

**Undergraduate Education Portfolio Committee:
Final Report**

**University of Kentucky
November 14, 2008**

Executive Summary

The Undergraduate Education Portfolio Committee recommends creating an undergraduate college led by an academic dean. The newly-formed undergraduate college (the University College) and dean (Dean of the University College and Undergraduate Studies) will be responsible for:

- Facilitating campus-wide discussion and action to enhance undergraduate education;
- Coordinating and enhancing the academic success of all undergraduates (as defined through retention and graduation rates), meeting the particular needs of exploratory students (a term we prefer to the rather pejorative “undeclared students”), and granting inter-disciplinary baccalaureate degrees;
- Creating quality, out-of-class academic experiences for undergraduate students; and
- Enhancing instructional-development efforts.

The Committee strongly believes that the long-term success of the newly-formed college and dean depends on adequate funding and staffing and a central presence on campus.

Report in Full

The Undergraduate Education Portfolio Committee, charged by Provost Subbaswamy to make recommendations on how best to restructure undergraduate education and related academic services, met during the fall semester. The Committee report reflects the insights of:

- Erica Caton, Engagement Director, Gatton College of Business and Economics
- Phil Harling, Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, *Committee Chair*
- Randolph Hollingsworth, Assistant Provost
- Nancy Johnson, Associate Dean, Gatton College of Business and Economics
- Michael Mullen, Associate Dean, College of Agriculture
- Toni Thomas, Assistant to the Provost for Retention Services, Multicultural Student Affairs
- Kirsten Turner, Assistant Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
- Bruce Walcott, Associate Dean, College of Engineering

- Kathryn Wong, Senior Program Manager, Teaching and Academic Service Center (TASC)
- Linda Worley, Professor, Department of Modern and Classical Languages (Professor Worley was appointed to the Committee, but was on scholarly leave during the fall semester. She, however, provided the Committee with excellent input from afar.)
- Ernie Yanarella, Chellgren Professor, Department of Political Science

The Committee began its deliberations by reviewing several documents, including (1) the external review reports of Academic Enhancement, the Central Advising Center, the Stuckert Career Center, and TASC; (2) former Associate Provost Phil Kraemer’s whitepaper, *Time for a General College at UK?*; and (3) Graduate Dean and Interim Associate Provost Jeannine Blackwell’s whitepaper, *Proposed Restructuring of Undergraduate Education and Academic Services*. The Committee also relied on the attached benchmark report (see Appendix).

Recommendation: Create a new position of Dean of the University College and Undergraduate Studies.

The Committee recommends creating an undergraduate college led by an academic dean. The newly-formed undergraduate college and dean will be responsible for:

- Facilitating campus-wide discussion and action to enhance undergraduate education;
- Coordinating and enhancing the academic success of all undergraduates (as defined through retention and graduation rates), meeting the particular needs of exploratory students (a term we prefer to the rather pejorative “undeclared students”), and granting inter-disciplinary baccalaureate degrees;
- Creating quality out-of-class academic experiences for undergraduate students; and
- Enhancing instructional-development efforts.

We stress at the outset that these responsibilities must be clearly focused. In our opinion, the current portfolio of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies includes too many functions that are at most tangentially related to these responsibilities. It is manifestly unwise for a large Committee to try to come up with even a detailed outline, much less a blueprint for the sort of administrative restructuring that will be necessary to ensure that the new dean is able to avoid the “mission creep” that afflicts the current office of Associate Provost. But such restructuring will be necessary. For a well-reasoned model of how this might be carried out, we point to Dean Blackwell’s whitepaper, which recommends the creation of an Associate Provost of Academic Services to assume a number of important functions that are not centrally related to the mission of the Dean of the University College and Undergraduate Studies as defined above.

