hours per year toward degree requirements.
- Plan graduation timelines based upon choice of major and academic programs.
- Receive academic advising each semester to verify on-track progression & planning.
- Register for classes during priority registration.
- Follow degree requirements.

Though the causality of this relationship has not yet been explored, it is also noteworthy that UC's retention rate for a first-time, full-time freshman seeking a baccalaureate degree who takes 15 hours or greater is significantly higher (85.9%) than for students who take less than 15 hours (79.8%). The difference is significantly greater for first-time, full-time students seeking associate degrees (70.7% vs. 52.6%). UC Blue Ash is already exploring offering certain groups a "complete in two years" program that requires students to sign a pledge/agreement that they will attend full-time and according to a set schedule for their program.

Implementation of this idea at the university level can begin in Fall Semester of 2016 after the establishment of the new degree audit and academic planning tools in PeopleSoft. It will also be contingent upon several of the recommended strategy enhancements included within this document.

Financial Support and Literacy

Existing Strategies

Strategy 6: Address College Costs and Increase Affordability

Current standing: Unmet financial need of undergraduate students at UC is the largest contributor to impediments in student retention and graduation success. Nearly 19,000 UC students have unmet financial need based on their total college costs. The sum for those students reflects an overwhelming \$250.6 million. This is important to acknowledge because students' ability to persist in college is based largely upon financial factors.

In addition, UC continues to enroll a high percentage of Pell-eligible students (32.8%) for a research-extensive university. We have taken measures to keep costs as low as possible, including freezing tuition and fee increases for 6 of the last 9 years. Although our relative national ranking for cost is in the center of the "medium" range, we continue to be concerned with the student cost of college attendance and will continue to find means to make educational attainment at UC affordable.

Proposed enhancements: The following enhancements will further support improved affordability:

- i. The UC Foundation is working with the Office of Enrollment Management to establish the Student Need Scholarship Fund. A current mini-campaign titled the Red & Black Challenge will remain active through June 30, 2014 and recur in October 2014. Fundraising for student need will be a continued strategy within the university's Third Century initiative. In fiscal year 13 (July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013) \$11,959,981 was raised for scholarship support.
- ii. The university will continue to find resource efficiencies. This is part of our ongoing strategy to help keep student cost as low as possible. One example is the current proposal to close the university between the winter holidays and readjust new and future employee vacation benefits to save costs. Utility cost savings would also be significant.
- iii. The university will continue to direct expenditures toward those activities which most effectively support student success. Regression analysis is underway now to determine which of our student supports are having the highest impact on student retention and graduation rates.

Strategy 7: Reduce Textbook Costs

Current standing: A Textbook Affordability Committee has been established to discuss options and develop strategies aimed at reduced textbook costs. Lowering

textbook costs is important to maintain equal access to the education we provide, and is therefore of particular importance to our low-income and/or first-generation students. This committee has already employed several cost reduction strategies at UC, including a) making faculty aware of free Open Education Resources (OER's) and providing easy access through UC Libraries; b) collaborating between UCIT and the UC Bookstore to work with publishers on electronic delivery of materials; and c) collaborating with other institutions on strategies such as sharing and contributing to the development of OER's, and developing consortia to negotiate reduced prices for books and materials used among large populations of students.

Proposed enhancements: The proposed enhancements below could further maintain or reduce textbook costs:

- i. Continue to research best textbook cost reduction practices currently employed at other universities.
- ii. Lower costs of textbooks, particularly in large gateway courses to increase success rates and potentially decrease the number of students who repeat these courses. Faculty overseeing each selected gateway course will consider cost reduction strategies annually (see below section on gateway courses).
- iii. Continue to share information across all academic units that both encourages the use and development of OER's as well as emphasizes available steps instructors can take to reduce costs when adopting textbooks.

Strategy 8: Coordinate Financial Services and Education for Students

Current standing: The One Stop Student Service Centers serve as a resource to students seeking help with both financial aid and billing in addition to registration-based services. A financial literacy specialist was recently hired in the main campus One Stop Center. In addition, some outreach is being done (mostly via mass emails) by the Student Financial Aid Office to educate students in regards to Satisfactory Academic Progress expectations, loan aggregate limits, effects of failing to successfully complete classes, and other barriers to success. Any student that submits an application for an alternative loan (private loan through a bank or other lending institution) must complete an "alternative loan counseling" process. Historically speaking, alternative loans have a very high interest rate and are more likely to be defaulted on than federal student loans. UC provides outreach to prospective and confirmed students, before they even get to UC, to help ensure they understand the types of aid available, what they need to do to secure that aid, and where to go if they have questions. We have also started seeking out current students who have an outstanding balance but still have remaining aid eligibility and are providing them with personalized, one-on-one financial aid advising. The focus of this is to make sure students are aware of all of the financial aid options

available to them, and to help guide the students through the process required to secure that additional funding.

Although UC Blue Ash students receive services from the central Financial Aid Office, the college has recently developed a financial aid FAQ sheet to increase student, staff, and faculty awareness of basic issues. The college now includes financial aid presentations in its FYE courses.

Proposed enhancements: The steps below could further facilitate coordination across integral service groups:

- i. Learning Communities and First Year Experience classes can both be used as a resource to help educate students on billing/financial aid issues that are most likely to lead to a student being unable to complete their program.
- ii. Increasing financial aid staff would allow for more targeted outreach and other direct contact with students regarding any issues they are having with finalizing their financial aid and getting their bill paid.
- iii. The One Stop Center will hire an Electronic Media intern to create videos which better explain frequently misunderstood processes.
- iv. Incorporate education for students regarding managing room and board costs, credit card use, and other daily living financial management.

Proposed Strategies

Strategy 9: Increase Need- and Merit-based Funding⁶

Proposed Implementation: Increasing the university's institutional aid capacity (need and merit-based) will help UC not only attract and retain competitive, diverse students, but it will also help close the need gap, thereby increasing accessibility and opportunity for prospective and current students. Actions to be considered include:

- i. Financial assistance could be used as an incentive for "bread and butter" students (i.e. award "continuing student" scholarships to motivate students to achieve/maintain strong GPA's).
- ii. Create academic achievement awards/scholarships for upper-class students.
- iii. Build on investment in scholarships for students in Gen-1, Honors, and National Merit programs.
- iv. Grow scholarships and grants that help fill the unmet need gap that the majority of students experience.
- v. Review utilization of current funding sources for student scholarships to determine if they are being used in the most effective manner.
- vi. Review the UC Institutional Aid portfolio to assess the need/merit balance and alignment with UC opportunities.

