STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITY ONE: CULTIVATING STUDENT SUCCESS

Task Force Recommendations

Spring 2019

The University of Arkansas – Pulaski Technical College First Year Experience Program was created to unify institutional resources and shape campus culture to prioritize the support of students transitioning to college. It is the goal of this task force to begin work on the identified action items in the fall of 2019 with the intention of impacting the strength of the UA-PTC First Year Experience program by Academic Year 2020.

The UA-PTC FYE plan is aligned with the institutional mission, vision, and values to provide access to high-quality education that promotes learning and enables individuals to develop to their fullest potential.

Strategic Plan Priority One: Cultivating Student Success

Cultivate student success through the delivery of excellent technical and transfer programs, support services, workforce training, and co-curricular activities.

Objectives:

- Establish clear paths to students' career or transfer goals through program maps and transfer pathways
- Utilize admissions process and standards that ensure all students are adequately prepared for success
- Implement processes that assist students with the selection of a guided pathway
- Execute strategies for guiding students to reach their goal
- Ensure students are learning
- Build a culture of engagement
- Expand community outreach to secure resources and promote student success

The following elements comprise the foundation of the initial First Year Experience Program:

1. **First Year Experience (Courses)**
2. **Academic Advising**
3. **Career Placement**
4. **Onboarding**
5. **Student Life and Engagement**
6. **General Task Force Recommendations**

📚 FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE COURSES

First year experience courses, often referred to as freshman seminars or student success courses, are courses designed to help students develop study skills and coping strategies to effectively navigate the academic and social environments of college. At UA-PTC, this includes a redesign of the three (3) hour College Seminar Course to support incoming at-risk students placed into developmental education, and a restoration of the Career Seminar course to support students in technical and professional programs.

1.1 College Pathway Course Redesign

Redesign the current COLL 1300 College Seminar course to better align with industry standards and best practices. The course should be reduced to one (1) credit hour and deliver a modern curriculum that provide support and resources to students transitioning to college. The proposed new course description and outline are as follows:

COLL 1100 College Pathway. This course is designed to help students transition to college life. Students explore strategies that lead to success in college. Topics covered include college resources, goal setting, time management, career exploration, degree planning, paying for college, and academic skills (note taking, listening, studying, and test-taking strategies). Students required to take two (2) or more developmental courses are required to take this course.

Week 1	*Welcome to College & UA-PTC College Pathway*
Week 2	*College Resources and Lingo*
Week 3	*College Expectations and Adjustments*
Week 4	*Career Exploration, Goals, Values, and Time Management*
Week 5	*Academic and Degree Planning*
Week 6	*Funding Your Education*
Week 7	*Understanding Money and Financial Institutions*
Week 8	*Self-Awareness and Learning*
Week 9	*Memory and Studying*
Week 10	*Listening and Note Taking*
Week 11	*Test Taking*
Week 12	*Information Literacy*
Week 13	*Discernment and Discourse*
Week 14	*Diversity and Perspective*
Week 15	*Physical and Psychological Balance*

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1.2 Career Seminar Course Redesign

Reactivate *COLL 1302 Career Seminar* as *COLL 1300 Career Essentials* to serve the needs of the School of Technical and Professional Studies. This course will deliver a modern curriculum that provides support and resources to students enrolled in Technical and Professional programs. It will meet community employer needs and align with industry standards and best practices.

COLL 1300. Career Essentials. This course is required for first-time entering students seeking career and technical education degrees. It is designed to allow students to take a comprehensive approach to career planning. The course focuses on refining pre-employment skills, reinforcing work values, exploring employment trends and issues. In addition, students will explore learning styles and construct strategies for success in college and the work world. Students will demonstrate an understanding of workplace culture, financial literacy, and career resources. (3 credit hours)

Week 1:   Syllabus and Class Orientation
Week 2:   College expectations and Resources
Week 3:   Academic Skills for Success
Week 4:   Career Exploration
Week 5:   Career Exploration
Week 6:   Degree and Career Mapping
Week 7:   Career Planning Toolkit: Workplace culture
Week 8:   Career Planning Toolkit: Workplace Skills and Competencies
Week 9:   Career Planning Toolkit: Portfolio Creation
Week 10:   Career Planning Toolkit: Networking and Connecting with Employers
Week 11:   Career Planning Toolkit: Portfolio Creation
Week 12:   Job Searching
Week 13:   Work Ethic and Career Success
Week 14:   Professional Communications Strategies
Week 15:   Money and Financial Institutions

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ACADEMIC ADVISING

UA-PTC Office of Advising provides an empowering and supportive environment for students to explore their educational and career goals. Academic advisors pledge to respect the dignity of our students, while providing timely and accurate information.

The Office of Advising at University of Arkansas – Pulaski Technical College is the contact point for all students with the following needs:

- First semester registration for incoming freshmen or transfer students
- Gaining knowledge about our degree/certificate options
- Adding and withdrawing from classes outside normal registration periods
- Advising for educational and career goals)

2.1 Continue Faculty-Led Advising Training

In October of 2018 the institution moved from a centralized organizational advising structure to a shared organizational model where certain student populations meet with advisors in a centralized staff unit, while other students meet with academic faculty in the department of their major discipline. Training was launched prior to this transition, and additional training and professional development are needed to continue refining the new advising model.

Training is currently provided by the Office of Academic Advising via school meetings at the beginning of each semester, and as requested through the Director of Academic Advising. A more structured type of faculty advisor training is provided by specially trained faculty from certain disciplines through the Office of Professional Development. The training is designed into three (3) levels and offered at the beginning of each semester:

Level 1: Faculty Advising – Getting Started

Level 2: Faculty Advising - Sharpening Skills

Level 3: Faculty Advising - Looking Beyond Registration

Each semester will bring new challenges and insights into the unique advising culture at UA-PTC. For this reason, the taskforce recommends continued training to guide the progress of quality academic advising for UA-PTC students.

2.2 Early Alert Training

The institution launched an Early Alert system with the start of the Spring 2019 semester. The system permissions allow all UA-PTC faculty and staff to submit early alerts. Institutional training was provided through the Office of Professional Development, and targeted training was offered if requested by the Dean of Student Affairs.

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Guiding documents were provided to the entire campus community, and additional training guides will continue to be developed as the Early Alert system as configuration is ongoing. Additionally, the institution plans to launch a full retention management suite in the Jenzabar system throughout the Spring 2019 semester. The full retention management suite will be fully operational for the Fall 2019 semester.

These new initiatives will require ongoing configuration and will therefore require new and additional training. For this reason, the taskforce recommends continued training and development of training documents.

2.3 Restore Universal Advising Rights to Trained Faculty Advisors

With the launch of a new hybrid advising model and retention initiatives, UA-PTC has taken the first steps toward system of case management advising. Part of the launch of these new processes included an evaluation of how UA-PTC users access the existing systems. As we launch these new systems it is important to consider how the users will interact with the system, and what permissions are necessary to be effective.

With the new advising initiatives, the system was configured to allow advisors to access students both within their specific advising case load and those within the same department and/or major type. This design has been used consistently for two semesters, and some trained faculty advisors need additional access to continue to serve students. For this reason, the committee recommends certain trained faculty advisors be allowed access to advise the entire student body.

2.4 Emphasis articulation and 2+2 agreements

As case management continues to evolve at UA-PTC, it is important to maintain and promote accurate and convenient articulation agreements. The institution has committed appropriate resources to cultivate partnerships and manage agreements.

These documents will continue to be used in all First Year Experience functions including academic advising, career services, new student orientation, and college pathways courses. For this purpose, the task force recommends emphasizing articulation and 2+2 agreements at a campus-wide level for increased effectiveness.

CAREER SERVICES

UA – Pulaski Tech Career Services are currently integrated into the Office of Academic Advising both physically and in practice. The services are coordinated by the Director and Associate Director of Academic Advising through various initiatives and events.

3.1 Establish Office of Career Services

The recommendation of the Career Services subgroup is that the college establish an office of Career Services. This office will be a centralized point of contact for employers and students look for employment or for the skills necessary to successfully seek and gain employment. We recommend that a director either be hired from outside or transferred from within. Possible internal places to look are the current advising staff and other staff members, such as those working with STEM Success. This office should work closely with the UA-PTC Foundation Alumni coordinator as well as the foundation's grant office in order to seek grant funding that currently exists and will exist in the future.

3.2 Survey UA-PTC Departments

Each department at UA-PTC currently manages career placement in a different fashion. Uniting the institution under one Career Services Department will require assessing best practices across all majors and department. The subcommittee recommends surveying other UA-PTC departments to determine how each department handles career placement.