Let us stress at the outset that, in our view, long-term success depends on adequate funding and staffing and a central presence on campus. The Committee understands the current budgetary constraints faced by the University. Nevertheless, if the Dean of the University College and Undergraduate Studies is to meet with success across the broad range of

endeavors, then he or she will need to benefit from very substantial recurring investment, adequate staffing, and a central location.

a. Recurring budgets: A common theme emerges from the external review reports of subunits that currently report to the Associate Provost of Undergraduate Education – that of serious budgetary constraint. There is clearly very good work being carried out in many of these units despite limited budgets. But it seems clear to us that if a revamped undergraduate portfolio housed within the University College is to meet well its expansive objectives, it will need to be better and more reliably funded than is the current portfolio. A new college should only be established if and when adequate recurring resources are secured to underwrite its success.

b. Staffing: Additional staffing will also be necessary to support the University College. Beyond the recommendation to hire a college dean, the Committee recommends hiring additional support administrators (two associate/assistant deans) to help the dean implement the College’s far-flung agenda. Benchmark administrators warn that undergraduate colleges tend to become understaffed as their responsibilities grow while the personnel devoted to carrying out these responsibilities does not. Beyond administrative personnel, the Committee recommends immediate increases in staffing in the center for faculty development (see recommendation IV).

In addition, the Committee offers two long-term staffing suggestions: (1) embed a development officer in the college and (2) embed an assessment officer in the college. Some of our benchmark institutions have both. For example, one institution employs two development officers in undergraduate education. These officers have raised more than \$70 million for undergraduate education. The funds are endowed and pay out \$4 million per year, which is given to students in the form of fellowships and grants to participate in experiential-learning opportunities. Benchmark administrators report that these funds are easy to raise, as donors are eager to support student participation in these types of learning opportunities. Similarly, the Committee believes it is important that a new undergraduate college lead the campus in assessment – both programmatic and curricular assessment. Thus we recommend that at an early point in the University College’s development an assessment officer from the University’s Office of Assessment be embedded within it.

c. Central location: Finally, the Committee believes that a central location for the University College and its subunits is particularly important. Symbolically this demonstrates to the University community and beyond the importance the institution places on undergraduate education. Practically it allows students, faculty and staff to access easily the important resources available to them through this college.

I. The Dean of the University College and Undergraduate Studies should facilitate campus-wide discussion and action to enhance undergraduate education.

UK needs a champion of undergraduate education who is viewed as an equal colleague on the Dean’s Council and in upper-administration discussions. The Dean of the University College and Undergraduate Studies should be that champion. He or she should serve

symbolically and practically as the University's point-person and leader for all non-college-based undergraduate education, and should help foster a more collaborative approach to undergraduate education among the deans of the undergraduate colleges.

The Committee envisions that the undergraduate dean will lead all institutional planning dealing with non-collegiate-based undergraduate education. In many of the benchmark institutions, such a person brokers on-campus conversations by bringing together multiple people and perspectives to form a common purpose and to implement coordinated efforts. Admittedly, such responsibility will be a tall order given UK's decentralized structure. In many respects the undergraduate dean will be responsible for creating an environment wherein other campus leaders willingly allocate their internal resources to issues pertaining to undergraduate education. Thus the undergraduate dean will need to be skilled in facilitation, cooperation, and negotiation – attributes that undergraduate leaders at benchmarked institutions deem absolutely vital to their success.

Given that the new dean will serve as a clearinghouse for undergraduate issues, the Committee recommends that the dean utilize pre-existing structures, such as the excellent Advising Network and the Academic Deans and Directors Working Group, but also create new mechanisms to solicit information. Benchmark institutions offer several different structures. The University of Illinois, for instance, convenes a Council of Undergraduate Deans. The council is made up of faculty-administrators who have the authority to amend college policies that do not have to go to the senate council. The council works to coordinate and implement advising policies and procedures that facilitate a smooth transition for students as they flow back and forth between colleges. Another example is the University of Iowa's All-Campus Retention Task Force. The task force is made up of approximately 175 people – everyone on campus who has a direct impact on student success. The group meets twice per semester, and once a summer for an annual retreat. At the retreat 3-4 projects are collectively identified. The task force is then divided into teams to work on the identified projects. Several other benchmark undergraduate units have set aside seed money to pilot policies and/or programs. The seed money (anywhere from \$50,000 to \$500,000) allows the units to be innovative. Institutional leaders argue that since they do not have large budgets the annual seed money enables them to move undergraduate education initiatives forward. These institutions facilitate campus-wide discussions each year on how best to advance undergraduate education.

