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Academic Affairs Update, November 2014

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*From the Office of the Provost and
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs*

Academic Affairs Update

University of Northern Iowa



Retention Council Efforts Show Results

*By Michael J. Licari, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
April Chatham-Carpenter, Interim Associate Provost for Academic Affairs*

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

Retention Council Initiatives

*By Kristin Woods,
Assistant Dean of Students/New Student Programs
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Latricia Hylton, Math Coordinator, Academic Learning Center*

Since its formation in 2011-12, the Retention Council, in collaboration with various departments, has led the charge on several new student success initiatives:

Success Coaching, which pairs volunteer faculty and staff members with first- and second-year students on academic probation in mentoring relationships.

Course-Embedded Peer Mentoring, where instructors of First-Year Only sections of Liberal Arts Core classes collaborate with undergraduate peer mentors to build a sense of classroom community and provide academic and co-curricular resources. In 2013-14, students in peer mentor-supported, First-Year Only LAC sections were retained at a 6% higher rate than other first-year students.

Supplemental Instruction, a non-remedial academic assistance program targeting courses with a high rate of D and F grades, Incompletes, and Withdrawals. The SI Pilot Program began in Fall 2012 and has served over 400 students, resulting in over 4,400 contact hours. UNI students participating in the SI Pilot Program earn up to 0.73 grade points higher than students not attending SI in the same course section. Supplemental Instruction is being piloted for Anatomy and Physiology, Calculus, Humanities, Introduction to Statistical Methods and Organic Chemistry.

Implementation and expansion of the ALEKS Math Placement requirement, after which the Math Department reported significant decreases in D and F grades and Withdrawal rates in Calculus I and Math for the Biological Sciences. Beginning in October 2014, students have access to the ALEKS assessment, online

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.

review modules, and up to four re-takes of the assessment at no additional charge.

Gaining Panther Success, a peer mentoring program for multicultural students and TRiO-eligible students, coordinated by the Center for Multicultural Education. This program had been in place several years ago, and was re-started with support from the Retention Council.

MAP-Works, an early-intervention tool that provides personalized feedback to first-year students on how to succeed during the transition to college, and allows faculty and staff to identify and address student needs early in the semester.

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. 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 by December 12, 2014.



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

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