

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

*Amanda Carey (Co-Lead), David Chih, Ollie Watts Davis, Sherrie Faulkner (Co-Lead),  
Gayle Spencer, Endalyn Taylor*

**Note:** Observations related to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic are highlighted in red font.

- Embed link to services in each syllabus
- Create a resource module that could be place in all Learning Management Systems (Compass2g)
- Provide some type of resource linkage opportunity to students in online programs. **(Though these students do not pay fees, it is still best practice).**
- Educate students, staff, and faculty on what Counseling Center does.
- Have embedded counselors in each unit. Consider using more of a case management model.
- Hire additional counselors for the Counseling Center. **This can still be done now using virtual interviews. Several units on campus have hired staff via virtual interviews.**
- Develop a mental health ally training. **This may be best held in-person in small groups if possible but development could certainly begin now, despite our hybrid campus model.**
- Require all Freshman 101 classes to have a health and wellness module/lesson. Perhaps this is where Kognito can be required.
- Require all transfer students have a health and wellness learning opportunity. **This can still be implemented in a virtual setting.**
- Hold a resource summit with representatives of each resource on campus to:
  1. Streamline referral and usage process
  2. Educate each other on what resources are offered
  3. Connect data

**This recommendation would be harder to do in-person but could be a virtual event. This could possibly be delayed to focus on development of above recommendations.**
- Develop a Coursera for high school students to help them start to prepare for the college experience at UIUC. Perhaps model course off of the Emotional Intelligence Skills class conducted by Gayle Spencer through the Illinois Leadership Center.
- Develop a 24-hour helpline where students can email a non-emergent question. Our group suggested the name of “Ask Alma” for this helpline. **This resource is even more critical in our current hybrid environment given that some resources are closed for in-person services.**

## CAREER READINESS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

*Jessa Barnard, Eugena Lee-Olukoya, Kristine McCoskey, Jennifer Neef (Co-Lead),  
Brian Neighbors (Co-Lead), and Kevin Wilson*

Co-curricular experiences have been identified as an integral component of the Illinois undergraduate experience that foster professional development and enhance career readiness. Ideally, they also complement and supplement curricular requirements to earn a bachelor degree.

Through a robust co-curricular experience, students:

- develop competencies that are required for post-graduation success;
- apply knowledge and skills gained in courses;
- build connections and communities that foster a sense of belonging and;
- work toward achieving the learning outcomes that have been identified by the campus.

A rich Illinois experience must include diverse co-curricular activities to ensure that graduates have the competencies, knowledge, and skills, to become leaders in their fields and lead lives of personal meaning and significant societal impact. A well-designed Illinois undergraduate journey gives students the keys to unlock the “Power of I” and reinforces our promise to deliver an exceptional and meaningful experience.

It is important to define essential elements of the Illinois co-curricular experience and the competencies that we expect students to develop by engaging in co-curricular activities. These competencies should be tangible and easily understood by students. They should provide the underpinnings for achievement of the campus-wide student learning outcomes. They should be vetted by a variety of stakeholders and endorsed by the Senate. We achieve these definitions through:

- Exploring existing competencies from AACU, NACE, Illinois Leadership Center (and other campus units) accrediting bodies, professional programs;
- establishing what it means to be “career ready” as a student and graduate of Illinois;
- benchmarking with peer and other institutions that have defined competencies and;
- renaming General Education course requirements and map to career readiness competencies to reinforce importance of Gen Education requirements.

With defined elements and identified competencies, the Illinois co-curricular experience could be designed in a way that it is applicable to all students, yet flexible enough to adapt to specific disciplines or to individual needs. It must honor the comprehensive nature of the university with its 150+ programs of study and a student body whose backgrounds are diverse and whose aspirations are boundless. The co-curricular experience should provide the tools to *empower students to build their own unique pathways*, informed by past experiences and tailored for their future hopes and destinations. These tools include:

- creating a co-curricular catalog detailing the different experiences and opportunities an Illinois student can engage in throughout their time at Illinois and;
- creating an inventory of courses taught at Illinois that map to the established competencies.

It should also integrate opportunities for reflection and assessment.

The campus must streamline and publicize how students can engage in co-curricular activities. We must identify and mitigate barriers to co-curricular engagement through intentional exploration and creative

workarounds. We must help students discover co-curricular activities available on-campus that are often unrecognized as such and help them recognize development of their competencies. We must leverage what already exists, while committing to innovative supports and approaches, including:

- creating positions for Co-Curricular Advisors, who complement academic advisors by connecting students with experiences outside of the classroom and;
- offering grants to colleges and departments for the design of career seminar courses that help students tell their career readiness story through the Illinois experience

Finally, it is imperative that we help students discover the myriad of ways in which they can operationalize co-curricular experiences through a multitude of modalities (for example: narrative, data visualization, educational and professional pursuits, etc.) by:

- Implementing a campus wide framework and culture that encourages students to reflect on and articulate the value of their entire Illinois experience and its impact on their future success.

## STREAMLINE & IMPROVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND CAMPUS RESOURCES

*Amanda Carey, Ollie Watts Davis, Christopher Holmes, Gayle Spencer (Co-Lead), Kevin Wilson (Co-Lead)*

### Current Suggestions

- Reduce barriers for faculty/staff to access student information to better facilitate interdepartmental communication and increase awareness of student needs.
  - Develop a Student Programs Database similar to UT Austin.
  - Develop a Progress Toward Degree tool that allows students and staff to easily track academic progress similar to UT Austin.
  - Creating a Predictive Student Analytics database to better identify and serve students with the greatest need.
  - Link to UT Austin Student Success Initiative Overview  
<https://provost.utexas.edu/news/data-driving-increase-graduation-rates>
- Develop a student portal and mobile app that streamlines access to all campus services.
- An "Ask ALMA" feature that allows students to find answers to questions related to utilizing campus resources.
  - 24 Hour Non-Emergency Helpline
- Revamping and unifying website themes and designs across campus.
- Graduation help desk

### Moving Forward

- What is the “why” behind our recommendations?
- What are the consequences of not implementing these particular recommendations?
- How can we prioritize students with the greatest needs moving forward?
- Reach out to professionals from other universities (UT Austin, Georgia State, etc.) who have implemented successful Student Success Initiatives.
  - Possibly plan a visit to one of these campuses or have key players visit UIUC.

## BELONGING, COMMUNITY, AND INCLUSIVENESS

*Patricia Anton, Nerissa Brown (Co-Lead), David Chih, Sherrie Faulkner, Eugena Lee-Olukoya (Co-Lead),  
Maritza Quiñones-Rivera, Rebecca Salzman, and Endalyn Taylor*

### **We outline a few assumptions to understand the theme of belonging, community and inclusiveness:**

1. As a basic human need, the concept of belonging refers to students' sense of connection to a "community". Additionally, belonging refers to students' sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others in the curricular and co-curricular spaces.
2. Absence of belonging leads to diminished engagement and interest in overall participation.
3. Sense of belonging can be more relevant to special populations, marginalized, and environments, such as student athletes, transfer students and students of color.
4. The literature suggests that engagement in an established community, where one's social identities intersect with that community, can affect college students' sense of belonging, engagement, achievement and retention (Strayhorn, 2012).
5. Inclusion is an essential contributing factor to bridging the intended outcomes of community building and is a support to facilitating belonging among student populations.
6. The literature also suggests that, a sense of belonging reflects the nature/artifacts of the social supports that students perceive on campus-connectiveness and inclusiveness