An undergraduate dean will also be the administrative leader of a newly-formed University College. In this capacity, the new dean will need to create and articulate a holistic vision for a collection of fairly autonomous and well-established student-centered offices (*e.g.*, Academic Enhancement, the Honors Program, and the Chellgren Center, among others).

II. Create a new University College to coordinate and enhance the academic success of all undergraduates (as defined through retention and graduation rates), to meet the particular needs of exploratory students, and to grant inter-disciplinary baccalaureate degrees.

Undergraduate education at UK is decentralized across 11 colleges and the Provost's Office of Undergraduate Education. Such a decentralized system offers many advantages. It enables colleges to tailor their undergraduate experience to their majors; it allows best practices to emerge; and it invites an entrepreneurial spirit for student success. However, a decentralized system can also result in uneven undergraduate experiences with varying academic success rates. With little central coordination students at times are left to discover campus resources on their own in a hit-or-miss fashion. The Committee wants to preserve the best of a decentralized system, while diminishing its weaknesses. With this in mind, we recommend forming a new undergraduate college, the University College, which should be charged with coordinating and enhancing the academic success of all undergraduate students. This college will be responsible for issues pertaining to retention and graduation, including first-year academic programs. It will also be charged to provide advising to all exploratory students.

a. Promoting academic success: The challenges involved in implementing a coordinated undergraduate academic-success effort should not be underestimated. It involves bringing many disparate people and offices to the table and developing an all-encompassing plan. Our benchmarking interviews make very clear that personnel from enrollment management, student affairs, the undergraduate colleges, the advising staff, the career center, academic support units, and orientation offices need to work in unison to implement an effective academic success plan. The Committee envisions the Dean of the University College and Undergraduate Studies as the central orchestrator of this effort, whether or not all these offices directly report to him or her.

Research signals the importance of faculty involvement in student success; the Dean of the University College and Undergraduate Studies should also be charged with enlisting faculty members to promote that success. Thus the Committee recommends that the dean should be responsible for developing ways to promote faculty involvement in retention efforts, such as UK101, Academic Readiness, Summer Reading Programs, Academic Alert, House Calls, etc.

We recommend, moreover, that the new University College be responsible for academic support units that currently reside outside of academic colleges. Ideally, this would include all tutoring and support services (including athletic tutoring, CARES, Student Support Services, the Disability Center, the Robinson Scholars Program, AMSTEMM, etc.). By centralizing these units within a single University College, UK will better be able to develop complementarities among them. As difficult as it will be to achieve, we also strongly recommend finding a central location for these units that is easily accessible to students – a place that students can visit to meet most if not all of their academic support needs.

b. Serving the needs of exploratory students: The Committee recommends that the new University College be responsible for all undeclared undergraduate students. We suggest renaming this cohort “exploratory students” and advising them through the Exploratory Student Advising and Resource Center (the next iteration of Central Advising). (In similar vein, we also support the creation of a Transfer Student Advising and Resource Center.) Exploratory student advising centers are common at our benchmark institutions. These centers work with their students to explore interests and then help the students find an academic home in all good speed. In fact, at some benchmarks exploratory advising offices are evaluated on the percentage of

students they have moved out of the undergraduate college rather than evaluated on the number they retain. These offices are expected to have moved out as many as 75 percent of their students into a discipline-based college by the end of the first semester and 90 percent by the end of the first year. Exploratory students are advised in a different way than students who have already declared a major, with interest inventories and career counseling playing a conspicuous role. Thus in this model we foresee the need for a strong partnership between the Exploratory Student Advising and Resource Center and the Stuckert Career Center.

