

TIER Efficiency Review: Academic cases

University of Northern Iowa Process and Implementation Plan

The following reports are in response to the charge given by the Iowa Board of Regents to address several recommendations put forth by the Pappas Group in the areas of Enrollment Management and eLearning/Distance Education and by Ad Astra Consultants in the areas of Resource Efficiency and Course Accessibility and Efficiency. Three taskforces were formed, composed of faculty, staff and administration in the relevant areas, with input from University Faculty Senate, and Deans and Directors from Student Affairs and Academic Affairs divisions. These three committees have proposed initiatives to address the recommendations put forth by the consultants. To begin the process of implementation, each report contains work in progress, work that will begin in the current semester (Spring 2016) and work that will be initiated after the Spring 2016 semester. The members of each taskforce are listed below.

Taskforce Members:

Enrollment Management:

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eLearning/Distance Education:

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Resource Efficiency and Course Accessibility and Efficiency:

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Enrollment Management:

The following initiatives address recommendations to enhance Enrollment Management at UNI and are in response to the Pappas Consulting Group report of October 15, 2015 on **Enrollment Management**. In proposing the initiatives listed below, it is important to note key aspects of the current context: 1) As noted in the Pappas report (pp. 20-22), UNI compares very favorably to its peer institutions on key measures of student success (and to national averages for its institutional type). As a result, room for improvement, while present, is compressed and will be increasingly challenging and likely more costly than improvements that have been made over the last seven years. 2) As the report also noted (p. 65), UNI's current staff effort to support enrollment management (and, in particular, student success programming) "comes from a level of personal commitment that far exceeds what is written in position descriptions." Such effort is practical, perhaps, to generate momentum and test new ideas, but not to sustain the long term efforts needed to institutionalize initiatives. Current efforts are structurally underfunded, even while new initiatives are being explored. And, 3) as to the resources committed to academic support and counseling, UNI has made significant investments in these areas (on a per-head basis) despite being structurally funded at a lower level on the same basis. We have made these investments because we recognize that retaining students, in the end, helps our budget situation; thus we are being proactive in managing our future.

Pappas Recommendation #1: Consider strategies to improve first year retention, and four- and six-year graduation rates, compared to peer universities.

Beginning Spring 2016:

- Given the particular challenges that have been identified relative to financial aid for transfer students, the Office of Financial Aid has begun a pilot initiative to provide mandatory face-to-face **counseling to all transfer students**.
- Based on the success of a previous pilot effort, peer-delivered **success coaching** is now being provided to all new students on academic alert or probation during their first year (direct from high school and transfer) along with students who are readmitted after suspension.
- The Office of Undergraduate Studies will continue to increase the proportion of new students engaged in at least one **enriched first-year learning experience** – Cornerstone, first-year only Liberal Arts Core section with course- embedded peer mentor, supportive seminar course or supplemental instruction course.

Work will begin in Summer 2016:

- Planning is underway for a **summer bridge** program that will increase rates of success for students who could benefit from additional academic preparation and resources. This program will feature academic support connected to credit-bearing courses, along with community building elements to improve the transition to college.
- Work is underway to substantially upgrade the availability of **online information** about major and curricular requirements, and to provide direct advice on steps to achieve timely graduation; this will be deployed by July 1.

Work will begin after Summer 2016

- The Office of Undergraduate Studies will lead efforts to develop initiatives that increase engaged student learning throughout the entire college experience. The initiatives would expose students to a thoughtful package of opportunities intended to maximize their experience at UNI and tie to employment or continuing education outcomes.

Pappas Recommendation #2: Continue to explore options for “one-stop” student service operations.**Beginning Spring 2016:**

- After considering what the University learned through its campus-wide self-study on the transfer student experience, exploratory planning is underway on the creation of a “**Transfer Center**” adjacent to the Office of Admissions in Gilchrist.

Work will begin in Summer 2016:

- The development of a campus-wide task force to identify **process improvement opportunities** that would facilitate student service delivery. Using processes and current staff who facilitated the implementation of the new student information system, identify further process improvements that would add efficiencies to the student service delivery experience and improve student satisfaction.