⁶ This is a key strategy in UC's Creating Our Third Century planning initiative.

Signature Initiative

Financial Literacy Coalition

Proposed Implementation: A university-wide coalition to significantly increase the financial literacy of UC students should be established. Once established, the coalition would work toward this goal by developing programming which provides financial coaching, financial counseling, financial literacy education, and financial awareness to UC students. The coalition would include staff from: One Stop Student Services Center and One Stop Centers on the regional campuses, the Student Wellness Center, the Economics Center (the largest center of its kind, this center is focused on the financial literacy for the K-12 environment and is affiliated with UC and the Lindner College of Business), the Student Financial Aid Office, and the Bursar's Office. This coalition would:

- i. Coordinate resources that are currently available within each office.
- ii. Utilize first year experience groups, learning communities, academic advisors, and other groups on campus to assist with student financial education.
- iii. Ensure that students are receiving clear and consistent messages reaching as many students as possible.

The coalition will increase the communication between key campus offices involved in student financial awareness. Doing so will reduce duplication of efforts, resulting in resource savings that could be diverted to other enhancements in student financial literacy.

Curriculum and Culture

Existing Strategies

Strategy 10: Improve Gateway Courses, Placement and DFW Grades

Current standing: We are working to address key gateway courses and course placements to improve student learning and student success. Our existing strategies in mathematics at this time include a) continuing to review the MPT annually, identifying at least one area to improve upon each year; b) working with OBR to create a state math placement testing instrument; c) organizing outreach to high schools to help bridge gaps in math college readiness, and d) expanding a pilot program which offers students the opportunity to replace their grade on the first examination if they participate in intensive tutoring or to move to a lower level course.⁷

With our other gateway courses, we issue DFW reports by class and section through the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Council and require the associate deans to provide a report of their strategies to improve student success. We are also intensifying the efforts of the Center for Enhancement of Teaching & Learning's in regards to course redesign for gateway courses.

UC Clermont's College Success Program (CSP) is designed to improve marginally prepared students' academic performance, course completion, term-to term persistence and year-to-year retention. A priority in participating in the program is given to the incoming matriculate student whose scores are below college-level in two to three areas (reading, writing, and mathematics). Students who actively participate in the program consistently outperform non-participants in GPAs, course completion rates, persistence and first retention rates.

Proposed Enhancements: To build upon these initiatives, we recommend the following augmentations to our current work on gateway courses. These strategies would need to be designed, monitored and evaluated for efficacy:

- i. Focus on Mathematics, including the following:
 - Better prepare students for the math placement test so they are not taking it "cold."
 - Supplement or refine the UC Math Placement test so that it makes better distinctions for developmental course placement, particularly for the regional colleges.
 - Examine the developmental math courses leading to the college math requirement. In some cases students have to take too many semesters of developmental math before they are ready for college math. This is especially

⁷ Note this requires resource to allow for the change in registration.

- true at regional campuses. UC Blue Ash has formed a task force to revisit developmental course structures.
- Consider expansion of summer bridge or other intensive instruction that might help students move to a higher level math course earlier.
 - Develop a student-friendly document on math success rates based on MPT scores to reinforce appropriate course and math resource utilization.
- ii. Identify strategies for other gateway courses, including the following:
- Reading and writing enhancements as needed.
 - Enhance utilization of tools such as ALEX to implement just-in-time teaching of math alongside of science.
 - Expand the use of peer education models such as those used by our faculty in pilots for physics and biology.
 - Consider moving students into more appropriate STEM courses after first test or providing intensive supplemental instruction. Biology pilots similar to the math approach are currently underway. Resources will be necessary if this pilot is expanded beyond this year and/or to additional academic disciplines.
 - Coordinate annual meetings between administrators of our student support service offices, the vice provost for undergraduate affairs, CET&L, and the appropriate faculty and course coordinators for our critically large gateway courses. These meetings would serve to share knowledge and experience of success strategies and ensure that each course had addressed certain issues related to success.

Strategy 11: Expand Learning Communities

Current standing: Learning Communities (LC) are curricular structures that enroll small groups of 15-23 students together into a cluster of related courses, forming an educational package. In addition to taking classes together, learning community students meet at pre-scheduled times either to study, work on team projects, or plan social and service related activities. Faculty, academic advisors, peer student leaders, and other invited content experts partner to create learning connections across classroom, experiential, and co-curricular contexts.

The Learning Communities program has demonstrated significant retention and course performance success for participating students. Currently, between 50 and 60% of incoming freshmen participate in an LC. On average, these students are retained at a significantly higher rate, earn significantly higher GPAs, and earn significantly more hours than peers with similar entering profiles such as ACT scores. For example, assessments of 2011 cohort impact found that retention of students enrolled in LCs for their entire first year was 93.5%, and for those in LCs that include peer leaders, retention was 95.2%, rates that are far higher than our first-year retention goal of 90%. Comparatively, retention of students who completed their first year at UC but did not enroll in an LC or similar structure was

88.2%. These results, which have been consistent over multiple years even as the program has included a wider range of student profiles, strongly imply that our retention and graduation rate goals could be met in part with expansion of this program.

Proposed enhancements: Expanding both available seats within LCs and the collaborative nature of LCs will support students towards graduation. Specifically, the following changes could further improve student retention:

- i. Expand participation in Learning Communities so that all baccalaureate students are in an LC or a similar curricular structure (for example, DAAP studios, CCM performance cohorts).
- ii. Strengthen the role and alignment of the LC educational package for integrative learning purposes. This would include creating more connection of learning across the LC courses.
- iii. Strengthen the role and alignment of the LC educational package to more specifically address student mastery of learning outcomes in gateway courses.
- iv. Explore the expansion of FYE to include Learning Communities on the regional campuses.

Strategy 12: Apply Analytics to Increase Success at Course and Program Levels

Current standing: We are actively using assessment data and tools to responsibly identify curricular opportunities for student success and improvement. This includes a) reviewing the placement of courses in the curriculum through the Cross College Committees (CCC); b) reviewing data in regards to student success in new semester-based curriculum and modifying programs as necessary (this is part of the program assessment work that begins in 2014-15); and c) considering use of classroom assessment techniques and early student course evaluations to help faculty improve course teaching.