c. The granting of baccalaureate degrees: We spent considerable time discussing whether to recommend the creation/administration of degree programs in a newly-formed undergraduate college. The Committee is unanimous in its belief that many current and future interdisciplinary baccalaureate programs should reside within the University College. Thus we support moving the College of Arts and Sciences Topical Major (a create-one's-own major) to the new undergraduate college, as well as to house within it inter-collegiate degrees that are likely to emerge in the future (*e.g.*, a Sustainability major). Interdisciplinary degree programs will enhance the undergraduate college's portfolio, and might well prove to be a draw for exploratory students. In fact, it should be stressed that there is a tendency to assume that all exploratory students are such as a result of their inability to make a major declaration and/or gain entrance to their major of choice. Experience suggests that often students find the requirement to choose a pre-existing major stifling and challenging to their intellectual curiosity. The University College will offer a home to students with creative and varied interests, enabling them to engage across disciplines, and ultimately developing new and exciting collaborations and research.

We are, however, divided on the question of whether a new bachelor of general studies degree should be created and housed within the University College. Some Committee members feel there is a need for a high-quality BGS degree at UK. They cite a large number of students who would likely seek a completer degree, and who, in the absence of one, tend to choose a degree program based on convenience rather than real interest in the subject, thus virtually guaranteeing their disengagement with that subject. These Committee members believe that a BGS degree would likely increase graduation rates among such students, as well as facilitating the timely graduation of UK's transfer population. Other Committee members oppose the BGS degree, feeling that it would lack intellectual coherence and rigor and that, as such, it could easily become a soft option – as the old “Bluegrass Special” was widely perceived to be. They also wish to resist state educational oversight agency pressures to accommodate real or perceived needs to increase dramatically baccalaureate degree productivity “on the cheap” and without due regard for maintaining high academic standards.

III. Create quality out-of-class academic experiences under the auspices of the University College and Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

We recommend that the new University College should spearhead an effort to rethink the way in which UK structures experiential learning and to expand the types and number of experiential-learning opportunities available. The benchmark study reveals that a defining

characteristic of undergraduate education at our benchmark institutions is a considerably broader expanse of quality, out-of-class academic experiences than UK currently offers. These institutions define experiential learning widely to include undergraduate research, service learning, internships, externships, study abroad, public service, and the like. They also make available a wide variety of different options within discrete programs. At benchmark institutions, *undergraduate research* includes working in research teams, working independently with an individual faculty member, short-term research experiences, and multi-year research programs; *service learning* includes multi-year projects, course-specific work, and projects rooted in research; and *study abroad* includes mini-study opportunities targeted at first-year students, traditional study-abroad opportunities, and summer study opportunities, among many others. All of these experiences are designed through an inquiry-based framework and are considered an integral part of a research-university education.

Experiential learning at these institutions is not an add-on activity; it is a central part of the undergraduate experience. Students who participate in these experiences report greater satisfaction and more interaction with faculty. We hope that by rethinking experiential learning in this more expansive way that is typical of our benchmarks, a sizable portion of all UK undergraduate students will participate in a wide range of inquiry-based experiential-learning activities.

We not only recommend an expansion of the current array of experiential learning opportunities (as offered through eUreKa, experiential education, study abroad, and the like), but also a stronger coordination among existing programs. Central coordination will help to provide students with a bird's-eye view of options available. It will also facilitate students' ability to plan for multiple experiential-learning experiences throughout their undergraduate careers. Viewed in this manner, experiential learning will overcome the narrow vocational stereotype many faculty attribute to it. How to reconfigure the current administrative structures to best accomplish these goals we leave for the Provost to determine.

IV. Enhance instructional-development efforts under the auspices of the Dean of the University College and Undergraduate Studies.

