

# Accreditation Matters

Issue 4

## Student Success at UC Blue Ash College

**UC Blue Ash College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission**, a regional accreditation agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Accreditation was granted on July 25, 1969 and the most recent reaffirmation of accreditation was in 2008-09. The next reaffirmation of accreditation is slated for 2018-19. A comprehensive evaluation visit by an HLC peer review team is scheduled for February 25 and 26, 2019.

## Student Success

Several areas of the HLC Criteria indicate expectation for the institution to support student success. These range from mission to teaching and learning to resources and planning. Core Component 4C specifically addresses the ways in which we help students succeed. 4C states "The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs."

In alignment with our mission and vision, we passionately support student success at UC Blue Ash. In addition to the UC resources available to students, faculty and staff at UC Blue Ash implement many unique initiatives and resources. These include support programs for under prepared students; informing, documenting, and providing interventions on intermediate student progress; expanding academic advising and orientation; providing extensive mentoring and coaching efforts and more. Some of our UC Blue Ash efforts are described below.

**Academic Advising.** In fall 2017, the UC Blue Ash academic advisor ratios were decreased to meet the University expectation of 300 students per advisor.

**Intermediate Grades.** In 2015-2016, the faculty senate passed a resolution that all faculty should report early-term grades to students before the official withdrawal deadline so that students could make an informed decision. Are you providing intermediate grades?

**Tutoring, Study labs, and more.** Students have access to a number of academic labs and tutors as well as support from the UC Blue Ash Library. These resources include the Writing and Study Skills Lab, Math Lab, Science Learning Lab, and Foreign Language Lab. Additional discipline-specific tutoring is available for Accounting and History. Other departments provide additional opportunities such as peer assisted study sessions in Physics and NCLEX reviews for Nursing. Students also have access to electronic resources such as Lynda and Student Lingo.

**Starfish Early Alert.** In Fall 2015, UC implemented a full-scale Early Alert program using Starfish which is integrated with our LMS. Faculty flag students for attendance concerns/online participation, assignments/homework concerns, low quiz/test scores, or being in danger of failing as well as kudos. The progress surveys sent to faculty request that they provide this feedback to students in the first, sixth, and ninth weeks of the term. Students immediately receive an email with a note about this concern, instructions about using resources, and encouragement to work with the instructor. If a student has multiple alerts, he or she is contacted by an advisor to check in about what help could be needed. We have high completion rates for these alerts—over 17000 last year! Thank you to everyone who has been completing them.

**Center for Pathways Advising and Student Success.** The University created the Center for Pathways Advising and Student Success in fall of 2017 to address the orientation and advising needs of transfer, transition, and non-matriculated students.

**College Program for Academic Success (CPAS).** The College Program for Academic Success (CPAS) program provides intensive support and performance requirements for our least prepared students with a high school GPA below a 2.2 high school. In CPAS, a conditional admission program, students sign a contract, meet with an advisor, complete progress reports, attend workshops, have a specified schedule, and achieve a first semester GPA in order to be fully admitted into their programs.

**Academic Alert.** The University threshold for alerting students to poor academic progress is a GPA under 2.0 with at least 30 credit hours earned. By this time, our students may have already jeopardized their financial aid. In order to intervene earlier, we created an Academic Alert status for students with fewer than 30 credit hours and a GPA under 2.0, and Academic Action Outreach to support these students. They receive monthly reminders of their status, success tips, referrals to support resources, an academic progress survey and for some, individualized follow-up.

**15-to-Finish.** State and national organizations focusing on retention advocate for students to take full-time course loads because this predicts degree completion. UCBA data confirms this trend, and it holds up even for Pell-eligible students. The College's advising office now advocates for students to take a full-time course load, unless there are strong outside circumstances preventing it (e.g., care giving, full-time employment). The 15-to-Finish initiative has been integrated into orientation, one-on-one advising meetings, and messaging to students and parents.

**CPS Students.** In support of our Cincinnati Public School students we implement and partner to provide programs including Barrier Busters, 12th Grade Cohort, UC Scholars, CPS Ambassadors, social events, and Pride Grant orientation and programming.

**Inclusion Workshops and Affinity Groups.** Our Assistant Director for Inclusion and Engagement leads efforts to create a more inclusive environment for our students including a workshop series on student success topics and the development of identity-based student support groups (Sister Circle, Men of Color Collaborative, UCBA Alliance, and Latinos en accion). Our Veterans are also offered unique services and support groups.

**Major Mentors.** Major mentors are teaching assistants who serve in our Exploratory Studies' Student Success Seminar assisting students with major selection, SMART goals, personality inventories, campus resources, and time management skills.

**CYC Mentoring.** In 2017-18, UCBA partnered with the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative (CYC), a nonprofit that places mentors in K-12 public schools throughout the city, to pilot a mentoring program at the college. Eighty students were paired with 57 volunteer mentors consisting of staff, faculty, alumni, and community members. This program was expanded to serve 120 students in 2018-19.

**Success Coaches.** This new program serves nearly 300 students. Success coaches build relationships by meeting regularly, monitoring academic progress, and referring students to academic support resources. Success coaches are provided through our partnerships with CYC and the national nonprofit, College Possible. Additional staffing is provided by the University's TRIO grant and the Cincinnati Pride grant initiative, a gap-filling program for Pell-eligible students from Cincinnati Public Schools. The College assigns caseloads, supervises the staff, and connects coaches to our other College resources.

**Accessibility Services.** UC Blue Ash College is committed to providing all students equal access to learning opportunities. Accessibility Resources is the official campus office that works with students who have impairments which may influence their performance in their courses (learning, ADD, psychological, visual, hearing, physical, cognitive, medical condition, etc.). In addition, programs such as the Success-abilities orientation, neurodiversity group, and the Inclusion Institute are initiatives offered to support students.

***What else are we doing to support student success? Let's share our ideas and accomplishments.***