UC Blue Ash is performing an extensive analysis of poor performing, non-returning, and non-completing students that involves mapping students' academic paths and course-taking patterns to identify specific course or program roadblocks.

Proposed enhancements: In addition, we expect to:

- i. Recommend implementation of mid-term grades in gateway courses to alert students of academic difficulty early in the term.
- ii. Work carefully with the implementation of the new SIS to ensure no functionality or necessary data are lost regarding the connectivity of courses and the curriculum, student learning outcomes, and course attributes such as type of experiential learning or the degree to which a course addresses the GenEd outcomes.
- iii. Expand and improve the use of teaching evaluations by all students for all courses to have this data for course improvement and faculty development.

Strategy 13: Strengthen General Education

Current standing: One of our important initiatives is to evaluate new semester-based GenEd options and strengthen as necessary. To do this we will use annual GenEd assessment data to evaluate student achievement of baccalaureate learning outcomes. This process takes place annually each spring. We will consider modestly streamlining the number of GenEd options offered to create clearer pathways for students. We will also work with associate deans to develop a process for annual updates to the course planning guide. A process to clean this up has been started by the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Affairs. Finally, we will continue to expand UC's experiential learning opportunities.

Proposed enhancements: Our next steps to accomplish this include:

- i. Review course availability across all 2 years (associate), 4 years (baccalaureate), or 5 years (co-op.) of a student's program. Determine if there is sufficient availability to take courses when students need them in all colleges, but especially in Arts & Sciences.
- ii. Work with associate deans and cross-college committees to coordinate course offer times that allow students to schedule effectively.

Strategy 14: Increase Prior Learning Assessment and Alternative Course Credit

Current standing: One of the most accessible ways for students to strategize for timely degree completion is by earning college credit for knowledge gained prior to arrival on campus or outside of the classroom experience. This year UC deployed a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) task force which issued a list of recommended actions to advance the university's means of evaluating and awarding credit through PLA. This initiative is primarily targeted to advance time-to-degree for adult learners. In addition, the amount of advanced standing that a new student brings to the university through advanced placement (AP), international baccalaureate (IB), post-secondary (PSEOP), and dual enrollment credit can reduce time-to-degree by up to a year.

Proposed Enhancements: To increase the rate of students acquiring prior learning credits, we need to

- i. Increase awards for PLA and other forms of alternative credit.
- ii. Adopt a full implementation of the PLA Task Force Report recommendations (see Appendix G.)
- iii. UC Clermont has announced a series of strategically directed activities to engage with adult learners. LEAP (Learner Engaged Adult Program) is a new program focused on degree completion for those who have prior college credit, work or military experience, but have not finished their associate degree.

Strategy 15: Reinforce a Culture of Connection, Community & Inclusion

Current standing: Engaged students are retained at higher rates. UC is home to over 500 student organizations, “intrusive” programs as well as host of activities and cultural programs for students that foster community, provide peer support and connect students to faculty mentors. UC’s current student life community is structured to facilitate the “inclusion of all” through purposeful engagement and experiences that “make a large university feel small.” In particular, the Office of Ethnic Programs and Services and the AACRC (African American Cultural and Resource Center) is central in the life and engagement of URM students. Within the residence halls, professional and student staff provide programs designed to create community for over 4500 students living on campus. Other Student Affairs Offices such as the Women’s Center and the LGBTQ Center focus on creating a sense of place and social support for various constituencies.

The regional colleges offer a variety of academic clubs and groups that are specific to majors and disciplinary interests, as well as the opportunity to be involved in professional student organizations. In addition, at UC Blue Ash, First-Generation Leaders of America and the Multicultural Club offer activities and support for specific groups. UC Clermont sponsors Active Minds and Students Helping Our Community Kinship. Both regional colleges encourage students to participate in University wide events designed to welcome and celebrate all Bearcats but also provide programs and activities such as New Student Convocation and End of the Year Recognitions to foster community within the specific regional campus student population.

Proposed enhancements: Further efforts to reinforce this culture should

- i. Create virtual communities, celebrations and strong university connection for on-line students.
- ii. Create gathering space and programs to enhance social inclusion for non-traditional or non-residential students such as a commuter or veteran student lounge.
- iii. Per semester events offered by academic departments to specifically welcome students to the community and meet faculty informally.
- iv. Develop an online “who to call” list that is easily accessible to all front-line faculty and staff in an effort to reduce the feel of bureaucracy.
- v. Equip parents of first generation students with the information they need to support college completion of a first generation college student.
- vi. Ensure sufficient resourcing of Testing Services, Veterans and Disability Services.

Proposed Strategies

Strategy 16: Develop a Collaborative Peer Education Initiative

Proposed Implementation: Most—but not all—Peer Educator programs on campus require extensive training, certification, and ongoing observation. This is true for student orientation leaders, peer leaders of learning communities, resident assistants and supplemental instructors. This has led to the development of several programs that are nationally-certified, improve GPA and student retention overtime, and generate high student satisfaction rates. The committee proposes to unify and more broadly establish Peer Educator expertise to assure consistency of high-quality service across campus.

By providing one centralized, base-line determination of the core skills required for successful peer support, and coordinating some training across these skills, UC can maintain high levels of student satisfaction and success across *all* programs. Peer Educator programs could also reduce redundancies. However, each Peer Educator program has different needs and goals; therefore, the first step in identifying where programs overlap and diverge is to establish a task force to review Peer Educator services, trainings, oversight, and outcomes.

This task force can help to identify the following:

- programs that can cooperate on identified goals
- shared standards for the hiring, training, and assessment of peer educators
- how to connect students with multiple peer educators throughout their career
- programs that may be duplicating services or administrative support in order to better streamline services
- potential avenues for cross-training to reduce cost and time

In addition, this task force can coordinate research of Peer Education outcomes in order to establish UC as a leader for excellence in Peer Education and innovative retention initiatives.

Signature Initiative

Center for Student Success

Proposed Implementation: Center for Student Success models, wherein several connected support centers are aligned via shared planning, space or resources in order to effectively and collaboratively promote student success, are increasingly common on university campuses. These centers generally make resources more accessible and visible to students, improve efficiencies and facilitate staff-to-staff communication about individual students and university-wide initiatives to assure that services are cohesive and intentional.

