

March 23, 2021

Sent Via Email

Student Success Initiative – Ask Alma Implementation Team

Ashley M. Davis, College of Education, *co-chair*
Arianna Holterman, Office of the Dean of Students, *co-chair*
Emma Andruczyk, The Career Center
Charlotte Bauer, Graduate College
Jen Carson, Auxiliary Health & Wellbeing Marketing
Ashley Dye, Fraternity & Sorority Affairs
Christine Edwards, Office of Student Financial Aid
Teri Farr, Campus Center for Advising & Academic Services
Hilary Frakes, Office of Undergraduate Admissions
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Chanda Hott, University Housing
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Caitlin Lantz, Counseling Center
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Jodi Silotto, Public Affairs
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Kendra Wieneke, Siebel Center for Design
Debby Willard, Office of Undergraduate Admissions
Ruby Barraza, Provost's Undergraduate Student Advisory Board
Garv Jain, Provost's Undergraduate Student Advisory Board
Alek Lucic, Provost's Undergraduate Student Advisory Board
Mary Marshall, Provost's Undergraduate Student Advisory Board
Zack Tollakson, Provost's Undergraduate Student Advisory Board

Dear Colleagues:

Launched in fall 2019, the campus' Student Success Initiative (SSI) has taken a comprehensive view in defining student success, establishing goals, and collecting feedback. To work toward the common goal of institution-level improvements in equity and inclusion, four teams were tasked to assess student responsibility, participation, and performance. Additionally, structural and systemic barriers that impede student progress were analyzed.

With collaboration from Academic and Student Affairs, and relying heavily on the expertise of colleagues from across campus, the initial phase invited faculty, staff, and student voices to recognize and advance the good work already being done and identify opportunities to facilitate equitable and inclusive outcomes for our students. Although unforeseen, the COVID-19 pandemic provided additional insight, and the task force teams submitted final reports with

recommendations that were thorough, aspirational, broad, and relevant.

The Student Success Initiative continues to a second phase with the assembly of teams to implement some of the key recommendations from the task forces teams' final reports. We hope you will accept our invitation to serve on the **Ask Alma Implementation Team**. Ashley M. Davis, Visiting Coordinator for Undergraduate Recruitment and Career Services, College of Education, and Arianna Holterman, Assistant Dean of Students, Office of the Dean of Students, have agreed to chair this group.

The Ask Alma implementation work invites compiling and coordinating campus resources to include in a database for students that is user-friendly, interactive, and robust. We are fortunate to offer a myriad of resources and opportunities to our students. However, navigating these many resources is a significant challenge to many of our students. Racial equity gaps present challenges for underrepresented and minoritized students in navigating institutional systems. The inability to access resources impedes participation in curricular and co-curricular experiences and adversely impacts a students' sense of belonging to our campus community. We are also fortunate to have access to human and technological resources to assist in developing an advanced, on-demand system. With these assets and considerations in mind, and limiting implicit and explicit biases, the Ask Alma Implementation team is asked to:

- Develop content for a Frequently Asked Questions feature to be used for a 24-hour helpline for non-emergency questions and for directions to appropriate emergency resources.
- Think through and devise ways the Ask Alma platform can close pre-existing equity gaps and establish an anti-racist environment through technology.
- Recommend ways to make this platform user-friendly, interactive, and inclusive.
- Provide strategies to encourage buy-in from all campus stakeholders and assure students the platform will be encompassing, up-to-date, and useful. Student voice and input must be central throughout this endeavor.

We ask your implementation team to focus on experiences that provide all students with a solid foundation to support continued success. This focus should be balanced by the needs of those students who are most likely to leave the university before earning an Illinois degree (e.g., low income, first generation, students living with disabilities, etc.). Your work should identify nationally recognized best practices and critical frameworks and consider exemplar models and resources already employed at our institution or other institutions, keeping in mind that the time to employ necessary interventions is quite short.

All work of the Student Success Initiative is guided by foundational core values to promote systemic change across the university. Please be sure to read carefully and frequently reference the core values statement, which is included as an enclosure with this charge letter, throughout your work. With students at the heart of every decision, these core values are embedded throughout our initiative to preclude racial equity gaps, inconsistencies, and miscommunication between institutional stakeholders. Common language fostering an inclusive, anti-racist environment and an unwavering commitment to student completion shall be derived from these core values.

Your team will have access to administrative support through Teresa Spence in the Office of the Provost. In addition, a Box folder pre-populated with a several documents are available to serve as a resource as your discussions unfold.

We are grateful for your willingness to serve, and we look forward to the team's recommendations. An update to the Council of Undergraduate Deans and Student Affairs Leadership Team will be due on May 14, 2021 with a full report following by October 15, 2021.

We appreciate the many demands on your time; if you are unable to accept this invitation, please let *Teresa Spence (tcspence@illinois.edu) know by Monday, March 29, 2021.*

Sincerely,



Andreas C. Cangellaris
Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs and Provost
M.E. Van Valkenburg Professor of Electrical and
Computer Engineering



Danita M. B. Young
Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs