

University of Illinois at Chicago

The **University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC)**, in its commitment to access and success, is among the most diverse universities in the country with no one racial or ethnic group comprising more than 50% of the student population. With a current 6-year graduation rate of 60%—up 31% over the last 17 years—there remains lack of parity across ethnic and racial groups.

In 2012, UIC embarked on a comprehensive planning program aimed to improve undergraduate retention and graduation. A collaborative of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, nearly 200 faculty, staff, and students contributed to the initial planning phase from which emanated 125 recommendations to improve academic outcomes and the student experience at UIC.

Received in summer 2014, the APLU/USU Transformational Planning Grant (TPG) allowed UIC to hire a specialist in implementation planning to set project priorities and carry out the Student Success Initiative. The input received by the Office of Project Management for the Student Success Initiatives (OPM-SSI) from various campus representatives provided insight into the depth and span of the initiative, making it easier to identify main goals and key challenges.

The following initiatives are among the projects that were subsequently prioritized at UIC:

Student Success Plan

In accordance with UIC's mission and the leadership charge for improving graduation and retention rates, the OPM-SSI provides project management support for all new and ongoing initiatives related to undergraduate success. The role of the OPM-SSI director is to facilitate collaboration, troubleshoot issues, and advocate for the success of the projects related to student success at UIC.

Through an APLU/USU-sponsored webinar and essential mentoring from colleagues at Portland State University, UIC shared the benefits of adopting project management techniques in academia, the components of a project management approach, and strategies for putting them into practice.

UIC has been successful in establishing a broad framework for the implementation phase of the Student Success Initiative. Current projects each have developed a detailed document that specifies their objectives, expected outcomes, assessment plans, and roles and responsibilities. Regular status updates from projects are good indicators of the success of the adopted project management framework for the implementation of this initiative.

UIC staff will also seek opportunities to publish an article discussing the lessons learned related to utilizing a project management framework to guide implementation of innovative projects within academia.

Transition Coaching Program

The TPG contributed greatly to the planning of UIC's Transition Coaching Integration Pilot which formed formal partnerships with Chicago-based transition coaching organizations (OneGoal and Bottom Line) and Chicago-area high schools (Noble Charter and North Lawndale College Prep). The pilot is being administered through the Office of First-Year Initiatives (OFYI), which is part of the newly launched Center for Student Success Initiatives.

As AY 2015-16 commenced, the transition coaching program became fully operational. It is expected that students participating in one of the coaching efforts will be retained at significantly higher rates than peers with a similar pre-matriculation profile. Next fall, as the AY15-16 cohort of freshmen participating in the transition coaching program continues into its second year, UIC will establish a peer mentoring component. Second year students will serve as mentors to first-year students, who are a part of the second phase of the transition coaching pilot.

UIC's OFYI will continue to establish strategic partnerships with internal units, including, but not limited to, recruitment, admissions, new student orientation programs, welcome week, first-year seminars, summer programs, undergraduate research initiatives, academic support and advising, and student support services.

Collaborative Relationships

UIC teams with the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) in the system's Chicago Compact for Higher Education, a collaboration dedicated to developing solutions to increase college enrollment, persistence and completion for CPS graduates, with the goal of increasing the college graduation rate for CPS students to 60 percent by 2025.

In a partnership with City Colleges of Chicago (CCC), UIC has created formal academic programs that present pathways through CCC to UIC degree programs. Collaboration with Southern Illinois University has resulted in an ongoing effort to foster a statewide discussion about mathematics reform.

UIC has been an integral partner in the City of Chicago's Thrive Chicago program, a consortium that aligns service providers, city agencies, funding organizations, universities and non-profits around outcomes that are proven to help children succeed from cradle to career. UIC's transition coaching program will serve as a pilot study for the Thrive program.