UC's proposed Center for Student Success will establish new partnerships between offices in Student Affairs, Enrollment Management, and Academic Affairs to help all undergraduates to thoughtfully integrate their academic and career planning, coursework and learning, experiential learning, and curricular and co-curricular experiences from the time they are accepted to UC through graduation. By coordinating the efforts of UC's professional advising centers, advising resources, academic support services, analytics on student success and course-based improvements, the Center for Student Success will provide infrastructure, coordination, and leadership to more fully realize the vision for UC's signature undergraduate experience called Integrated Core Learning (ICL).

The impact of many of these programs is outlined within this document, as is their need for expansion and increased coordination across programs. Fully resourcing the Success Center will not only enhance the operations of these offices, but help to mitigate some of their current challenges. In addition, UC administrators will investigate which additional resources will prove integral to the establishment of a Center for Student Success; these may include life skills and financial literacy mentoring, new peer education programming, and experiential learning supports, among others.

To accomplish these changes, the following steps will be necessary:

- i. Develop a common vision and guiding principles for all of the offices and activities that support student success.
- ii. Consider expansion of First Year Experience concept to Sophomore Year (Mid-Collegiate) Experience and transfer students; determine which other programming may need to be expanded to fully support a Center for Student Success.
- iii. More fully resource and staff proven academic support offices such as Learning Assistance Center programming (Math and Science Support Center, Writing Center, Tutoring, Coaching, etc.).

- iv. Investigate additional offices to be integrated into the Center for Student Success and currently undeveloped programs that may need to be integrated.
- v. Continue to build collaborative connections across academic support services in the colleges including the regional campuses and other university units, as appropriate.

Conclusion

This suite of 16 existing strategies and their proposed enhancements are specific areas in which the university can make progress toward more sharply targeting our student persistence and graduation rate goals. Some of these strategies are related and interdependent. Among them are national best-practices, many of which have been proven to be successful within the university but may need to be expanded to reach more students. In addition, the three signature initiatives are “big ideas” that can help us truly move the dial on college completion. It seems we are very much on the right track with our efforts around retention and persistence. In most cases, these strategies simply need to be prioritized and resourced for implementation.

IV. Further Investigation

***Areas of Inquiry to
Promote Completion***

IV. Further Investigation

The following ideas and strategies require further investigation before specific implementation strategies can be recommended:

1. Review University Policies to Better Support Completion

This task force recommends assembling a reviewing body to explore policies that could improve student degree progression. Considerations may include review of grade replacement, “fresh start,” academic standing, course withdrawal limitation, late course additions, and graduation policies. This review must be conducted with respect to the Student Information System implementation timeline.

- Consider whether limiting “W” grades to no more than five per student would enhance student success and progression.
- Investigate success and applicability of college models in which grades are not formally transcribed in a student’s first year.

2. Review Effectiveness of Supports for Distance Learning Students

Distance learners are a student population with similar needs for academic support as other students. Because most do not spend time on-campus, however, we must determine how to effectively meet their needs in a distance format. This population includes the following demographics:

- Average age is 35 years old (vs. 23 for non-distance learners)
- 55% graduate students and 44% undergraduates
- 24% students of color
- 83% female and 13% male
- Majority are part-time students (this is 15% for non-distance learners)

Access to appropriate student services, advising, and academic services and resources should be planned with this population in mind.

3. Identify the impact of university processes and supports on completion rates of unique populations, including international students, transfer and transition students, veterans, adult learners, under-represented minorities, first generation students, and students with disabilities.

4. Identify policies or practices that reinforce financial peer pressure, such as use of smart phones in class or social trips designed to create community.

5. Identify discreet behaviors that lead to students being successful and graduating on time, such as meeting with an advisor to develop a plan, meeting regularly to review that plan and make change, etc. Determine how those behaviors can be rewarded or incentivized to get more students to do them. Learn more about groups of students that are not doing what they should (in terms of securing financial aid, paying their bill on time, etc.) so that we can identify ways to help.

- 6. Identify which UC student supports are having the greatest impact on student success and completion.** The Office of Institutional Research is underway with a regression analysis on this at present.
- 7. Consider the benefits of investment in a “Big Data” driven analytics system to support student success.** Companies such as Civitas and InsideTrack offer compelling testimony of positive student outcomes with use of their products – sometimes at a considerable cost. Investigate the potential impact and conduct a cost-benefit analysis to determine if such a purchase would produce a good return on investment.
- 8. Provide support through mentoring in the development of “life management skills.”** Students often do not have or exhibit the management skills that are critical to accessing the resources or information they need to achieve their short and long term goals. In many cases, prior to arriving on campus their lives have been managed by parents or, as for students who are first generation college students, they have had limited opportunities to acquire the necessary skills. It's often assumed that college students are equipped with the foundational competencies needed to be independent and successful in a completely new environment.
- 9. Learning Portfolio Model as a Signature UC Experience**
The current University Honors Program model for electronic Learning Portfolios could become a signature aspect of every UC undergraduate's educational experience. Portfolios are used to help students make meaning of their education and thoughtfully craft their educational experience to prepare for “what comes next,” ensuring the academic experience is connected to and constructed with a clear goal or vision for after college. This is an as-yet unrealized goal of the Integrated Core Learning (ICL) signature model for undergraduate education at UC.

Learning Portfolios capture personal, curricular and co-curricular experiences that uniquely and richly describe each individual student. They demonstrate student overall educational and career goals as well as plans for experiential learning, course selection, academic support, co-curricular activities, advising, etc.

There are multiple free portfolio tools available to students online via Weebly, Wix, Google and others. Student URL addresses and passwords for these can be stored in a university database or student information system. Faculty mentoring would also be a key strategy to help deploy the reflective learning aspects of this initiative. This “big idea” is powerful, and yet significantly resource intensive in advising time. It requires the lowest possible advisor caseloads to accomplish.

V. Workforce Development Priorities

UC and Ohio's Workforce

V. Workforce Development Priorities

The University of Cincinnati has been a globally recognized frontrunner in the development of workforce-ready college graduates over the past 108 years. The Cooperative Education (co-op) program was started at UC by Dean Herman Schneider in 1906. Today, UC facilitates in excess of 5,000 co-op work terms annually with more than 1,000 Ohio employers. The University is investing considerable resources into making experiential learning opportunities such as co-op, internships, undergraduate research, practica and clinical experiences available to all students enrolled at the University regardless of their major. The University is also launching cross-disciplinary UC Forward courses offered as multidisciplinary projects designed to create graduates prepared to apply integrated knowledge to solve today's problems. UC's cutting edge programs in service learning, entrepreneurship, and global learning initiatives prepare students that are technically and culturally ready to enter the workforce.