Work will begin after Summer 2016:

- A **college-based student services center** has been designed and is under construction in new Schindler Education Center. The center will provide academic advising for all College of Education majors, and admission to Teacher Education and field placement assignments for all Teacher Education students (including student teaching).
- A committee of faculty and staff from various offices in Student Affairs and Academic Affairs will be formed to explore the development of a “**virtual**” **one-stop student services center**,

Pappas Recommendation #3: Timeline of implementation plan for campus-specific recommendations.

Recom- mendation#	Initiative	Responsible	Timeframe
1	Pilot mandatory financial aid counseling for transfer students.	Director, Financial Aid	Spring 2016
1	Expand success coaching initiative.	Retention Council	Spring 2016
1	Pilot engaged learning opportunities	Office of Undergraduate Studies	Spring 2016
2	Plan Transfer Center in Gilchrist Hall	AVP, Enrollment Management	Spring 2016
1	Improve the quality and effectiveness of online information.	Director, University Relations	Summer 2016
1	Implement pilot of summer bridge program.	Office of Undergraduate Studies	Summer 2016
2	Identify process improvement opportunities.	Task Force (to be named)	Summer 2016
1	Increase proportion of first year students taking an enriched first-year experience course.	Office of Undergraduate Studies	AY 2016-17
2	Implement student services center in Schindler Education Center.	Associate Dean, Education	AY 2016-17
2	Explore development of a “virtual” one-stop student services center.	Task Force (to be named)	AY 2016-17

eLearning/Distance Education

The following initiatives address recommendations to enhance eLearning/Distance Education programming at UNI and are in response to the Pappas Consulting Group report of October 15, 2015 on **eLearning/Distance Education**. In proposing potential initiatives, several assumptions and guiding principles will

direct our work including: 1) Our efforts will align with and support UNI's Academic Master Plan and UNI's Strategic Plan and advance our institutional priorities, 2) the Office of Continuing and Distance Education will lead efforts at continuous quality improvement in all aspects of distance education, 3) curriculum development, including courses, certificate program, and degree programs will remain the purview of faculty and will follow UNI's approved curriculum processes and protocols, 4) new online courses will primarily be developed with faculty participating in the Quality Matters professional development program utilizing best practices in designing distance education courses, 5) to ensure that students taking online course have positive experiences and the same level of access to materials as on-campus students, we have to realize that some electronic formats have associated higher costs and restrictions and could be a potential barrier and 6) to address the needed educational markets across Iowa and beyond, courses will continue to be taught by highly-qualified faculty who have the support services necessary to ensure that that the teaching and learning that takes place in distance education meets the same high standards expected in face-to-face instruction. Finally, underlying all of this work is that **significant** financial resources will have to be invested for the proposed initiatives which will result in 10-15% growth. If the proposed rate of growth is more in the range of a typical 4-5%, **financial investment is still required** but will be less.

Pappas Recommendation #1: Identify ways to increase the number of online courses, including general education and summer session course offerings.

- a. Increase the number and scope of faculty who teach online courses in specific majors and in the Liberal Arts Core (LAC)

In Progress:

- Continue with the implementation of Quality Matters (QM) to enhance consistency and quality in online course design.
- Work with Deans, Department Heads, and faculty members to identify core courses in various majors that could be possible online offerings
- Continue collaborations between Division of Continuing Education and ITS Educational Technology and other campus partners to provide comprehensive, ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty members to increase number of faculty who incorporate instructional technologies as part of their teaching
- Provide individualized, comprehensive instructional development support for faculty who develop and teach distance education courses.

Work to begin in Spring 2016

- Identify gaps in LAC online offerings by using Institutional Research & Effectiveness data that show what current students are transferring back each summer
- Work with LAC director, deans, department heads, and faculty members to identify possible online courses that can be developed
- Support individual faculty in the development and delivery of needed courses, including major specific and LAC offerings. Work with individual faculty to develop needed courses, either major specific or LAC
- Hire additional instructional development staff to support faculty in utilizing best practices in the development and teaching of distance education courses.

