

March 3, 2021

Sent Via Email

**Student Success Initiative – Gateway Grades, Retention and Graduation Study
Implementation Team**

Jeremy Tyson, College of Liberal Arts, Department of Mathematics *co-chair*

Kristy Valentin, College of Liberal Arts, *co-chair*

Jenny Amos, Senate Educational Policy Committee

Tekita Bankhead, Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center

Shari Clapp, Division of Intercollegiate Athletics

Domonic Cobb, Office of Minority Student Affairs

Stephen Fuqua, Division of Intercollegiate Athletics

Rod Hoewing, Office of the Registrar

Kathy Martensen, Office of the Provost

Jennifer McNeilly, College of Liberal Arts, Department of Math

Shawna Patterson-Stephens, Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations

Susann Sears, Disability Resources & Educational Services

Sarah Sheeley, College of Liberal Arts, Department of Chemistry

Thomas Skottene, Office of Enrollment Management

Emily Stuby, Division of Management Information

Dustin Tarter, Office of Undergraduate Admissions

Jamie Thomas-Ward, College of Liberal Arts, Department of Economics

Nicole Turner, Senate Educational Policy Committee

Ross Wantland, Office of Academic Inclusive Excellence

Maryalice Wu, Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning

Craig Zilles, Grainger College of Engineering, Department of Computer Science

Himana Ancha, Provost's Undergraduate Student Advisory Board

Reva Balakrishnan, Provost's Undergraduate Student Advisory Board

Samantha Harris, Provost's Undergraduate Student Advisory Board

Julia Ilecki, Provost's Undergraduate Student Advisory Board

Sara Tolva, 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 **Gateway Grades, Retention, and Graduation Study Implementation Team**. Jeremy Tyson, Professor, Department of Math and Kristy Valentin, Director, College of Liberal Arts, Access & Achievement Program, have agreed to chair this group.

We ask the Gateway Grades, Retention, and Graduation Study Implementation Team to expand the work done as part of the [Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities' Powered by Publics \(APLU PxP\) initiative](#) by the Big Ten Academic Alliance Cluster. The APLU PxP is comprised of approximately 130 universities and state systems grouped into 16 transformation "clusters." The initiative is scaling student success by setting the goals of increasing awarded degrees by 2025; working to eliminate the achievement gap for low-income, minority, and first-generation students; and expanding access to higher education for students from all backgrounds. Starting in late 2018, the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) Cluster has been engaged in the APLU PxP with a focus on increasing student retention and persistence by decreasing achievement gaps. The first phase of this work has resulted in identification of large, gateway courses essentially shared across participating institutions, looking at data on students who earn letter grades of D or F or who withdraw from the courses, and considering impacts on retention and graduation rates. This data analysis illustrates disproportionate impact on underrepresented and minoritized groups.

Building on and expanding this work, the Gateway Grades, Retention, and Graduation Study Implementation Team is charged to do the following, bearing in mind and limiting all implicit and explicit biases throughout:

- Compile the BTAA Cluster data and your team's data to expound on the recommendations.
- Research and identify nationally recognized best practices and critical frameworks to inform new equitable policies and practices.
- Request, review, and critically analyze additional data to further understand campus-specific impact, and ramifications.
- Based on your team's findings and research, provide specific recommendations as to how to best make appropriate academic units and campus leaders aware of the critical analysis and conclusions and the impact on students.
- Recommend equitable policies and culturally responsive pedagogical practices to best match student preparation and course content and pedagogy.
- Highlight existing programming and other initiatives celebrating the experiences of



underrepresented and minoritized student groups, including expansion of and ways to refine this programming as applicable to support student success. Student voice and input must be central throughout this endeavor.

Recommendations may include re-evaluation of existing policies and procedures, broadening access to exemplar programs, and/or investment in the creation of new programmatic offerings.

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 1, 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* (tjspence@illinois.edu) know by *Wednesday, March 10, 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