

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Approximately 95% of post-secondary institutions provide a first-year seminar to support entering freshmen. These programs range from 1-credit extended orientation seminars to 5-credit academic programs lasting the first year. Two-thirds of four-year institutions require 90% of their entering freshmen to take a first-year seminar (National resource Center, 2013). At UNC, a 1-credit extended orientation was the model for many years; however, few of the stakeholders (e.g., faculty, staff, and students) were satisfied with the outcomes. After an extensive program evaluation, a new program was developed and implemented.

Unlike the 1-credit orientation model, which focused on campus resources and study skills, a 3-credit research-based academic model was implemented, UNIV 101. The philosophy of UNIV 101 is to provide the opportunity for students to attempt and complete rigorous college-level academic tasks with the scaffolded support of highly trained instructors and class leaders (peer mentors). There is a focus on building community and social supports both within the class and on campus.

The course is based on the educational psychology discipline and includes topics such as goal, information processing, metacognitive and motivation theories. Students first learn about the theories and the research that supports these constructs and then learn about the short- and long-term applications. Additionally, the course includes time management and major and career planning. It is also a writing intensive course that includes a research project with a poster presentation to the UNC community through our annual Research Nights. Ongoing partnerships include the library (essential to the research project), Career Services, CHE, Honors, the GOAL program, and Counseling Services. The program serves a wide range of students with varying abilities ranging from Honors students to low-income, first-generation students within CHE.

There is a coordinated curriculum where all sections have the same syllabus, course schedule and major assignments. Instructors are doctoral students in specific disciplines (e.g., psychology, education, and counseling) selected through a competitive process. Before teaching, the entire instructor team completes a week-long comprehensive training in the summer and then two hours every week concurrently during the semester. Ongoing and concurrent training is essential to ensuring similar delivery of course content to all students.

Providing comprehensive and ongoing training to doctoral students also supports the mission of the program to “promote exemplary teaching.” These teaching opportunities coupled with the training and support has proven to be a graduate student recruiting tool for the university. Additionally, UNIV 101 has partnered with the graduate school to build a teaching library of videos illustrating effective undergraduate teaching that will be able to support graduate student instructors of record across the university.

Lastly, this program is relevant to the work in other task forces. Within the Active Learning subcommittee (in Academic Portfolio), UNIV 101 has been recommended as a benchmark for engaging students in beginning research experiences. The research project is a comprehensive experience that is scaffolded throughout the semester and then culminates with Research Nights. UNIV 101 is also relevant to the LACs in multiple ways. First, the curriculum is interdisciplinary and focuses on college-level reading, writing, metacognitive strategies and critical thinking. Additionally, the curriculum includes an emphasis on the importance and relevance of a liberal arts education both in terms of a comprehensive education but also, its necessity for career readiness. In effect, it serves as an introduction to the LACs.

RATIONALE

The UNC admission policy committee has assessed longitudinal data and has concluded that “high school GPA is the greatest predictor of success for students enrolled at UNC”. Additionally, in aligning with CDOE’s revised admissions policies, UNC intends to use admission scores “to place students into appropriate courses and refer to appropriate student success resources” (UNC Admission Policy presentation to Faculty Senate). Consistently, students who enter with a high school GPA of less than 3.0 are at considerable additional risk. Students who participate in UNIV 101 have consistently outperformed their peers both in terms of first-term GPA and short- and long-term retention (some graduation rates as high as 20% differences). See table below for additional data.

Additionally, another group of students at additional risk are undeclared or exploring students. Historically, these students have struggled the first year as well as compared to their declared peers. In addition to the curriculum described above, which supports all students, UNIV 101 also has an extensive Major and Career unit. The program partners with Career Services and the unit includes a 2- or 4-year education plan, an interest inventory, research into potential careers, and a final writing assignment and presentation that has students align potential interests with career and life goals. For declared students, this unit helps them to confirm their decisions with real information and for undeclared students, it helps provide the tools to explore their options.