3.3 Work with Career Match at the Business and Industry Center

Job placement is handled at Business and Industry Center by a service called Career Match. This service is operating successfully and could be used to provide transitional support for a new Office of Career Services.

3.4 Survey other Two-Year Colleges

Career placement services are provided at many other two-year institutions in Arkansas. The subcommittee recommends reaching out to like institutions to discover how they implement career services for their students and alumni.

3.5 Career Services and Career Seminar alliance

Consider the utilization of the Office of Career Services to support the Career Seminar course. As the office becomes functional and staff are trained, it would be ideal to utilize the same staff. Additionally, as the office begins to accumulate resources it will hold the same resources needed by the Career Seminar course.

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ON-BOARDING

The student onboarding initiatives address the critical period in which students acquire the necessary knowledge, resources, skills, and behaviors to enable them to be successful and engaged in college. While all departments at UA-PTC are responsible for helping create a positive experience for incoming students, the departments typically tasked with facilitating student onboarding include Admissions, Financial Aid, Records, Academic Advising, New Student Orientation, and other various student services and student support offices.

4.1 Require Customer Service Training and Accountability Measures

The Offices of Student Affairs, Admissions, and Financial Aid have committed to providing quality customer service across all services and departments. While these efforts are ongoing, it does not exclude this from being an important focus of the student onboarding experience. The subcommittee recommends the development of integrated feedback/survey/evaluation process for employees to gauge effectiveness. The offices tasked with onboarding services need to develop automated surveying for offices when students sign-in, call, or e-mail.

Identified resources include Connections user training, customer service training, and top-level administrative support to reinforce customer service as a priority. Options must continue to be investigated to get Professional Development funding, updated materials, and additional support. Valuing stakeholders committee is working to develop an internal customer service training and recognition program.

4.2. Student Enrollment Navigator / Student Mentor

The subcommittee recommends investigating the utilization of student leaders to assist in navigating the onboarding processes and offices. These students would primarily be tasked with distributing reference guides, assisting students with commonly asked questions, and helping students navigate campus. Resources needed include creation and printing of reference guides, training of participants, simple reporting to get relevant data.

4.3 Integrated Text Messaging and Push Messaging

Effective communication must be established to provide quality student services. UA-PTC relies heavily on the use of email to communicate with student, with limited success. It is well known that text messaging and push messages are a modern and effective mode of communication.

The Jenzabar system has new been fully implemented, and the opportunity to begin integrating a text messaging service is now. While some features are currently available in the Jenzabar Recruitment Manager, the institution will need additional texting and push alert capabilities to the needs of various departments. Additionally, the institution is currently working on a project to revitalize and reimagine the UA-PTC mobile app with this app comes new capabilities.

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The subcommittee recommends updating the Jenzabar JRM contract to include all necessary text messaging features, purchasing additional text messaging component for use by student services offices outside of Admissions, and providing training for all parties.

4.4 Rejuvenate and Broaden New Student Orientation Experience

New Student Orientation has been through many iterations at UA-PTC. Currently, the orientation sessions are highly recommended but not required for new students. The orientation sessions are only accessible on pre-scheduled dates prior to the beginning of each semester. While this model suits certain types of students, it is not accessible to all students.

🔊 STUDENT LIFE AND ENGAGEMENT

UA-PTC Student Life and Leadership Department to complement the academic programs of study and to enrich and supplement student-learning experiences outside the classroom. Experiences outside the classroom include social, cultural, and intellectual clubs and activities that encourages students to realize their full leadership potential.

5.1 Create Comprehensive Student Engagement Plan

In order to further enhance the overall strategy for student success at UA-PTC and embed a culture of student engagement, the subcommittee recommends creating a Strategic Student Engagement Plan. The plan should enhance existing practices, reflect industry best practices, strengthen existing partnerships, increase the impact of events on campus, and empower students at learners.

This plan may include proposals to redesign structures, introduce new committees, and increase student representation and feedback.

5.2 Recruit from High School Related Student Organizations

Many college level student organizations align with chapters of high school organizations in the four-county service area of UATPC. This effort is obvious healthy first year experience initiative to support students transitioning to college. This initiative directly benefit the students, and fostering new relationships and launching new recruitment efforts would strengthen the partnership between UA-PTC and area high schools.

