

UNCO ACADEMIC PLAN
STUDENT SUPPORT SUB-COMMITTEE

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Community of Learners

Guided by a strong commitment to outstanding teaching enhanced by research and service opportunities for faculty and students, the University of Northern Colorado places learning at the forefront of all we do. We hold ourselves to high standards of scholarship and integrity and affirm the rights of all members of the community to express their views and to disagree respectfully with others. The University of Northern Colorado attracts a diverse, highly qualified, achievement-oriented, civically engaged, and socially responsible student body from Colorado and beyond. The University of Northern Colorado is the institution of choice for many students from the Centennial State. Our graduates are prepared to become leaders and contributors in and to their professions and in their communities.

Charting the Future recognizes the classroom as the center of learning while also emphasizing the essential role played by co-curricular activities that support the educational achievement of students: “Investment in the success of our students through quality academic enrichment and closely linked support services captures the spirit of a learning community” (CTF, p. 6). Programming supports successful transitions to college for first year students, promotes retention through completion of the baccalaureate degree, and recognizes the unique needs of graduate students. The University’s mission, vision, and values emphasize a commitment to providing student-centered learning environment with equal opportunities for all students. Providing co-curricular services in the form of academic support and advising, learning communities, recreational and leadership opportunities, and civic engagement activities are essential to the successful fulfillment of the University’s mission. In developing an academic plan for the continued provision of student support, the following issues should be considered:

A Community of Learners Strategic Intentions

PREAMBLE:

The faculty, staff, administration, alumni, and friends of the institution provide unique opportunities for students to share in the University of Northern Colorado Experience. That experience consists of but is not limited to, a wide-range of commonly practiced academic and

co-curricular experiences and prospects. The UNC Experience begins before students enroll in the University and continues throughout their academic career on campus and becomes an indelible part of each UNC student's lifelong connection with the University. The UNC Experience takes place in an environment that helps students build competencies in the disciplines taught and nurtures their sense of confidence in themselves as individuals who are empowered to make a difference in the world. We at UNC believe that every member of our learning community matters and that each individual is to be embraced as an important member of the community.

Six broad strategic intentions are designed to ensure that the UNC Experience is successfully part of every student's academic journey at the University.

First, we intend for students to have at their avail a diversity of common experiences and opportunities that reinforce the UNC Experience as one that engenders unity and pride, as well as critical thinking and tolerance for others.

Second, we intend to be of the utmost assistance in helping students transition into the community of learners at UNC and orienting and mentoring them to the UNC Experience and to a successful academic career.

Third, we intend the UNC Experience to be a springboard for students to transition from college to the next step in their life plan.

Fourth, we intend to support students in every way feasible to ensure that they are provided with the academic assistance they need to complete their programs of study.

Fifth, we intend to provide our students with opportunities to be engaged on and off campus and aid them in making healthy choices for themselves and in seeing the benefits of serving the greater good.

Sixth, we intend to implement the best possible practices to work toward a seamless administrative structure that keeps the best interests of our students in mind.

1. Common experiences and opportunities

Key elements of a positive campus culture include an inviting place with a strong sense of community, a celebrative place where traditions are shared, a caring place where faculty and staff make personal connections with students, a just place where persons are honored and diversity embraced, and an educationally purposeful place where learning is the focus. To achieve these ends, UNC provides the following:

- Mandatory on-campus residence for the freshman and sophomore years
- Acceptance in sharing of the responsibility for first-year student success by faculty, staff, and students
- University-wide calendar recognition ceremonies
- Significant campus events and activities
- Leadership programs

- An environment that nurtures healthy choices by those in the learning community
- ID 108 as an opportunity for all students
- Awareness of domestic and global issues and perspectives

2. Pre-UNC and Transition Experiences

The University of Northern Colorado recognizes that the transition to college begins three to four months prior to enrollment and extends through the first year. In order to support each student's unique transition to the University an environment of high and clear expectations paralleled with high levels of support and guidance are foundational. Students, faculty and staff will address what it means to be a UNC student and a member of the UNC community, what is expected of UNC students and what UNC students can expect of faculty and staff, as well as the academic and social traditions that characterize the UNC experience. Activities that support this include:

- ▯ Participation in Junior and Senior Preview Days
- ▯ Participation in New Student Orientation for both freshmen and transfer students
- ▯ Academic Convocation and Welcome
- ▯ Common Book experience
- ▯ Consistent discussion and implementation of the Honor Code
- ▯ Peer and professional mentoring for all students
- ▯ Opportunities to participate in a variety of academic learning communities
- ▯ Opportunities to connect to organizations or groups with both common and diverse interests
- ▯ Faculty and staff are prepared to articulate the UNC Experience

3. Post-UNC Transitions

University of Northern Colorado recognizes that its alumni pursue a wide variety of endeavors upon graduation, including professional careers, post-baccalaureate education, and further civic service engagement. With this in mind, the University supports the Community of Learners concept by providing an array of experiences designed to assist students and alumni with the post-UNC transition. Ideally, each student will have access to guidance in understanding the post-graduate opportunities available to him or her. These experiences and services include:

- Opportunities to participate in faculty-guided professional and scholarly activities
- Academic capstone experiences
- Comprehensive career planning services
- Assistance with the graduate school application/ selection process
- Connection and involvement with the UNC Alumni Association

4. Successes and Support

In order to assist students with academic success, there are multiple programs and areas at UNC that provide support for students throughout their years of enrollment. The following recommendations all have the opportunity to connect students to our campus, thus increasing student retention:

- Peer mentoring experiences that connect new UNC students with upperclassmen

- Creating specific support services for transfer students, non-traditional students and commuter students
- Faculty and staff advisors that conduct intervention meetings with students based on midterm grades
- Effective and consistent academic advising across all majors and disciplines
- Additional financial assistance for students to reduce the need for our students to work full-time
- Each student is matched with an academic advisor

5. An Engaged Campus

An engaged campus is one characterized by students, faculty, and staff who are excited to learn, teach, celebrate, and collaborate. Members focus on dialogue about the world in which they live and how to improve society by giving their time, energy, and passion to the pursuit of knowledge and social justice. The University of Northern Colorado will create this environment by:

- Encouraging faculty and student interaction in and outside of the classroom
- Creating opportunities for active learning
- Setting high expectations for our students, faculty, and staff
- Creating an environment where diverse ways of being, learning, and thinking are encouraged and affirmed
- Utilizing technological advances to connect off campus students with the UNC Community
- Celebrating UNC successes
- Communicating what it means to be a member of UNC
- Encouraging student engagement with the local and regional community off-campus

6. Best Practices

The University of Northern Colorado has long been committed to implementing best practices to ensure excellence in experiences for our community of learners. All members of the campus – faculty, staff, administrators, and students – are involved in creating an environment for learners that supports the endeavors of our community towards the highest standards in education and the experiences – both inside and outside of the classroom – that conceive the engaged individual. Through our best practices we put forth the opportunities for our students to succeed. Examples of the University of Northern Colorado’s best practices are:

- A “one stop shop” approach to student services areas.
- Individualization of each student’s experiences
- Nurture of and experiences for the whole person
- Recognition of the family experience and communicating effectively with parents and families of students
- Creation and maintenance of housing and residential learning communities
- Stewardship of a place and culture of enduring excellence