Below is background data to support the recommendations for exploring (undeclared) students and for students with lower entering HS GPA (< 3.0). The past two years of data were included to allow for averages and one-year persistence rates. Each of the differences reported were statistically significant and consistent with the data for the past seven years.

Fall 2016 - 2017				
	Average # Students per Year	First-Term GPA ^a	One-Year Persistence (%)	Good Academic Standing (GPA > 2.0; %)
Undeclared	330	2.3	60	67
Declared	1763	2.8	71	81
HS GPA ≤ 2.75	266	1.93	56	55
HS GPA > 2.75	1827	2.83	71	83
HS GPA < 3.00	547	2.02	57	58
HS GPA ≥ 3.00	1546	2.96	73	86
	Average # Students per Year	First-Term GPA	One-Year Persistence (%)	Good Academic Standing (GPA > 2.0; %)
UNIV 101 Undeclared	97	2.6	70	78
Non-UNIV 101 Undeclared	233	2.2	56	63
UNIV 101 HS GPA ≤ 2.75	67	2.06	68	59
Non-UNIV 101 HS GPA ≤ 2.75	199	1.89	52	53
UNIV 101 HS GPA < 3.00	141	2.30	70	70
Non-UNIV 101 HS GPA < 3.00	406	1.92	53	54

^a GPA < 2.0 means these students on average are on academic probation after their first semester.

Student Success Task Force: First-Year Experience Subcommittee (UNIV 101 Recommendation)

	n	UNIV 101 Students One-Year Persistence	Non-UNIV 101 Students One-Year Persistence	Additional Revenue Saved Per Year by Serving Non-Participants ^a	Total Revenue Saved Per Year by Serving All Students	Total Revenue Saved Per Year with no Overlap
Undeclared	330	70%	56%	\$233K/ \$162K ^b	\$344K/ \$233K ^b	\$465K
HS GPA ≤ 2.75 (Ave Index = 90)	266	68%	52%	\$324K	\$435K	
HS GPA < 3.0 (Ave Index = 92)	547	70%	53%	\$698K	\$941K	

^a These costs were calculated based on the additional revenue saved by serving students who had previously not participated. It does not include the total revenue saved if the program served all of the students within that criteria.

^b These calculations account for overlaps between HS GPA and undeclared status. Accounts for tuition revenue saved based on current tuition costs after COF (no other costs were included).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 – Immediate (Resources required \$4500; Revenue saved \$557K per year)

- Assuming current enrollment of students who are already required to take UNIV 101 and who have self-selected, require:
 - All undeclared students and students who earned a HS GPA of less than or equal to 2.75.
 - Due to statistically significant differences of an average 0.4 higher first-term GPA and an average 10% increase in retention for students with a Class Leader (peer mentor), provide \$4500 to fund a Class Leader for every section of UNIV 101
 - During the semester, Class Leaders provide ongoing, continuous connection and support for students in the classroom (twice per week in class; provides academic support) and connection to the campus (Fall 2018 – 15+ events sponsored by class leaders and attended by freshmen students)
 - See [Peer Mentor manuscript](#) for details about program.
- Requiring students due to low HS GPA could be difficult for some majors due to number of credits required to complete the degree; however, providing post-secondary access for students who are at additional risk without necessary supports is setting up students for failure (this also does not account for the fact that half of these students are first-generation). Currently, students without first-year support (in the form of UNIV 101 participation) are, on average, on academic probation after the first semester and half are gone after the first year.
 - A possible solution would be to move UNIV 101 from LAC electives to Area 5 in the LACs. As a 3-credit academically rigorous, writing intensive course within the Educational Psychology discipline, it is an appropriate fit for Area 5 Social and Behavioral Sciences (See supporting material and rationale for the move request: [LAC UNIV 101 Request](#))

Recommendation 2 – When resources are available (Resources required \$33K; Revenue saved \$831K per year)

- Assuming current enrollment of students who are already required to take UNIV 101 and who have self-selected, require:
 - All undeclared students and students who earned a HS GPA of less than 3.0.

