

**REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE TO REVIEW UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE (UC)
December 2023**

INTRODUCTION

The University of Iowa (UI) Operations Manual requires that reviews of colleges and programs be conducted regularly, and when judged appropriate the internal review can be limited and focused. In accordance with this operating procedure, UI Executive Vice President and Provost Kevin Kregel formed a committee (“the Review Committee”) and charged it to conduct a focused, abbreviated review of University College (UC) and to prepare this report. The Review Committee members are listed in Appendix A.

Materials Consulted and Individuals/Groups Interviewed

Materials used to inform the Review Committee included the Provost’s charge for the review and UC’s self-study. Individuals and groups interviewed were selected by the Provost’s Office and included UI leadership and individuals from UC and its affiliated units. Interviews were conducted via Zoom between October 30 and November 1, 2023. A full list of those interviewed appears in Appendix B. Specific areas that the Review Committee was charged to focus on are listed in Appendix C and serve as the subheadings in the body of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strengths

- Proactive focus on student success
- Leadership
- Collaboration
- Innovative approaches and partnerships to serve students across the entire UI

Future Directions

- Additional collaboration within UC and beyond to align student success initiatives for increased scale and impact
- Continue to strive for student and faculty success as primary mission
- Further conversations for continued alignment with UI colleges
- Explore various models for expanding services (e.g., a fee-based service for media and technology services, particularly within Distance and Online Education) to support enhanced undergraduate learning and provide additional resources to UC to further expand opportunities for student success
- Continue with data-driven approach

BODY OF REPORT

1a. Does UC optimally deploy instructional resources to achieve the UI strategic plan objectives of supporting undergraduate student learning?

Yes, UC optimally deploys instructional resources to achieve the UI strategic plan objectives of supporting undergraduate student learning. UC, created in 2005, serves an important role at the UI and is an academic home for numerous courses and programs that span multiple units.

UC offers two bachelor's degrees: a bachelor of applied studies (BAS) and a bachelor of liberal studies (BLS). These programs allow students who have prior college credit to earn a four-year degree. It also offers undergraduate certificate programs in clinical and translational science, leadership studies, nonprofit leadership and philanthropy, and sustainability. In addition, several K–12 programs are also administered through academic units that are associated with UC.

UC is committed to the success of all UI students. This commitment is demonstrated in the programs and services offered through Orientation Services, On Iowa!, First Gen Hawks, Honors at Iowa, Academic Support and Retention, Distance and Online Education (DOE), Army and Air Force ROTC, Iowa Veteran Education, Transition, and Support (IVETS), the A. Craig Baird Debate Forum, and the Office of Scholar Development.

The major strengths that allow UC to carry out its mission include its staff and leadership. UC personnel show excellent collaboration with one another and with individuals from other UI colleges. Campus-wide partnerships with UC Dean Tanya Uden-Holman and her staff are strong. UC faculty and staff are viewed as responsive, engaged, and solution-oriented problem-solvers with high engagement and participation. UC personnel were reported to be proactive, open to feedback, innovative, and well-resourced. Those interviewed identified positive relationships repeatedly as a strength of UC.

UC's activities are broad, with the end goal of promoting student success. Everyone interviewed by the Review Committee reported having a clear sense of how UC supports undergraduate learning. UC plays a key role in the UI's success in retaining and graduating students, thereby generating tuition revenue for UI and strengthening the workforce of the State of Iowa. UC provides support for students at all stages of their academic career. For incoming students, UC provides summer orientation, OnIowa!, the online "Success at Iowa" course, and first-year experience courses. For enrolled students, UC developed and maintains the underlying infrastructure for peer mentors, learning assistants, supplemental instruction, and tutoring in courses offered by other UI colleges. For students who need non-traditional courses, UC offers a range of 4- and 8-week courses (which often support retention by allowing students who drop a course the opportunity to enroll in a shorter course that prevents the student from jeopardizing financial aid); the BAS and BLS degree programs help place-bound students earn a UI degree. For advanced students looking for leadership opportunities, UC employs students as orientation leaders, undergraduate learning assistants, peer mentors, and supplemental instruction leaders. UC provides training to ensure these student workers have the skills and support they need to be successful in supporting other students and their success.

UC views supporting faculty as an important part of improving student success. UC works with faculty across the university to add supplemental instruction or learning assistants to particular courses. In addition, instructional technology and course design staff in DOE assist faculty with development of ICON pages and online courses. UC's recent partnership with the Excellence in Teaching and Learning P3 project and the ongoing collaboration with the Center for Teaching have increased the number of faculty who know about and use the support UC provides.