At present, instructional development resources for faculty members are woefully inadequate at UK. Thus we feel strongly that faculty instructional development should be a major focus of activity within the new University College. The Dean of the University College and Undergraduate Studies should be charged with the task of fostering a culture of pedagogical improvement on UK's campus. This can be achieved by closely coordinating the faculty-development arm of TASC and with the Chellgren Center for Undergraduate Excellence (which offers a promising focus for faculty discussions about teaching, instructional experimentation, and pedagogical research), the Instructional Computing Committee and the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs. It is our hope that the Dean of the University College and Undergraduate Studies would preside over a more expansive faculty development center that would serve as a gathering place for faculty members to share instructional ideas as well as a place to exchange syllabi and learn new instructional methods. In order to ensure that more thoughtful teaching

translates into more effective student *learning*, it is critically important that this unit have a strong assessment component and be rooted in pedagogical research. It is no less important that other TASC units currently assigned to the Office of the Associate Provost (instructional technology, audio visual services, distance learning, graphics and multimedia production) continue to work closely – perhaps even more closely – so that they are properly embedded in the faculty-development mission of this unit.

We conclude recommendation IV by stressing yet again the need for a new, central location as well as additional staffing and resources for the broad array of University services a new University College will be called upon to provide. To achieve a culture of pedagogical improvement, it is vitally important that the instructional-development effort be highly visible. Similarly, if the instructional-development activities of the University College are to be effective in improving undergraduate education writ large, then they will require considerable coordination and more recurring funding than is currently devoted to instructional development on the UK campus.

Appendix. Structure of Undergraduate Education Units: Benchmark Analysis

The following summary presents a benchmark analysis performed on twenty-two provost-level undergraduate education/academic affairs offices (hereafter “undergraduate education units”). Nineteen of the twenty-two undergraduate education units are located in one of the University of Kentucky’s official benchmark institutions. The remaining three units are located in institutions cited by UK’s Undergraduate Education Portfolio Committee as best-practice institutions for undergraduate education. Information was gathered through three primary methods: (1) a review of all twenty-two undergraduate education unit websites; (2) a survey instrument emailed to the head administrative officer of all twenty-two undergraduate education units; and (3) phone interviews with the unit leader.

All of the institutions interviewed have a centralized undergraduate education unit – though the units vary greatly in terms of scope and function. The following report details the benchmark analysis findings.

Structure, Mission and Responsibilities of the Office

Most of the benchmarked offices report a similar mission – to enhance the undergraduate experience and to ensure the institution provides quality undergraduate instruction. The senior administrators report that they are the person on campus who is charged with thinking about undergraduate education at all times. Their unit is responsible for all units that contribute to the academic success of students that are outside the scope of academic colleges/schools. Similarly, they are the leading voice for the institution’s undergraduate education agenda. They have the primary role in brokering on-campus conversations, whether it is with the campus advising network, council of deans, or the provost office staff.

Those interviewed point to several important attributes for a successful undergraduate education leader. Most administrators mention that their main role is to figure out how to have an impact on campus without controlling any purse strings. As a result, persuasion, communication, and facilitation skills are prized. They see their role as one to convince other deans, faculty and senior institutional leadership to spend resources on the undergraduate education mission.

These individuals are responsible for all the institutional planning efforts with regards to undergraduate education. Most of those interviewed have unit-based strategic plans. Several senior administrators remark that each year their office generates three-to-five main issues to tackle and implement. In doing so, they are able to create a common set of priorities for all involved parties. This is invaluable, particularly on campuses that are either highly decentralized and/or have additional advising and undergraduate affairs units housed in colleges/schools.

In addition, the undergraduate education leaders create and articulate a holistic vision for the collection of fairly autonomous and well-established offices/sub-units (*e.g.*, study abroad,

honors program, undergraduate research, etc.) that report to them. These sub-units often enjoy a strong band of loyal supporters (both students and faculty) and have existed long before the overarching undergraduate education unit is formed. Administrators report that developing a unifying vision for these fairly autonomous sub-units is potentially tricky but vitally important to overall unit success.