The subcommittee recommends partnering with Public Relations and Marketing to create push cards to be used by student organizations sponsors and the high school sponsors of the appropriate organizations.

5.3 Create Student Interest Survey

The subcommittee recommends creating a student survey to gauge which current student organizations students are interested in joining. This effort would help add attention and value to existing UA-PTC Student Organizations.

5.4 Student Volunteerism / Service-Learning Opportunities

The institution should investigate partnering with community organizations to offer a meaningful service-learning experience to UA-PTC students. Students who engage in this experience will be able to realize that they can "make a difference" while realizing that the topics they learn about in the classroom are relevant in the real world.

Opportunities would include work related to disaster relief recovery, conservation projects, and community improvement. UA-PTC could work locally as well as in the Southern region on projects and learn more about the areas they visit. Community Organizations already do this work and are looking for opportunities to partner with colleges and universities.

5.6 Student Spaces

The Student Life and Engagement subcommittee recommends continuing to investigate best of student spaces. It is essential to monitor both the impact and perception of student space on a college campus. Currently one of the most used and preferred spaces on campus are in the CHARTS Building. Considerations are being made to redesign student spaces in the Campus Center Building. This building currently holds the majority of the student services office, and it does not provide many multi-purpose spaces for current students.

⚙️ GENERAL PRIORITY 1: STUDENT SUCCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

General taskforce recommendations are included outside of the five (5) initial components of the UA-PTC FYE Program. These elements were determined to be essential to the development of an effective FYE Program but did not fall within the boundaries of the initial components. The recommendations range from general staff improvements, information/technology systems, campus operations, and marketing/PR.

Cross Training Opportunities

The Academic Advising subcommittee recommends prioritizing cross-training among student services offices and personnel.

Portal Scheduling Design

The current portal design, regarding how courses are scheduled, could offer a more student-friendly design. For instance, when scheduling courses, the student's schedule is positioned at the very bottom of the page. Depending on which type of course the student is trying to schedule the page depth could require significant amounts of scrolling to determine what other courses are already scheduled. The drawback of the current design is not based on functionality, but instead on efficiency and ease of movement.

If possible, the subcommittee for Student Life and Engagement recommends moving the scheduling feature to the top of the student view, to allow an easier scheduling experience.

Office / Campus Hours of Operation

The Student life and Engagement subcommittee recommends aligning the hours for all student services offices. Currently, the Office of Academic Advising, Admissions, Financial Aid, and Student Accounts all keep various hours of operation. While relatively closely aligned, the offices do not provide services and are not available to students at consistent times.

In addition, late hours should to be coordinated to provide clear messaging to students and maximize institutional investment.

Create Map of all Student Services

The foundation for clear and accurate services is to ensure students can easily contact and locate the services for which they are seeking. Due to the University of Arkansas acquisition and the recent institutional restructuring, the institution is still experiencing still significant signage challenges. Additionally, the institutional restructuring is still ongoing in many areas. It is understood that permanent signage cannot be immediately purchased.

It is the recommendation of the subcommittee for Student Life and Engagement that simple resources be created to assist students with navigating the UA-PTC Campus and ensure contact information for essential services are easy to access.

Provide System-Wide Jenzabar Consultation/Training

The subcommittee recommends investigating the potential to have third-party consultant group review the UA-PTC Jenzabar system and find areas of improvement regarding efficiency of systems and structures. If a third-party consultant is not available, perhaps the Jenzabar company can provide additional training on a more focused basis.

The subcommittee for Onboarding is aware of additional training needs from offices outside of Student Affairs, Admissions, and Financial Aid.

Provide Customer Service Training and Support for Office of Disability Services

Like the recommendation to provide customer service and student surveys throughout the onboarding process, the subcommittee for Student Life and Engagement recommends targeted training for staff and faculty related to disability services at UA-PTC.

Identified resources include certified customer service trainers and IR Office to help develop Institutional Effectiveness survey to begin assessment process of these services.

Advertise Blackboard Help and Services

The subcommittee for Student Life and Engagement recommend measures that make institutional Blackboard support more visible and accessible to students. Consider moving physical office of Blackboard support technician. These services must be available to students at all times classes are offered (including Saturday and evening) and appropriately advertised to students.