1b. Does the University College optimally deploy instructional resources to achieve the UI strategic plan objectives of cost containment through efficiency and innovation?

Yes, UC examines effective and innovative practices in order to improve success. There is evidence that UC is improving graduation rates. The highly collaborative nature of UC was exemplified by one individual, who reported that UC personnel “are constantly hustling to partner with programs.”

It was reported to the Review Committee that UC does a very good job of collecting data and revising its approaches on an annual basis. UC partners report that UC is data-informed, data-supported, and undertakes continual evolution of its programs. In particular, UC works closely with the UI Office of Assessment to access data and metrics about student experiences to provide support to students. UC’s Academic Support and Retention (AS&R) office provides an example of how UC has responded to students’ needs. Within the last 10 years, AS&R has grown from two full-time staff members to twelve full-time staff members. However, AS&R was still viewed by those interviewed as a program that is efficient and appropriately sized.

UC was reported to be highly innovative, and it moves quickly to develop needed programs. For example, UC directed resources and staff to start the First Gen Hawks program, which it did in a few short months. UC was reported to be creative and able to work within budget constraints to do things that will help students, and UC leadership will advocate for more resources when it is warranted. UC relies on research-driven strategies to promote student success. Moreover, UC does not “own” programs so much as it facilitates them via multiple campus partners. The fact that it shares resources across multiple bases speaks to its strategic innovation and efficiency.

2. Does UC tactically work to align collegiate resources and messaging with important needs within the State of Iowa?

Yes, UC tactically works to align collegiate resources and messaging with important needs within the State of Iowa. UC’s administration of online degree completion programs supports the workforce needs for Iowa’s place-bound students; on campus, UC’s many other programs and support services help students persist and progress toward graduation and fulfill the workforce demands of Iowa. Further, UC supports the transitional and academic needs of military and veteran students, which is also a UI priority.

As discussed in the following sections, UC’s online courses have also become increasingly popular for on-campus students, who may take one or two of them to enhance the flexibility of their course schedules.

Regarding messaging, most UC messaging is internal to the campus, promoting resources to students and staff to support undergraduate learning and student success (with the notable exception of the online BAS and BLS programs). Individual units within UC do an effective job of messaging to students and faculty what they do.

UC offers short-term courses that allow for increased degree completion. Their structure is different than other courses in ways that are helpful to students. Demand for these courses comes from students across the state as well as from on-campus learners.

UC promotes the development of citizen-leaders. UC provides peer mentors, undergraduate learning assistants, supplemental instruction leaders, and orientation leaders. UC's employment opportunities include robust training for students to develop leadership skills that they can take with them after they graduate.

UC units and the diversity among them are strengths. A vast array of diverse offices and services within UC serve students across the entire university. Many of these initiatives are university-wide, and students in a variety of different colleges utilize them.

3a. Does the organizational structure of UC align in a way that is most efficient and effective, or would a different organizational structure be appropriate?

The structure of UC is working. Changing to a different organizational structure is not advised.

Several UC units recently relocated to a new location on campus so that most UC units are now housed in a common building. Several people mentioned to the Review Committee how this shared location is increasing interpersonal interactions and improving collaboration among UC units. Overall, this move will result in further enhanced communication and collaboration among UC units going forward.

The UI community is highly familiar with the various UC units, but it is relatively unclear about what "University College" is. Thus, there is an opportunity to create a more cohesive understanding of UC itself, but this is not necessarily an issue of concern. Currently, UC's recognition comes via its individual units, which are generally well-known and highly regarded. While there may be benefits from centralized messaging from and about University College, the Review Committee suggests continuing to message primarily from the individual UC units.

UC is carrying out significant and important work through its units, supporting a wide range of students from different backgrounds and with different needs. UC has an important story to tell, if not to students, then to UI faculty and staff who can direct students to UC units. At present, there is some confusion on behalf of faculty and staff with respect to when and to which unit to refer a particular student (e.g., Academic Support & Retention in UC versus Student Care and Assistance in the Division of Student Life).

Looking forward, UC will need to consider how to engage and interact with UI colleges (e.g., Tippie College of Business) that are building their own student success support ecosystems. UC will have to consider how to address differing needs of different colleges—centrally or locally—and whether there is duplication of efforts. This can create inefficiency with resources and services and can also create confusion for students on where to seek out support.