Many of those interviewed report the strong need for seed money, particularly given their decentralized role. Some undergraduate education units run on lean operating budgets. These institutional leaders argue that since they do not control a large amount of resources, a set amount of annual seed money (anywhere from \$50K-500K was reported) is important to enable them to move undergraduate education initiatives forward. One institutional officer reports that she facilitates a campus-wide discussion each year on how best to move the undergraduate education agenda, and then is able to pilot various policies and/or programs through her seed money. In essence, the seed money allows units to be innovative and not static.

Most institutions reported a centralized/decentralized, hybrid model – where some unit functions are centralized under the undergraduate education office and some undergraduate education functions are decentralized to other campus units or colleges/schools. Institutions with a highly decentralized structure report that their structure offers greater autonomy for academic units to make important local decisions. It also enables more entrepreneurship, where best practices may emerge. At these institutions, the centralized undergraduate education effort takes on a role of facilitating collaboration and encouraging people to work together to advance universal goals that are set collectively.

Although the benchmark survey asks about direct reports and operating budgets, due to the large variety of structures (centralized, decentralized and hybrid), no consistent pattern emerges. However, a couple of units have dedicated assessment officers for undergraduate education (particularly if the faculty development sub-unit reports to undergraduate education office). Similarly, many of the administrators remark that they rely heavily on the institution's institutional research office and underline the importance of using data to drive decisions. At one institution the IR office reports to the undergraduate education unit. In similar vein, development officers are embedded in some benchmark undergraduate education units. Administrators interviewed report that raising funds for their unit is fairly easy as donors are interested in supporting undergraduate education. One institutional officer has overseen the growth of a \$70 million endowment for her undergraduate education unit.

Sub-units Housed in Undergraduate Education

Some administrators warn of creating too large a unit portfolio. They mention that due to historic and particular events their undergraduate education units have become catch-all units. They argue for establishing guiding principles for what the office should be responsible, and then assign the necessary offices/units.

Common sub-units housed under undergraduate education units include (1) academic advising; (2) faculty development center; (3) career center and experiential learning (including research experiences, public service, internships, service learning, externships); (4) academic enhancement/tutorial support, including athletic tutoring, the writing center, bridge programs, and remedial education; (5) honors and the national scholarship office (*e.g.*, Truman, Rhodes, Marshall); (6) degree programs; (7) enrollment management (including financial aid, admissions, registrar, schedule building); and (8) first-year seminar, summer-reading programs, senior capstone seminars, and living-learning communities (at some institutions these were joint programs with student affairs).

Academic Advising

Most institutions report a hybrid academic-advising structure. Some parts of advising are centralized under the provost's undergraduate-education unit, such as advising exploratory/undeclared/gateway students. Other institutions report that all first-year (and for some institutions, second-year) students are advised centrally, and then decentralized to colleges/schools.

Several interviewed administrators argue that ensuring quality academic advising is critical to undergraduate student success. Two administrators state that quality academic advising has the most direct impact on improving undergraduate success. Others strongly recommend centrally-managing advising as much as possible – even if the system is decentralized (*e.g.*, dual reporting lines, dotted reporting lines)

Additional Points Pertaining to Advising

- One institution that advises first-year students centrally allows the students to keep their first-year advisor throughout their four/five years if they so choose.
- For some institutions the centralizing advising unit on campus is housed in the college of arts and sciences and not the provost's undergraduate education unit. In one of these instances even cross-college advising is housed in arts and sciences.
- Two institutions employ lecturers to teach lower-level service courses. These lecturers teach 3/3 loads and are the primary advisors for upper-level undergraduate majors in the department.
- One institution hires a cadre of academic advisors who specialize in pre-professional and graduate-school advising and houses these advisors centrally for students who are interested in furthering their education. Degree program advising continues but is separate from pre-professional and graduate-school advising.