Student Success Task Force: First-Year Experience Subcommittee (UNIV 101 Recommendation)

- Same comments as above for Class Leaders (resources required = \$5500)
- Resources required includes costs for additional Class Leaders and two 18-hour graduate student (doctoral) appointments for the fall.
- Same comments as described above about challenges requiring additional credits.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

PROBATION STUDENTS – When resources are available (\$114K or \$154K, see breakdown below)

- Require students who earn less than a 2.0 in their first semester and are on academic probation to participate in UNIV 101 in their spring semester. For Fall 2017, this number was approximately 400 students. **Key note: 71% of these students were gone after their first year.**
 - Because number of participants in the spring have previously been low (less than 30 students), data is missing on potential performance or revenue saved.
 - Because of the consistent GPA and persistence results for students who participate in UNIV 101, it is likely that these students would also benefit.
- The two amounts for resources needed equal the following:
 - The \$114K would include eight 18-hour graduate student appointments for the spring and eight Class Leaders.
 - The \$147K would include one full-time 12-month lecturer, six 18-hour graduate student appointments in the spring and eight Class Leaders.
 - Key point here is with a 12-month full-time lecturer, the \$27.5K listed above for graduate students in Recommendation 2, would not be needed.
- Currently, spring sections include a varied student population. These sections have included entering freshmen, freshmen who are on probation, transfer students, and upper classman (including senior students). The curriculum is easily adaptable to support the individualized needs of these students. Instructors have effectively adapted both discussions and classroom activities as well as assignments to fit individual student needs.

FACILITIES

- Currently, the program does not have its own program resources or space. The Director has a borrowed office in another program's space. Fifteen instructors and 7 class leaders share two small office spaces. This becomes more challenging as all freshmen students are required to meet with their instructors during the semester. There is little to no opportunities for confidential discussions. Additionally, there is no storage space and all program resources sit in the Director's office. It is difficult to sustain program efforts with current resources. If additional instructors are added to support recommendations, these facilities become nearly impossible to support the program.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- Currently, support for entering international students is limited. Adding specific sections for international students is easily supportable. Expertise is available to appropriately adapt the curriculum and instructors will have access to specific training to support the pedagogy required to effectively teach English language learners while still challenging and supporting students as they gain necessary skills.

ONLINE STUDENTS

- With support from extended studies, curriculum could be adapted to online platforms. This is recommended only for students who will be completing their education *completely* online. This would not be appropriate for our traditional entering freshmen.

ASSESSMENT

- Currently, the UNIV 101 program director collects both qualitative and quantitative data to support ongoing program improvement and assessment. These include the following and would support the recommendations above:
 - Due to scheduling in computer labs at the end of the semester, the program has consistently received between 90-100% rate of response on course evaluations. Programmatic changes have been implemented based on direct student feedback.
 - Program currently partners with the library to assess the value and benefit of library sessions which are required for UNIV 101 students (Fall 2018, 30+ sessions were provided by the library). Library faculty have also assessed student final products to evaluate benefits to students in terms of writing and research progress.
 - Program currently partners with Career Services to provide major and career curriculum and to assess the impact of this specific unit within the program. The UNIV 101 program has access to this data and shares with Career Services.
 - Instructors and Class Leaders participate in comprehensive and ongoing training and are evaluated by both course evaluations and classroom observations during the semester. Focus groups are also conducted to evaluate instructor and class leader support and training. Focus groups with students are conducted to assess perceived value.
 - The UNIV 101 Program Director has access to an Insight Report and continuously does short- and long-term student achievement related to UNIV 101 participation. These analyses include quasi-experimental designs for all students and students who are at additional risk. First-term GPA (predictor of continued retention), one-year persistence, and graduation rates (see example below) are assessed on an ongoing basis.