The State of Ohio's workforce development priorities and needs are categorized by the JobsOhio key industries and business functions. In 2012-13, UC graduated over 10,000 students with undergraduate degrees, graduate and professional degrees and certificates, which include significant feeders to every one of the JobsOhio key industries and business functions. According to a 2012-13 survey of graduating seniors, 49% were headed for employment (45% full-time), 23% were planning graduate or professional school or post-baccalaureate coursework and 2% were planning military service or volunteer activity such as the Peace Corps. Among those planning to work full-time, 13% were headed to employment within a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) area and 79% of students who reported accepting full-time employment said the position was related to his/her respective major. As of the deadline to apply for graduation, 24% were seeking employment. Many UC graduates qualify for jobs across multiple JobsOhio industry categories:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Aerospace & Aviation
- Automotive
- Biohealth
- Business Functions
- Energy
- Financial Services
- Food Processing
- Healthcare
- Information Technology
- Logistics
- Polymers & Chemicals

The two regional colleges – UC Blue Ash and UC Clermont - contribute significantly to development of the Ohio workforce. Together, the colleges offer nearly 30 applied or technical associate degrees that prepare students for employment in areas, such as

manufacturing engineering, information technology, electronic media, as well as in a host of health professions, including but not limited to nursing, radiologic technology, dental hygiene, health information systems, medical assisting, and emergency medical services. Other opportunities requiring shorter length education and training to contribute to the Ohio workforce in health care are offered by the regional campuses. For example, one year certificates can be obtained in paramedic education, medical assisting, and surgical assisting. Other opportunities that can be obtained in one semester or less include state tested nurse aide training, pharmacy technician, phlebotomy, EKG, splinting and casting, EMT-Basic, First Responder, CPR & First Aid.

Through stackable certificates and pipeline programs outlining pathways from workforce training and certificates to advanced degrees in the various health care areas that have been identified as a need in the Greater Cincinnati metro area, the regional campuses are strategically located and equipped to produce graduates to contribute to the workforce. Regional campuses offer short-term certificates in areas such as accounting that can be used to qualify immediately for jobs and also count toward associate degree programs. Two online one year post associate degree certificates, Physician Practice Management and Healthcare Privacy and Security, will provide curriculum to prepare students to take the CPPM and CHPS credentials. The Physician Practice Management certificate prepares students in managing a physician practice for revenue cycle, compliance regulations, human resources, health information and general business processes. The Privacy and Security certificate is designed to prepare students to implement, administer comprehensive privacy and security programs in all types of healthcare organizations. In addition, the new project to develop the Martin Luther King/Interstate 71 interchange is anticipated to bring 6,000 new jobs to Uptown Cincinnati, mostly in health care.

VI. Appendices

Appendix A:

University Undergraduate Student Profile

**University of Cincinnati
Undergraduate Student Profile
Autumn 2012**

Total University

Student Demographic	Entering		Returning		Transfer		Total	
	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total
Total	6,037	100.0%	23,712	100.0%	1,970	100.0%	31,719	100.0%
Part-time	358	5.9%	6,121	25.8%	602	30.6%	7,081	22.3%
Associate	1,904	31.5%	5,266	22.2%	666	33.8%	7,836	24.7%
Baccalaureate	4,133	68.5%	17,155	72.3%	1,281	65.0%	22,569	71.2%
Non-Degree			1136	4.8%			1136	3.6%
Pell Eligible	2,005	33.2%	7,545	31.8%	857	43.5%	10,407	32.8%
Needs Remedial Education	2,018	33.4%	7,408	31.2%	469	23.8%	9,895	31.2%
Female	3,042	50.4%	12,567	53.0%	1,126	57.2%	16,735	52.8%
Male	2,995	49.6%	11,145	47.0%	844	42.8%	14,984	47.2%
Under 18	218	3.6%	509	2.1%	2	0.1%	729	2.3%
18-24	5,624	93.2%	17,586	74.2%	1,276	64.8%	24,486	77.2%
25 and Older	195	3.2%	5,617	23.7%	692	35.1%	6,504	20.5%
Ohio Residents	5,433	90.0%	21,439	90.4%	1,588	80.6%	28,460	89.7%
High School-to College Factors								
Average High School GPA	5,611	3.23	19,539	3.2	1,123	3.03	26,273	82.8%
Average ACT Composite	4,696	23.9	14,995	23.8	613	23	30,304	95.5%
Race/Ethnicity								
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	0.0%	70	0.3%	6	0.3%	79	0.2%
Asian	161	2.7%	645	2.7%	39	2.0%	845	2.7%
Black or African American	528	8.7%	1,983	8.4%	225	11.4%	2,736	8.6%
Hispanic/Latino	131	2.2%	535	2.3%	59	3.0%	725	2.3%
International	164	2.7%	582	2.5%	86	4.4%	832	2.6%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific	3	0.0%	18	0.1%	4	0.2%	25	0.1%
Two or More Races	198	3.3%	308	1.3%	47	2.4%	553	1.7%
White	4,489	74.4%	18,168	76.6%	1,376	69.8%	24,033	75.8%
Race/Ethnicity Unknown	360	6.0%	1,403	5.9%	128	6.5%	1,891	6.0%