- For those institutions that have centralized academic advising, students with majors in the professional schools are able to meet with an advisor in their school/college if deemed interested and/or necessary.
- Two institutions recommend creating professional career paths for academic advisors.
- Many institutions have created cross-campus academic-advising councils to coordinate decentralized advising.
- Two institutions report that they created an office of academic advising ombudsmen.
- Another institution recently implemented a social networking site for first-year students. Every time a student opens the site a question/quiz pops up. The questions are fun, but are designed to capture important data (dealing with campus involvement, study habits, etc.). The institution aggregates these data points to gain a better understanding of its first-year students, but it also captures the data at an individual level and includes them in the student's individual profile, which is accessed and used by academic advisors.
- One institution has a council of undergraduate deans. Associate/assistant deans from all academic units meet regularly to discuss policies and initiatives pertaining to inter-collegiate transferring, enrollment issues, advising policies, etc. This council is not the university's advising council/network. It is made up of primarily faculty-administrators who have the line responsibility for undergraduate affairs in their college and have the authority to change college policy. It enables cross-college coordination for advising policies and procedures – allowing for a smooth transition for students as they flow back and forth between colleges.

Faculty Development Center

Whether the faculty development sub-unit reports to the provost's undergraduate education office varies greatly from campus to campus. Some institutions house the faculty development center centrally under the provost's undergraduate education unit. Others house it centrally but under the vice or associate provost for faculty affairs. At least two institutions decentralize this unit completely, housing it within individual colleges/schools. These institutions believe that it is most effectively implemented at the unit level – offering the ability to respond to faculty quickly with discipline-based approaches.

For the most part, the technology/classroom instruction support arm of benchmark units is separate from units that focus on pedagogical improvement. It is not unusual for both of these units to report to the undergraduate education unit, but they are not housed under the same sub-unit.

Two institutions run similar programs named the Faculty Fellows/Faculty Academy program. These programs pair faculty distinguished for their teaching (for example, those

faculty that have won campus-wide teaching awards) with new, incoming faculty. The faculty work together during a week-long workshop held prior to the beginning of the academic year. The program is completely voluntary, but the involved faculty are paid for their time. The senior faculty help the junior faculty by workshopping course syllabi, offering teaching advice, etc. The relationships often continue informally throughout the school year (and are sometimes supported by sponsored luncheons, etc.). An unintended but happy byproduct of these programs is the creation of cohorts among incoming faculty.

A second noted program involves mounting two large-scale teaching symposia each year. The first symposium is held in October and focuses on teaching first-year students; the second annual symposium is held in May and is organized around a central theme. At these symposia keynote speakers are scheduled; there are break-out and poster sessions; and best practices are shared. The events are free to faculty and graduate students, and average over 400 attendees.

Career Center and Experiential Learning

One of the more interesting findings from this study is the fact that very few benchmark institutions house the career center under the provost's undergraduate education unit. More commonly this office is housed under student affairs. Some institutions report that it operates as a stand-alone entity – with a student fee structure in place to finance its operating expenses. One institution reports that a career center's function is decentralized throughout the campus – embedded in colleges/schools' undergraduate affairs offices.

Similarly, very few career centers of our benchmark institutions have the dual responsibility of experiential education and career counseling. Often experiential education is conceptualized to include undergraduate research experiences, service learning, internships, externships, study abroad, and public service – all under the same umbrella. These functions are housed under the provost's undergraduate education unit and are often quite robust and pointed to as a primary mission of the undergraduate education unit. Several institutions report upwards of 80% of their undergraduate students taking part in these types of educational experiences.

Of special note, almost everyone interviewed places a high priority on their undergraduate research program. Many mention their large undergraduate research office as a pinnacle program and state that it is a defining experience for students studying at a research institution. They mention that they offer many different types of research opportunities to undergraduates (working in teams, working independently, short-term experiences, long-term experiences, multi-year programs, creative inquiry, etc.). These are thought of as principal ways for undergraduate students and tenured/tenure-track faculty to interact. It may also be important to mention that at least three institutions have well-thought out plans (ready to implement) to create similar programs attendant to public service, wherein students will work on research-based service/community issues or problems.

