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Retention Council Efforts Show Results

By Michael J. Licari, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
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The UNI Retention Council was established in 2010 as a result of the 2009-10 Foundations of Excellence (FoE) initiative. UNI’s retention and graduation rates remain strong, and should be a source of pride for the institution.

To date, the Council’s focus on student retention rates has been in regards to the first-year experience, and its efforts are successful. The first-year retention rate for UNI is 84.7%, the highest it has been in at least 20 years.

Several other retention efforts are visible across the university campus, such as a mandatory, two-day new student orientation program designed to facilitate the successful transition of new students to UNI. Students learn about academic expectations and university resources, and begin to connect with the UNI community. Similarly, Welcome Week is a community-building initiative to connect new students to campus life, as well as to the Cedar Falls/Waterloo area.

Living, Learning Communities (LLCs), in which students live together in residence halls based upon shared academic interests and participate in programming and conversations with faculty, were offered in Fall 2013. A few LLC academic and co-curricular areas include music, elementary/early childhood education, and business. Additional LLCs, such as for “deciding [on a major]” students and Biology students, were offered beginning this fall. LLCs also exist for first-year and transfer students.

In July 2014, UNI’s Department of Residence sent members of the new Advisory Task Force for Learning Communities to the National Institute for...
Learning Communities, to determine additional ways UNI could benefit by offering these types of opportunities to students in the future.

Among the Council's retention efforts specific to student advising, the Advisory Task Force reviewed course scheduling practices and made recommendations, to ensure that each semester's schedule of classes can be built in a manner to avoid bottlenecks in students' progress through their programs.

Now that the Council has implemented a number of first-year initiatives alongside other groups on campus, it is moving its focus to the retention of sophomores, international students, and transfer students, as well as providing continued support for at-risk students.

**Call for Submissions: NAR Bicentennial Conference**

The *North American Review* is now accepting submissions to its Bicentennial Creative Writing & Literature Conference, to be held on the University of Northern Iowa campus on June 11-13, 2015.

The editors invite proposals for individual papers, pre-formed panels (3-4 panelists), or roundtable discussions (4-6 participants). [Upload a submission here](#). Unless otherwise specified, the deadline for submissions is January 16, 2015.

- Critical papers, panels, and roundtables may be submitted on any literary or cultural topic, theme, author, art work, or text that has some connection (broadly conceived) to the *North American Review*. Group society proposals are welcome.
- Creative writing proposals may include readings of one’s creative work, explorations of the craft and theory of writing, or discussions of creative writing pedagogy, the publishing world, the professionalization of creative writing, or creative writing as a discipline in the university.

Among proposed panels, for instance, is one focusing on "Mark Twain and the *North American Review*." Scholars are invited to submit proposals for papers as part of this panel. Selected papers may also be published as part of a future digital critical edition. Questions, proposals under 500 words and brief CVs should be sent to Dr. Jim O'Loughlin at [jim.oloughlin@uni.edu](mailto:jim.oloughlin@uni.edu). Proposals must be received by December 1, 2014 to be given full consideration.

Another panel, "'The New Historical Romances': Representing America in Historical Fiction of the 21st Century," seeks paper proposals from scholars or creative writers on recent literature portraying any era of American history (including young adult fiction or non-traditional forms like graphic fiction). Proposals of approximately one page and CVs should be sent to Dr. Anne Myles at [anne.myles@uni.edu](mailto:anne.myles@uni.edu) by December 12, 2014.

See more details about the *North American Review* and the conference on its [website](#) and [Wordpress website](#).