

October 8, 2019

REVISED

Student Success Initiative – First Year Experience Task GroupGretchen Forman, Grainger College of Engineering, *co-chair*Daniel Turner, Division of General Studies, *co-chair*

Demonic Cobb, Office of Minority Student Affairs

Liv Thorstensson Davila, College of Education

Rachel Graddy, Disability Resources & Educational Services

Jeffrey W. Graham, Counseling Center

Brianna Gregg, College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences

Brian Steven Hodges, Office of Undergraduate Admissions

Joycelyn Landrum-Brown, Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations

Judith Pintar, School of Information Sciences

Alicia Rodriguez, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Brian Russell, Division of Intercollegiate Athletics

Nathan Sanden, University Housing

Murillo Soranso, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Rachael Dietkus, Siebel Center for Design

Corey Thoss, Student Success & Engagement, New Student Programs

Zuri White, Student Success & Engagement, Parent & Family Programs

Mary M. Edwards, College of Fine & Applied Arts, *ex-officio*Gioconda Guerra Perez, Office of Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, *ex-officio*Jim Hintz, Office of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, *ex-officio*

Dear Colleagues,

In keeping with our land-grant mission, and building on our Strategic Plan goal to provide transformative learning experiences, as a campus we are committed to closing the graduation gap and giving every student the chance to meet their goal of attaining an Illinois degree. As we embark on this effort to better understand what constitutes, supports, and carries forward undergraduate student success, the perspective of those who work directly with our students is critical. We hope you will accept our invitation to serve on the First Year Experience Task Group. Gretchen Forman, Assistant Director, Illinois Engineering First-Year Experience, and Dan Turner, Director of the Division of General Studies, have agreed to co-chair this task group. Jim Hintz, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Success & Engagement, will serve as Student Success Initiative Steering Team liaison.

We ask the task group to focus on the elements of the first-year experience with the ideal that the first year should 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 graduating. Your work should consider the exemplar programs and best practices already employed, as well as the exploration of innovative and novel approaches for improving graduation rates and enhancing the overall Illinois experience. Your task group is empowered to boldly consider opportunities to improve, expand and better integrate our efforts to help students achieve a degree at Illinois.

As you explore the first-year experience, please review the programming currently happening on campus, the recommendations of the 2018 Undergraduate Education Strategy report, the work of appropriate peers, and the relevant literature on student persistence and success. Your work should culminate in a set of recommendations for the institution to foster and grow a successful undergraduate student experience. These 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.

Student voices are undoubtedly critical to this process and students will be named to your task group. In addition, your work should reflect engagement with the various student advisory groups active on campus. The task group is encouraged to consult broadly, to consider the use of smaller teams to target efforts in particular areas, and to invite additional members to serve on smaller teams. Feedback from the Initiative kickoff event will be available to your group, and the upcoming lunch sessions will be an opportunity to engage stakeholders from across campus. Your team will have access to administrative support through Deb Kincaid in the Office of the Provost who is ready to assist with scheduling and other related tasks. In addition, a Box folder pre-populated with a number of documents is available to serve as a resource as your discussions unfold.

Access to data will be a critical aspect of your work. A data team, with representatives from across campus, is in place to help the task groups form questions and gather data to inform your recommendations. We ask that the task group focus on questions, and the data team will assist with refining these questions and determine how best to proceed. The task groups are reminded that the Campus Profile, a number of standing reports from undergraduate admissions, the Registrar's office, and Student Affairs are readily available. A guide to those data sets and reports is in the Box folder.

Vice Provost Kevin Pitts will attend your first meeting to formally charge your group and answer any questions you may have about the work ahead. We are grateful for your willingness to serve, and we look forward to the task group recommendations. An update to the Council of Undergraduate Deans and Student Affairs Leadership Team will be due on January 17, 2020 with a full report following by May 22, 2020.

We appreciate the many demands on your time, if you are unable to accept our invitation, please let Deb Kincaid (dkincaid@illinois.edu) know by Friday, October 4.

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