UC is highly responsive to student needs, and it undergoes realignment based on student needs; these attributes are strengths. It carries out constant assessment and evolution of programs, which is vital for the continued growth and development of UC and the UI.

UC is achieving measurable outcomes, and it has opportunities and the potential for scaling up particular initiatives/units to enhance student success. UC follows the data to see how to structure its services.

3b. Does the organizational structure of UC support the needs and requirements of the online BAS and BLS degree programs?

UC's BLS and BAS degree programs give vital access to students across the state who are unable to travel to participate in a traditional degree program. Therefore, the programs are wholly online. Students fully appreciate the courses and the advising they receive. However, important work needs to be done.

Systemic issues with course offerings exist. Many of these issues stem from the fact that the courses required for the BLS and BAS degrees are housed in and controlled by other colleges. Students cannot count on certain courses being offered consistently, and distance students are unable to enroll in some courses, because these online courses have become popular with on-campus students, especially after the COVID pandemic. BLS and BAS degrees need to be prioritized within the colleges for these programs to serve their students effectively. The UC should consider including this discussion as a part of the broader enrollment strategy and course offerings for highly sought after courses, balancing online demands with in-person demands.

Resources are an issue, particularly at a time of diminishing enrollment. UC is under pressure to recruit more students and increase enrollment in the BLS and BAS programs, but they have limited staff and courses available. UC is also witnessing competition from other universities—including for-profit universities—that offer online degrees. UC staff supporting the BLS and BAS programs need increased partnerships with those on campus who can help with marketing and assessment of the online classes and degree programs so as to bolster enrollment in a competitive environment.

UC lost two staff members recently, and their positions were eliminated due to declining enrollment. Each BAS/BLS student has their own individualized degree and plan of study, so they need high-touch advising, which is time-intensive. As mentioned, UC has limited control over course offerings. UC and the other colleges should work together to identify courses that can be offered online on a regular basis with priority enrollment for BAS/BLS students.

Online students want a mixture of courses, more specific majors, and credentialing courses. As noted above, there is a growing body of on-campus students who want online classes for flexibility. UC is being asked to grow its online classes, but there are fewer “seats” for them in the virtual classroom. Given the demand for online courses from students who reside in various physical locations and colleges, increasing the availability of such offerings would be beneficial for everyone.

5. Other Topics

- Alignment between UC and other campus programs and efforts—In many UI colleges, there is an interest in building out college success infrastructure. There is a need for intentional conversations about how to do this to ensure all UI students are provided equitable experiences. Should UC scale some of its infrastructure back as other colleges build their infrastructure up? How does the UI sponsor conversations and collaborations so that students do not have five different units reaching out them, and risk marginalizing them further?

- Space—UC's move to Calvin Hall is viewed quite positively. There may be more UC space needs in the future that would require consideration, as student leaders (mentors, graduate assistants) mentioned that they could not have private conversations, because they are housed in cubicles. There are also opportunities for new collaborations regarding the renovations happening at the Iowa Memorial Union. Regarding testing space, there is high demand at certain times, and there is a demand for more and improved testing space for students with disabilities.
- Excelling @ Iowa—UC could leverage additional support for this tool. The UI has several software programs in which notes about meetings with students can be entered (e.g., MAUI, Maxient). Multiple university constituents within and beyond UC could work together to consider how these systems can be integrated and used to maximize communication, coordinating support in an effort to foster student success while also keeping necessary information confidential. It would also enable staff to obtain a more comprehensive picture of students' engagement with various offices across campus.
- UC's instructional design component (online course development, media services)—There is a high demand for these UC services (which do not exist elsewhere else on campus), but the current GEF budget model does not include revenue changes for professional tuition and courses offered outside of the model (e.g., professional MBA). Essentially UC is providing them free of charge to these non-GEF programs, which make considerable money from enrollment in those courses. The potential for having these non-GEF programs somehow pay for these services should be considered.