### **Preliminary Strategies:**

- What does it mean to be an Illini? Are there overarching experiences that connect our students and alumni together? It is currently unclear what being an Illini means for our alumni. We recommend conducting a benchmark analysis of peer institutions with a strong culture and sense of an inclusive community. Enhancing the community with a focus on a strong culture of traditions and customs can facilitate positive outcomes. Possible peer institutions are the University of Texas, Ohio State University, and University of South Carolina.
- Conduct a survey of resident advisors to solicit their views about belonging, community, and inclusiveness from a residential life perspective. A preliminary survey with responses from 8 residential advisors is attached to this memo along with summary points.
- Better understand belonging and inclusiveness within subpopulations across campus, e.g., student athletes and transfer students. Tap into the stories being collected and archived by the University Library on how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected students and other constituents of the campus community. See link at <https://archives.library.illinois.edu/about-us/initiatives/covid-19/> for further details.
- The University provides several programs to enhance students' freshman experience. Similar offerings need to be created for all years during a student's time on campus. This would help to mitigate the commonly-known sophomore and senior year "slumps". We also recommend a targeted look at programs for transfer students who enter campus after their sophomore years.
- Codify a Sophomore living requirement to improve equitable access across different set of students and enhance a sense of community beyond the freshman year.
- The importance of virtual communities is at the forefront of the Covid-19 disruptions to campus life. We recommend developing a set of goals and a framework for a virtual campus community that spans

different disciplines and units across campus. This framework should outline specific outcomes and strategies that can be implemented across campus.

- Create a “Did you know?” digital space for a one stop co-curricular engagement platform to assist students in finding paths to community.
- Create an interdisciplinary “Choose your adventure” framework that is designed for students to outline a 4-year experiential course in the co-curricular space. This framework should be a guide that will allow students to select from many options to meet specific co-curricular outcomes.

## FINANCES

*Nerissa Brown, Kristine McCoskey (Co-Lead), Brian Neighbors, and Maritza Quiñones-Rivera (Co-Lead)*

### **Introduction**

When our work on issues surrounding undergraduate finances began, we inhabited a world that was different than our current one. Now, our committee finds itself in the position of crafting a proposal that addresses a handful of the diverse financial challenges faced by our undergraduates during an unprecedented moment in history as we navigate the complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic. This period has both *highlighted and exacerbated* the structural inequities that exist across all domains of our society--and our most vulnerable student populations (students of color, low-income and working class, non-traditional, etc.) bear the brunt of these challenges. In anticipation of the long-term effects the pandemic will have on our economy (job/income losses; limited access to healthcare; widening digital divides; access to childcare; and food insecurity, just to name a few), we are forwarding the following recommendations:

### **Recommendation #1: Re-thinking federal work-study offers to students**

Currently, students from moderate to low-income families may be offered federal work-study funding as a part of their financial aid award. Our understanding is that if a student declines this offer for a semester, they will not be offered it again. Exceptions to this include Illinois Promise scholars and students studying abroad. Given that many students, especially those in their first semester on campus, or those with exceptionally heavy course loads, often forgo working to focus more intensively on academics, we recommend that federal work-study remain a part of the financial aid award to those qualified to receive it.

### **Recommendation #2: Crafting an “Illinois Work-Study” program**

Additionally, our committee wishes for the campus to explore the creation of an “Illinois Work Study” program that would allow undergraduates to work across various functions of our campus. We know that student employment is a rewarding experience that supports career readiness. Similar to Federal Work Study, an Illinois specific program would support employment of students to directly reduce tuition and other costs of attendance. An Illinois program would also provide leadership to units employing students to enhance career readiness skills, and for students to see part-time employment as a meaningful co-curricular experience.

### **Recommendation #3: Wrap-around services in the Student Success Center**

Finally, dedicated space should be integrated into any planned Student Success Center that can provide wrap-around services to undergraduates that are most in need of financial and social service resources. Ideally, this space would include a food pantry; a satellite Career Closet; an embedded financial aid counselor (to assist with financial aid awards and work-study issues); and perhaps an embedded member of the Dean of Students Office to connect students with resources such as housing, mental health, childcare, SNAP benefits, etc. We envision this space not only as an opportunity to provide undergraduates with critical connections to services but, ideally, it would be staffed by eligible work-study students who could gain skills in a number of functions (social media and research, staffing, donation solicitation/fundraising, special events, etc.).