Work to begin after Spring 2016

- Evaluate staffing levels and structures to ensure faculty and students are provided exemplary support services.
- Implement newly developed courses during summer and Fall terms

- b. Systematically inform faculty and department heads of the support they will receive as they plan, develop, and teach online courses

In Progress:

- Division of Continuing and Distance Education continues to meet with various departments/faculty to identify and develop new online offerings
- Conduct on-going market analysis to identify possible new areas of growth utilizing distance delivery
- Discuss with Deans, Department Heads and faculty how offering online courses can increase educational access, pedagogy and provide financial benefits (clarify the incentives that would be available)

Work to begin in Spring 2016:

- Showcase existing online programs and arrange meetings/discussions with heads and faculty who have experienced teaching distance education courses with those who would like to offer new courses or programs.
- Arrange workshops/discussions with current UNI faculty who are teaching online with faculty who are interested in online delivery and pedagogy to talk about rigor, innovation and implementation

Work to begin after Spring 2016

- Bring in faculty and researchers from a variety of disciplines who can address the rigor and innovation that can occur in online offerings.

Pappas Recommendation #2: Continue discussions between the three Regent Universities to expand course-sharing opportunities and the development of a “How to Learn Online” course

- Utilize the structure of the State Extension, Continuing and Distance Education Council (SECDEC) that consists of members from the three Regents universities to lead initiatives for course sharing opportunities and to develop the “How to learn online” course

In Progress:

- Begin to set up the logistics needed to offer a small number of courses specific to each university that would be useful to students at other two Regent universities
- Identify criteria for courses that will offered as part of a course sharing model

Work to begin in Spring 2016:

- Assess and analyze current structures and processes in place for students who enroll in coursework from another Regent institution and identify ways to create a more seamless process of enrolling and transferring the credits earned.
- Publicize offerings at all three Regents universities
- Discuss and assess the need for the development of a course that can be shared by the three Regents universities to help students with “How to learn online”

Work to begin after Spring 2016

- Improve logistics to the point where UNI routinely offers courses from UNI that will be available to UI and ISU students
- Continue to evaluate and improve the structures and processes involved in course sharing across the Regents Universities.
- Continuing to seek and identify course and programs areas for which course sharing provides benefits to students.

Pappas Recommendation #3: Analyze ways to develop new “fully online” degree programs

- The Division of Continuing Education will continue to analyze workforce needs via market and informal surveys to determine possible new programs that could be delivered via distance

In Progress:

- Take inventory of currently offered or soon to be offered online programs and showcase, publicize these programs
- Develop Academic Master Plan to help inform the decisions about new program development
- Continue discussions with deans, department, heads and faculty members to identify program opportunities with strong demand and high need and assess the feasibility of development and delivery

Work to begin in Spring 2016:

- Work with departments to enhance, augment current face- to-face programs with online courses
- Have discussions regarding the costs and benefits of distance education programs and how distance education outreach serves students, the needs of the state, and the university.

Work to begin after Spring 2016

- Review and refine the system of incentives to ensure faculty, departments, and colleges are appropriately rewarded for efforts to increase distance learning
- Work with departments to develop online undergraduate and graduate degree programs, certificates and endorsements in areas of high demand that match the academic strengths of the university
- After approval by the Iowa Board of Regents, begin implementation of the new online Bachelor of Applied Science degree program

Resource Efficiency and Course Accessibility and Efficiency

The following initiatives address recommendations provided by the Ad Astra Consulting group, as part of the TIER initiative, regarding **Resource Efficiency and Course Accessibility and Efficiency**. As Ad Astra began its work, much information was requested and supplied. Prior to the start of TIER initiative, a year-long study of course scheduling had already taken place at UNI in Academic Year 2013-2014. The university-wide committee was led by Associate Provost for Faculty, Nancy Cobb, and Registrar Philip Patton. Data that 2013-2014 committee gathered was provided to Ad Astra and was extremely helpful to them.

With the recent approval of the Ad Astra study by Board of Regents on “Resource Efficiency” and “Course Accessibility and Efficiency,” a committee was formed to address these recommendations. The makeup of the committee ensures that faculty, department heads, deans and the provost’s office have input into the responses. Of the nine committee members, four had previously served on the 2013-2014 Course Scheduling Committee and were familiar with the data that had been gathered.

Ad Astra Recommendation #1: Resource Efficiency: Make the most of our existing space to better serve our existing students and to accommodate additional students if necessary.

a. Classroom utilization (particularly during peak demand times)**In progress or completed:**

- The current committee is studying classroom utilization patterns from 2015, the first Fall during which the recommendations from the May 2014 report were truly in effect (since the Fall 2014 schedule had already been created by the time the report had been submitted).