Appendix A. Members of the Ad Hoc Committee to Review UC

- Nicholas Bowman, Mary Louise Petersen Chair in Higher Education and Professor of Higher Education and Student Affairs, College of Education, University of Iowa—Committee Chair
- Cynthia Farthing, Associate Professor of Instruction of Mathematics, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Iowa
- Tom Paulsen, Senior Associate Director, Office of Admissions, University of Iowa
- Amy Goodburn, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean, Undergraduate Education, University of Nebraska-Lincoln—External Reviewer
- Beth Lingren Clark, Associate Vice Provost for Retention and Transition Programs, Office of Undergraduate Education, University of Minnesota Twin Cities—External Reviewer

Appendix B. Individuals Interviewed by the Review Committee

Dean

- Tanya Uden-Holman: Dean of the University College and Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education

University College Leadership

- Andrew Beckett: Associate Dean, University College
- Anne Zalenski: Associate Dean, University College
- Deanna Green: Budget Officer, University College
- Annette Beck: Director, Operational Services, University College

Excellence in Teaching and Learning—Core Partners

- Mirra Anson: Director, Student Academic Success and Strategic Initiatives
- Anna Flaming: Director, Center for Teaching
- Wayne Jacobson: Director, Office of Assessment

Academic Support and Transition/Retention Programs

- Tina Arthur: Director, Orientation Services
- Stephanie Preschel: Director, Academic Success, Academic Support & Retention
- Stephanie Huntington: Associate Director, Academic Support & Retention

Student Success and Outreach

- Paul Bellus: Director, A. Craig Baird Debate Forum
- Kelly Thornburg: Director, Scholar Development
- Shaun Vecera: Director, Honors Program

IVETS and ROTC Programs

- Lt. Col. Matthew Youmans: ROTC, Air Force
- Lt. Col. Todd Kuebler: ROTC, Army
- Tara Lamb: Director, Academic Resources, IVETS
- Matthew Miller: Director, Student Support Services, IVETS

Bachelor of Applied Studies/Bachelor of Liberal Studies

- Dawn Freerks: Director, Advising and Student Support Services
- Angela Ward: Academic Advisor, Bachelor of Applied Studies and Liberal Studies
- Mollie Willis: Academic Advisor, Bachelor of Applied Studies and Liberal Studies
- Michelle Maxwell: Administrative Services Coordinator, Distance and Online Education

University College Coursework

- Robert Kirby: Director, Office of Undergraduate Research (oversees Undergraduate Research Experiences courses)
- Amanda McFadden: Director, Academic and Leadership Programs, Pomerantz Career Center
- Maureen Schaeffer: Assistant Provost, Director of Academic Advising Center (oversees College Success Initiatives courses)

Distance and Online Education

- Susan Bailey: Director, Instructional Design
- Ron Kral: Director, Media Services
- Laura Sinn: Director, Course Administration and Exam Services
- Barrett Thomas: Senior Associate Dean, Tippie College of Business

Campus Partners/Constituents

- Sarah Hansen: Vice President, Student Life
- Von Stange: Assistant Vice President Student life, Director, Housing and Dining
- William Nelson: Associate Dean and Executive Director, IMU
- Teri Schnelle: Director, Projects, and Partnerships
- Mike Venzon: Director, Student Disability Services
- Julie Fell: Assistant Provost, University Registrar
- Liz Tovar: Executive Officer and Associate Vice President, Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Undergraduate Associate Deans

- Nicole Grosland: Associate Dean, College of Engineering
- Charles Keene: Associate Dean, College of Business
- Mark McDermott: Associate Dean, College of Education
- Anita Nicholson: College of Nursing (served as Associate Dean until July 2023)

Student Executive Team

- Tyler Brown
- Kalyn Haslam
- Olivia Van Fosson-Roelfs

Student Leaders/Graduate Assistants (GAs)

- Harold Walehwa (SI/PLUS GA)
- Seth Kochheiser (FGH GA)
- Emilia Moody (Metacognition Mentor and LA PM)
- Madelyn Anderson Trotter (FGH PM)
- Olivia Young (SI Leader)

First Gen Hawks

- Natalie Santiago (FGH and works as ASR receptionist)

BAS/BLS Students

- Nicholas Gustafson
- Elizabeth Jackson

Appendix C. Areas of Focus (from the Charge for the Review)

1. Does UC optimally deploy instructional resources to achieve the UI strategic plan objectives of:
 - a) supporting undergraduate student learning?
 - b) cost containment through efficiency and innovation?
2. Does UC tactically work to align collegiate resources and messaging with important needs within the State of Iowa?
3. Does the organizational structure of UC:
 - a) align in a way that is most efficient and effective, or would a different organizational structure be appropriate?
 - a) support the needs and requirements of the online BAS and BLS degree programs?

END OF REPORT