A History of the University College

Since 2004, task groups at North Carolina Central University (NCCU) have studied and researched ways to increase student success – to increase the number of students retained from year to year, the number of students graduating in four years and six years, and the number of students who graduate and advance into competitive careers or graduate and professional programs. The Comprehensive Academic Success and Enhancement (CASE) Center idea was conceived in a conference at Appalachian State University by a task force of five NCCU faculty and administrators. The purpose of the CASE Center is to facilitate academic, personal, and professional growth and development and student success, through a broad range of programs focused on synergistic work to make students competitive. In Fall of 2007, Chancellor Nelms suggested a reorganization of the University to include a new University College as a means to facilitate the successful transition to the first year experience of all new first-year students and new transfer students. The Provost and members of the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs Divisions worked to design the organizational structure of the University College.

In order for NCCU students to achieve student success, best practices in higher education must be available for all students with very intentional focus during the first two years of the students’ enrollment and matriculation. Research by Noel Levitz, NSSE, John Gardner, and others indicate that effective academic advising, academic support, personal and career counseling, social interaction opportunities, and leadership responsibilities make for student success during the first two years of college. The University College will focus intentionally, consistently, and qualitatively on academic advising, academic support, academic excellence, career placement, socialization skills, soft skills, and personal, civic, and social responsibility and accountability. The goals and objectives of the University College are aligned with the work of the UNC Tomorrow Commission. The implementation of the University College will enable NCCU to carry out recommendations of the UNC Tomorrow Commission, specifically the recommendations related to Global Readiness and Access to Higher Education.

Several initiatives at NCCU work to promote student success: early warning reports, mid term grades, student engagement sessions, tutorial services, and learning communities. Yet, more intentional work must be done to ensure success for the majority of our students. The University College will fill the void with its intentional focus on student success for all new freshmen, transfer students, and sophomores.

The mission of the University College is to assure a successful transition of first and second year students to the point that they become successful during their college matriculation. In addition to promoting the mission of the university as a whole, the University College creates a learning environment that fosters academic commitment, civic and community responsibility, school pride, and life-long learning. The vision for success is to develop and establish a University College that will be recognized regionally and nationally for its record of student productivity and success.

The purpose of the University College is to provide a means to enhance the successful transition and experiences of the first two years for all freshmen, sophomores, and new transfer students with intentional focus on student success.

Fundamental to the success of the University College are the core values that will exist in everything that we do. Students are the source of North Carolina Central University’s success. They should always receive the strongest commitment of the staff, faculty and administration. The University College encourages effort, support and progress in first and second year students.

Retention is based on the ability to attract and develop students who reflect the mission, goals, standards and culture of North Carolina Central University. The University College will seek to retain students by providing a positive first and second year experience. Community should be a place where students are nurtured and engaged. The University College promotes a welcoming environment where students have the opportunity to learn from and gain diverse classroom experiences. University policies and procedures, rules, and regulations will be focused on enabling the success of students. Academic Affairs and Student Affairs personnel will work cooperatively in a collegiate process.

The goals of the University College and the strategies for obtaining those goals are (1) Assist students in developing clear set goals as a path toward graduation (students work with Career Services and Academic Advising to set clearly defined goals that they follow to graduation); (2) encourage students to create interpersonal relationships (students participate in continuous orientation where they interact with other first year students as well as upperclassmen and alumni); (3) Assure students acquire intellectual and academic mastery of subjects and content in a self-directed learning environment (students begin with general education requirements as well as the Dimensions of Learning class to receive an unproblematic introduction to college curriculum, and at the end of two years they will have mastered core competencies in General Education courses and lower level courses in their majors); (4) Facilitate an awareness of diversity and liberal arts
values (students participate in colloquies, symposiums, and lyceum programs provided by the University and the University College) (5) develop civic, social, community and personal responsibility (students complete required hours of community service beginning their freshman year, thus satisfying portions of this requirement for graduation; students participate in student government elections and become registered to vote in local and national elections; and, students develop and complete global awareness projects in peer groups); (6) create a sense of community and school spirit (students participate in campus traditions such as Eagle pinning and homecoming, learn school songs and chants, and have the opportunity to interact with area and noted alumni); and (7) become members of a PASSPORT Society (students meet prescribed competencies before being able to use that PASSPORT Society to move to the Upper Divisions of the University).

The University College makes the following assumptions: that the University College will work exclusively with first and second year students, with particular focus on freshmen, and student success; that the University College will be a part of the Academic Affairs Division; that the University College structure and program will help to assure student success and retention; that the University College structure will be embraced by the University community and appropriate buy-in will be demonstrated through a willingness to cooperate with the conversations and public meetings, and discussions necessary to make the University College a success; that NCCU will allocate necessary resources to implement the University College structure through new acquisitions of positions and funds and a reallocation of positions and funds; that appropriate space will be allocated even if other offices and rooms will need to be relocated to make room for the University College; and, that NCCU will put policies into place that will support the organization of a University College.

The University College is governed and managed by a dean, two associate deans, and an advisory council, and is made up of the following units: Academic Advising, Academic Support, Learning Communities, Dimensions of Learning, First Year Experience; Tutorial Program, Community College Partnerships/Transfer Students, Aspiring Eagles, Assessment, Lyceum Program, Reading Program, Thurgood Marshall, Regional Science Bowl; ITSSTEM, and University Testing.

All new NCCU students are admitted into the University College. At the end of two years in the University College, students should be able to: demonstrate mastery in analytic, communication, quantitative, and information skills; demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and practical experience with the disciplines which explore the liberal arts, behavioral sciences, social sciences, and health and wellness; demonstrate positive ethical and moral behaviors; demonstrate civic, social, and personnel responsibility; demonstrate knowledge of global learning and cultures by describing clearly how what is done locally impacts others globally; demonstrate mastering in transferring knowledge from one discipline to another and from one setting to another; demonstrate teamwork and collaborative problem-solving skills; demonstrate mastery of terms of the General Education Curriculum; demonstrate the ability to review books and make presentations on them; demonstrate competence in using soft skills and technical skills; complete at least sixty clock hours of Community Service Learning; and, develop personal goals, commit to them, and monitor goal accomplishment.

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