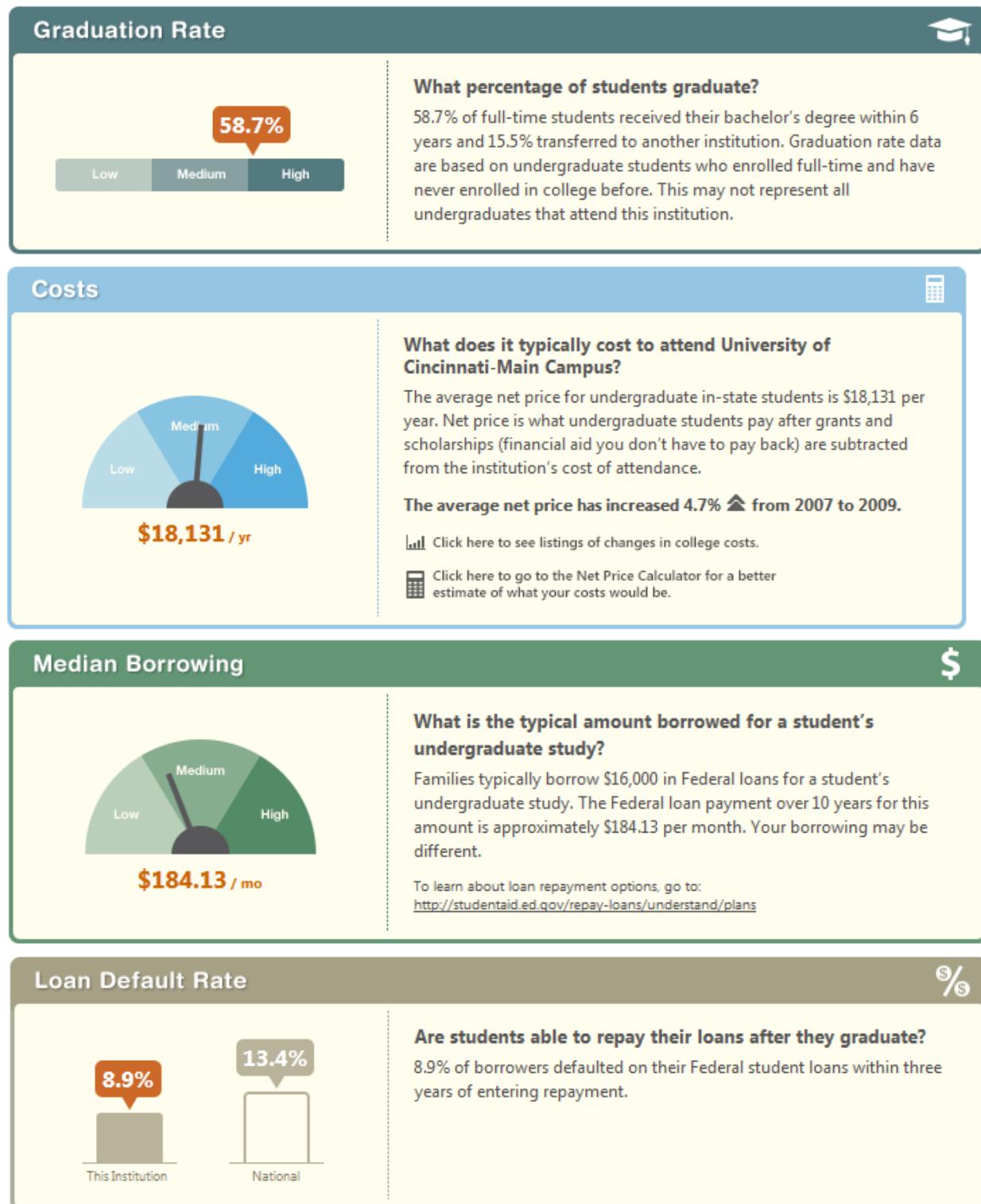
Appendix B:
Complete College Ohio
University of Cincinnati Task Force Members

Complete College Ohio Task Force Membership

Merchant	Debra	Co-chair, Student Affairs and Services
Warden	Tara	Co-chair, Advising
<i>Members</i>		
Ba	N'deye	Graduate Student
Bankston	Karen	Nursing, Distance Learning
Burnett	Alexandra C.	Undergraduate Student
Clark	Lauren	Learning Assistance
Escoe	Gigi	Undergraduate Affairs
Graeter	Linda	Faculty Senate
Hanson	Margaret	Graduate School
Henry	Erica	Financial Aid
Kennedy	Doug	Center for Exploratory Studies and Advising
Lane	Adriianne	Faculty Senate
McSwiggen	Patrick	College of Arts and Sciences and Mathematics
Miner	Marlene	UC Blue Ash
Person	Pam	First Year Experience and Nationally Competitive Awards
Sapona	Regina	College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services
Soman	Rajiv	UC Clermont College
Zhu	Hongmei	Institutional Research

Appendix C:

Department of Education College Scorecard – UC Main Campus (11A)



Appendix D:

Unmet Financial Need of UC's Undergraduate Students

Undergraduate Students Enrolled in the Fall Term Who Filed a FAFSA

TOTAL BUDGET - Need and Unmet Need Based on Total Budget

Aid Year	UG	Students with Need			Students with Unmet Need		
		N	%	Total Need	N	%	Total Need
2008-09	18,547	15,347	82.75%	\$265,380,032	14,290	77.05%	\$151,182,849
2009-10	21,152	17,782	84.07%	\$320,083,954	16,929	80.03%	\$189,090,077
2010-11	22,358	19,374	86.65%	\$365,021,003	18,291	81.81%	\$217,899,537
2011-12	23,048	20,064	87.05%	\$412,429,557	19,068	82.73%	\$266,462,940
2012-13	22,796	19,589	85.93%	\$393,061,724	18,331	80.41%	\$245,713,380
2013-14	22,958	19,528	85.06%	\$399,876,648	18,862	82.16%	\$250,684,989
6 Year Change	23.8%	27.2%	2.31%	50.7%	32.0%	5.11%	65.8%

TUITION and FEES - Need and Unmet Need Based on Tuition and Fees Only

Aid Year	UG	Students with Need			Students with Unmet Need		
		N	%	Total Need	N	%	Total Need
2008-09	18,547	9,921	53.49%	\$63,459,835	1,262	6.80%	\$5,072,262
2009-10	21,152	11,919	56.35%	\$78,663,184	1,774	8.39%	\$6,670,805
2010-11	22,358	13,603	60.84%	\$93,065,634	2,018	9.03%	\$7,721,211
2011-12	23,048	14,122	61.27%	\$104,790,164	3,137	13.61%	\$13,508,557
2012-13	22,796	13,678	60.00%	\$98,215,395	2,005	8.80%	\$8,033,288
2013-14	22,958	13,241	57.67%	\$90,173,760	1,472	6.41%	\$5,635,674
6 Year Change	23.8%	33.5%	4.18%	42.1%	16.6%	-0.39%	11.1%