Work to begin in Spring 2016:

- A committee will be formed to, on a semester-by-semester basis, review all requests for scheduling courses at non-standard course times and will:
 - a. review the Registrar's list of standard class times and recommend any additions or subtractions to the list.
 - b. review any Fall 2016 requests for deviation from the standard class meeting times published by the Registrar.
 - c. be composed of: two department heads, one associate dean, two faculty members, the Associate Registrar, and the Associate Provost for Faculty) with representatives selected from each of the colleges.
- A procedure will be developed by which colleges can apply for and receive permanent waivers for particular courses which will always need to be scheduled at a non-standard time.
 - a. Requests will be reviewed by the above committee and a list will be developed and held in the Registrar's office.
 - b. Waiver requests will not have to be submitted in the future for these courses; there will be, in effect, a permanent waiver.
- The Registrar's office will identify two 110 classrooms (i.e. general, and with at least 20 seats) in a central campus location which can be used to schedule courses that have a particular reason to be scheduled at a non-standard teaching time that Fall outside the permanent waiver listed above. Faculty members who request that their courses be at a non-standard teaching time and who have a legitimate programmatic or pedagogical reason will be required to hold their courses in these classrooms unless there is a need for a laboratory-type classroom.

b. Opportunities to expand classroom utilization outside of traditional days/hours

In progress or completed:

- The 2013-2014 committee recommended this suggestion and those times are already available. Survey data from students were used to select times. It was determined through results of the survey that students were less likely to register for courses during less desirable time slots and therefore would lead to other inefficiencies.

c. Reduction in number of rooms which are managed or restricted by particular departments

Work to begin after Spring 2016

- A committee will be formed for 2016-2017 that will look at:
 - a. The number of 110 classrooms for which scheduling is controlled by departments rather than the Registrar. Current practice establishes community for majors around campus, and that means that some control by departments best serves our students and aids in retention efforts.
 - b. Develop a list of acceptable reasons that a department is allowed to control scheduling of a 110 classroom
 - c. Develop a process by which departments release scheduling control of a classroom to the Registrar.

Ad Astra Recommendation #2 Course Accessibility and Efficiency: Campuses must also include measure to ensure that they are offering the courses that students need and that enough sections are being offered so that they are accessible, but not so many that there is waste.

- a. **Overloaded Course Ratio --- percentage of unique courses offered that are difficult for students to get because they are over-filled**

In progress or completed:

- The 2013-2014 committee studied this issue, and department heads across campus were consulted as well. It was noted that department heads solve problems for students when there are no seats left in courses they need or when a course in the student's major is not offered. Course substitutions and independent studies are implemented when a course is not offered and the student needs it to graduate.

Work will begin in Spring 2016

- Scheduling seats for Liberal Arts Core courses will be a joint venture headed by the Director of Undergraduate Studies, Office of Academic Advising and department heads in whose departments LAC courses are housed mirroring the process that is currently underway regarding the scheduling of Humanities courses.
 - Subgroups will study historical data regarding number of seats needed in the various LAC categories. Courses will be scheduled according to the data along with projected enrollment numbers. The first semester affected by this method of scheduling will be Spring 2017.
- b. **Addition Candidate Percentage –the percentage of total sections in a schedule that could potentially be added, based on sufficient pent-up demand.**

In Progress or Completed

- A process is already in place on campus that deals with scheduling for Fall Liberal Arts Core Classes. It is recommended that this process be implemented for Spring scheduling as well.
 - See paragraph above under “a.” (second bullet). The work of that group headed by the Director of Undergraduate Studies will also assist on this issue.
- c. **Under-utilized Course Ratio –the percentage of unique courses offered that are an inefficient use of faculty resources because they are under-filled**

In Progress or Completed

- A process is already in place on campus where under-filled classes are evaluated each semester by department heads, associate deans and the Provost’s Office to ensure under-filled classes are closed or combined with other sections if possible

Work that will begin in Spring 2016

- Please see the response to “a.” This will also address this issue in the realm of Liberal Arts Core classes.
- d. **Reduction Candidate Percentage ---the percentage of total sections that could potentially be removed from the scheduled based on insufficient demand.**

Work will begin after Spring 2016

- In 2016-2017, a university-wide work group will be established to study historical patterns of low-enrolled courses. The work group will develop a list of acceptable justifications for low-enrolled courses. The group will also be charged with making a recommendation to campus on how to reduce the number of low-enrolled classes.