

February 3, 2021

Student Success Initiative – First Year Academic Experience Task Force

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Kelly Ritter, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, *ex officio*
Laura Hendley, Provost's Office, *ex officio*
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Dear Colleagues,

Launched in fall 2019, the campus' Student Success Initiative has taken a wide view in defining student success, establishing goals, and collecting feedback. Last year's principled look assessed student responsibility, participation, and performance, and it analyzed structural and systemic barriers that impede student progress.

With collaboration from Academic and Student Affairs and relying heavily on the expertise of colleagues from across campus, the initial phase in 2019-2020 invited faculty, staff, and student voices to recognize and advance the good work already being done, identifying current opportunities for effective future outcomes. In spite of – and, in many ways, informed by the COVID-19 pandemic – four implementation teams submitted final reports with recommendations that are thorough, aspirational, broad, and relevant.

In the second phase, the Student Success Initiative continues by assembling teams to implement some of the key recommendations that came from the task forces' final reports.

One of the major concerns associated with the COVID-19 pandemic is the effect on student learning. In particular, we know that new freshmen students entering the University in the Fall 2021 semester had a severely truncated high school experience, both academically and socially. We also know that the pandemic has affected students unevenly, with low-income and underserved communities disproportionately losing out on educational experiences. This Task Force is asked to specifically consider academic preparation and recommend interventions we can undertake to help students “catch up” and have a successful academic career at Illinois.

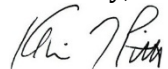
In particular, I ask that this task force:

- Consider the range of preparation and types of academic concerns this cohort will present, particularly in first year, foundational courses.
- Propose interventions that we can undertake to help compensate for “lost learning” due to the pandemic. These interventions might be through additional materials, short-courses, co-instruction or other ideas.
- Consider how we can address inequities in learning loss and ways that underrepresented groups can be aided through this effort.
- Collaborate closely with instructors assigned to teach these foundational courses. Their involvement and participation is key to successfully implementing these interventions.
- Consider the resources necessary to carry out the proposed interventions. For example, graduate degree completion has slowed due to the pandemic, can we take advantage of additional graduate personnel to carry out supplemental support?

As you know, the time is short to develop and implement interventions for the cohort entering in the Fall 2021. Please provide an interim report by March 15, 2021 and a final report by May 1, 2021.

Thank you for agreeing to serve. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Kevin T. Pitts

Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education