Notes

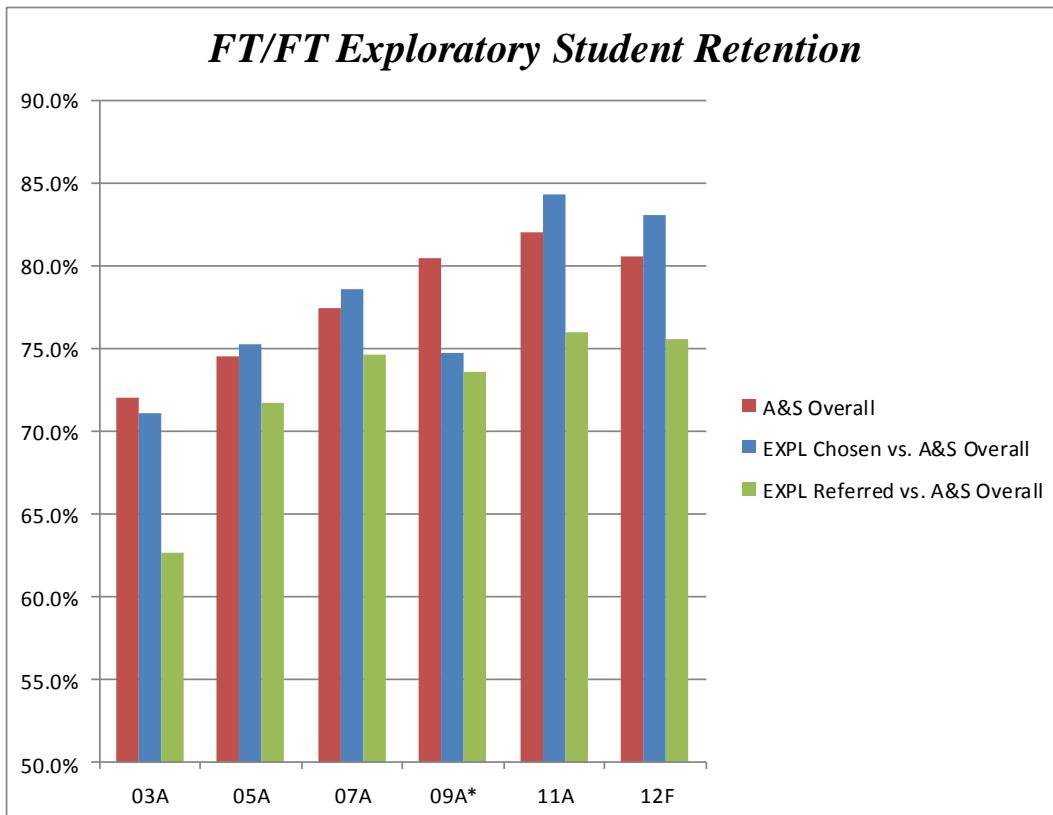
¹ All data exclude students enrolled in the Adult Learning Center and students enrolled in high school dual enrollment programs.

Appendix E:
UC Graduation Rates
By Award Objective, Race/Ethnicity and Pell-Eligibility Status

Award Objective	Pell Eligible	Ethnicity/Race	Enrolled Autumn 2007	Graduated within 150%**	Graduation Rate
Baccalaureate	No	American Indian or Alaskan Native	7	*	57.1%
		Asian or Pacific Islander	75	55	73.3%
		Black non-Hispanic	100	54	54.0%
		Hispanic	41	27	65.9%
		White non-Hispanic	2,431	1,626	66.9%
		Other	52	35	67.3%
		Unknown	137	87	63.5%
		Nonresident Alien	30	21	70.0%
	No Total		2,873	1,909	66.4%
	Yes	American Indian or Alaskan Native	*	0	0.0%
		Asian or Pacific Islander	33	20	60.6%
		Black non-Hispanic	136	59	43.4%
		Hispanic	10	*	40.0%
		White non-Hispanic	418	228	54.5%
		Other	18	7	38.9%
		Unknown	33	14	42.4%
		Nonresident Alien	6	*	33.3%
	Yes Total		655	334	51.0%
Baccalaureate Total			3,528	2,243	63.6%
Associate	No	American Indian or Alaskan Native	*	*	40.0%
		Asian or Pacific Islander	18	*	22.2%
		Black non-Hispanic	98	22	22.4%
		Hispanic	*	*	20.0%
		White non-Hispanic	771	200	25.9%
		Other	15	*	26.7%
		Unknown	89	19	21.3%
		Nonresident Alien	7	*	42.9%
	No Total		1,008	255	25.3%
	Yes	American Indian or Alaskan Native	*	0	0.0%
		Asian or Pacific Islander	12	6	50.0%
		Black non-Hispanic	196	28	14.3%
		Hispanic	7	*	14.3%
		White non-Hispanic	326	58	17.8%
		Other	16	*	6.3%
		Unknown	54	7	13.0%
		Nonresident Alien	6	*	33.3%
	Yes Total		622	103	16.6%
Associate Total			1,630	358	22.0%

Appendix F:

Exploratory (Undecided) Student Retention and Graduation Rates



Since the establishment of the Center for Exploratory Studies (CES) in Fall 2003, retention rates of UC's first-time, full-time exploratory students who chose to enter as exploratory (undecided) have been outpacing the retention rates of the declared Arts and Sciences students entering under the same admission requirements. In addition, retention rates have also sharply increased for "referred" students who chose a declared program for which they were not admissible, and entered instead as exploratory students. This population is particularly "at risk" due to placement (at least initially) in a program that was not their primary choice. (*Fall 2009 data reflect admission anomalies with the closure of UC's Center for Access and Transition.)

Graduation rates for students who choose to enter as exploratory have increased 9% in the five years of graduating cohorts since CES opened. These graduation rates were also higher than other Arts & Science-admitted students for 4 out of 5 of these graduating cohorts.

Appendix G:

UC's Prior Learning Assessment Task Force Report Summary

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is a term used to describe the assessment of college-level learning and knowledge that is gained outside of the traditional classroom or academic environment, for the purpose of awarding college-level, specific course or block credit.⁸ The University of Cincinnati has offered PLA through the acceptance of Advanced Placement exams, College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests, International Baccalaureate and A-Level exams for international students.

In the spring of 2013, a proposal was created from a joint effort between the divisions of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management to enhance the PLA program at UC by increasing accessibility to students and standardizing processes related to PLA throughout the university. Concurrently, in 2013, the Ohio Board of Regents began the PLA with a Purpose Initiative, which seeks to develop a state-wide PLA policy and strategy to “develop and advance best practices for the assessment of prior learning and the purposeful application of prior learning credit to degrees and certificates”.⁹

In light of this state initiative, Senior Vice President for Enrollment Management Caroline Miller and Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Kristi Nelson created a Task Force of staff and faculty, charged with making recommendations for an improved PLA program based around six outcomes. Those outcomes are listed below, immediately followed by the recommendations from the Task Force.

Outcome 1: Recommendation for an appropriate policy statement at UC

- The University of Cincinnati’s commitment to PLA should be grounded in a dedication to student success and degree completion.
- Definitions of the various PLA options should be standard, clearly defined, and readily available to all stakeholders.
- Student eligibility and limitations for PLA should be based on specific policies that ensure academic integrity and promote degree completion, and not on where or how the knowledge was gained.

⁸ Council on Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), “What is Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)?” accessed September, 2013. [http://www.cael.org/pla.htm#WhatisPriorLearningAssessment\(PLA\)?](http://www.cael.org/pla.htm#WhatisPriorLearningAssessment(PLA)?)

⁹ Jonathan Tafel, Donald Van Meter, and Paolo DeMaria, “Prior Learning Assessment: Measuring What Students Learning Outside the Classroom”, November 2012, https://ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/uploads/PLA/PLA_WITH_A_PURPOSE_FINAL_Nov_2012-6%202013%202013.pdf

- Internal and external reporting of PLA, as well as assessment of the PLA program and policy, should be standardized and adhered to.

Outcome 2: Recommendations for an a set of strategies and that colleges and academic programs can deploy with variations appropriate to the discipline

- Each academic program should create a PLA policy based on a standard template, which will be approved by the Office of the Provost.
- All faculty and staff should receive appropriate and standard training.
- The campus community should be invited to participate in a kickoff event to celebrate and encourage the new PLA initiative.
- A centralized database should be created to track PLAP applications and outcomes.
- The university should provide funding to dedicate staff to the oversight and coordination of PLA at the university level.
- A PLA Workgroup should be identified to support the implementation and monitoring of the new PLA program.

Outcome 3: Establishment of a PLA “One Stop” for students and applicants to understand UC policies and pathways for attaining credit for prior learning

- Centralized information is currently available at www.uc.edu/testingservices/pla. A UCIT developer is creating an application to enhance this website upon implementation of new PLA program.
- The website should utilize a central database to provide resources to all stakeholders (faculty, staff, and students.)
- The website should allow students and potential students a realistic idea of how PLA may result in credit at UC.
- The website should clearly identify the fees for PLA with a brief explanation of the costs associated with those fees.

Outcome 4: Recommendations for an Internal Credit by Exam Policy

- UC should increase the number of standardized assessments to include the Dantes Subject Standardization Tests (DSST) and Excelsior College U Excel Proficiency Exams.
- UC should institute an internal credit by exam program, Prior Learning Assessment Exams (PLAE.)

- Exams should be delivered in a proctored environment, either by faculty or a test center, to ensure security and academic integrity of the exam process.
- Distance Learning students should have the same opportunity to take exams as students local to Cincinnati.

Outcome 5: Recommendations for an Internal Portfolio Review Policy

- Academic advisors, faculty, and other staff will work together to ensure that students have clear expectations for the outcome of PLA Portfolios.
- Faculty assessors will be trained on the UC PLA Portfolio policy and how to apply it.
- The decision to award credit will remain with the faculty member assessing the portfolio.
- Faculty will use established rubrics to evaluate portfolios.
- The process of applying for PLAP should be transparent and accessible for students, reducing barriers to PLAP application and completion.
- Well published and supported timelines must be adhered to by students, staff and faculty.

Outcome 6: Recommendations for Financial Strategies and Pricing

- The fees for assessment should be based on actual costs of providing the assessment.
- Fees should be charged based on credit requested, not credit awarded.
- Fees should be published and consistently applied.
- Fees should be consistent to the extent possible across colleges.

Other Recommendations: The following are areas where the Task Force believes that further detail or strategies may be necessary, but that did not fit in the framework of the six outcome areas in the charge.

- **Credit for Workforce Training:** The Task Force recommends that UC colleges and programs evaluate the recommendations by American Council on Education for workforce training found through the web-based resource the National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training (<http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/National-Guide-to-College-Credit-for-Workforce-Training.aspx>) and determine a policy for accepting this credit as a standalone recommendation or as part of a PLAP application.

- **Distance Learning:** The Task Force recommends that each program's PLA policy addresses accessibility for distance learning students in a consistent and affordable way.
- **Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs):** The Task Force recommends that each college and program should determine if and how MOOCs will be evaluated as part of the PLA process, including considerations of certificates of completion received for MOOCs.
- **Veterans:** The Task Force recommends that the focus of considerations for UC Veterans and PLA be focused on billing and marketing.
- **Graduate Students:** PLA credit for graduate students should be offered when possible, and should not exceed 12 credit hours. Those hours should be counted toward the total number of advanced standing credits that a graduate student can receive in general.
- **Students with Disabilities:** In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act¹⁰ and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act¹¹, all PLAs must be made accessible for individuals with disabilities in order to reduce the impact of the student's disability and ensure that the assessments are measuring the student knowledge.

¹⁰ United States Congress, *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, As Amended*. Washington, D.C., 2008
<http://www.ada.gov/pubs/adastatute08.htm>

¹¹ United States Office of Civil Rights, *Fact Sheet: Your Rights Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*, Washington, D.C., 2006 <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/resources/factsheets/504.pd>

University of Cincinnati
Recommendation to the Board of Trustees
For Action

Date: May 27, 2014

Title: University of Cincinnati College Completion Plan

Synopsis: Language in Amended Substitute. H.B. 59, or the Biennial Budget Bill of the 130th General Assembly, requires each college, university and adult career technical center in the University System of Ohio to develop an institution-specific Campus Completion Plan that is consistent with the institution's mission and strategic priorities. Each plan will include specific, measureable completion goals; a mix of strategies and tactics, a communications strategy and metrics for success.

It is recommended that the Board of Regents approve the attached University of Cincinnati College Completion Plan which outlines UC's success strategies and metrics related to retention, graduation rates, time to degree, academic success and financial literacy and assistance. The plan was created by a comprehensive and inclusive taskforce and has been fully vetted across the university community.

Prepared by: Debra Merchant
Debra Merchant
Vice President for Student Affairs

Prepared by: Caroline B. Miller
Caroline B. Miller
Sr. Assoc. Vice President, Enrollment

Reviewed by: Beverly Davenport
Beverly Davenport
Sr. Vice President for Academic Affairs & Provost

APPROVED

JUN 23 2014

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

FOR BOARD OFFICE USE ONLY:

Recommendation Number: 14.06.23.04

Date of Board Approval: June 23, 2014 Submitted by: Nancy A. Quillian
President