Academic Enhancement/Tutoring, Writing Center, and Remedial Education

Most institutions report centralized tutorial and academic enhancement offices. Many report that all tutorial support, including athletic tutoring, is housed under one unit, which reports to the centralized undergraduate education unit. A common deviation from this tends to be with tutoring support that targets at-risk students, which at times is housed in separate retention offices, if they exist.

Honors and National Scholarship Office

Almost all the centralized undergraduate education units at the benchmark institutions house the honors programs. The only exceptions are those institutions that have stand-alone honors colleges and those institutions that house them in the college of arts and sciences.

Degree Programs

There is no universal practice with regards to degree programs. Some institutions offer degree programs (such as a general studies degree, a topical major, and interdisciplinary degrees) through the undergraduate education unit, whereas others do not.

Enrollment Management, Student Success, and New Student Orientation

At several of the institutions enrollment management (including financial aid, admissions, retention offices, registrar, and new student services) is housed under the centralized undergraduate education unit. For the remaining institutions it is either a part of the provost office or the student affairs unit. The more centralized undergraduate education is at the institution, the more likely enrollment management is placed under undergraduate education. Some administrators argue that it is absolutely necessary to have enrollment management as a part of their portfolio, while others argue that it does not matter as long as a climate of cooperation and coordination exists.

Several institutions report recently hiring an assistant provost of retention (or similar title). Depending on the institutional structure (decentralized versus centralized) this person could or could not be housed in the provost's undergraduate education unit (as opposed to reporting directly to the provost or a separate enrollment management unit).

Most institutions studied have high retention rates. Interestingly, almost all the institutions report substantial gains in their retention rates this past year (2-3% improvement). Reasons include admitting better students, a concerted marketing effort branding the institution as a "four-year" university, implementing an opening convocation, creating class events, suspending the practice of suspending students (placing students on probation instead),

implementing early alert systems, increasing students' sense of belonging, promoting campus traditions, and relying on the institution's tradition of student self governance.

One administrator interviewed discusses a student success team he created. He invites anyone on campus interested in student success issues to join him in an ongoing discussion. Approximately 175 people have joined the discussion. The large group meets twice per semester, and then once every summer for a retreat. At the retreat 3-4 annual projects are collectively decided. The team is divided into task forces to work on the identified projects. The vice provost/dean is able to devote some seed money to help implement task force recommendations.

Several administrators interviewed stress the importance of the provost's undergraduate education unit overseeing the new student orientation/summer student advising conferences. They argue that in doing so the unit is able to ensure seamless coordination for the first-year experience. They point to statistics that suggest students make up their minds as to whether or not to remain a student during the first few weeks of the school year – thus, orientation takes on a particularly important role. By placing orientation under the undergraduate education unit it allows academic issues to be placed at the forefront of these first-year sessions, it sets the tone for academic success, and it reinforces to students at the start of their academic career and the rest of the campus that the undergraduate education unit is the primary unit for undergraduate academic affairs.

First-year Seminar, Summer Reading, Capstone Seminars, Living-learning Communities

Several administrators report overseeing first-year seminars and senior capstone seminars. These are three-credit hour, academic-based courses, taught by senior faculty. Similarly, these offices tend to run summer reading programs, and often are responsible for coordinating the discussion and exploration of the summer reading selection throughout the first-year.

It is common for the undergraduate education unit to work jointly with the office of student affairs on these seminars (though not always) as well as on living-learning communities. At a more macro-level the office of student affairs is often seen as a resource, but almost always as a separate entity. A few administrators remark that ideally student affairs would be housed under undergraduate education. Almost all those interviewed discuss either formal or informal ways in which the two units work collaboratively – from routinely scheduled meetings to formal reporting lines of shared direct reports.

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