UNCG Cares: Reaching Out to Students in Distress

The “UNCG Cares” program at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) is a joint initiative between the Divisions of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services. The UNCG Cares program specifically aims to positively affect retention, increase graduation rates, and promote a sense of community and support at UNCG by providing faculty and staff information to effectively assist students in distress. After completing this program, participants are equipped to intervene with students and provide necessary assistance before concerns reach a crisis level.

During the 2006-2007 academic year, the Dean of Students received regular requests from academic departments and others to provide presentations focusing on students in distress and students who are disruptive. The numbers of students on campus that fit one of these descriptors had increased dramatically over the last several years. As a result, the Dean conceptualized a program that would address these situations before they reached a crisis point, with the intent of positively affecting retention and graduation rates. In order to proactively reach out to students as soon as they show signs of distress, the entire campus must create a culture of caring. In that culture, whoever interacts with the student, (faculty, student organization advisor, work-study employer, etc.) can assist the student in accessing the help needed. The Dean of Students Office approached Enrollment Services, which is a division within Academic Affairs, about partnering together to implement the program. The team launched the UNCG Cares program in Summer 2007. Since this time, the Dean of Students, the Assistant Dean of Students, and the Assistant Director of the Counseling and Testing Center have led monthly interactive programs for faculty and staff. More than 400 UNCG employees in the past three months have participated. During the two-hour session, participants learn active listening skills, how to recognize signs of distress, how to proactively reach out to students and offer help, the variety of issues that students face, effective referrals, and the resources available on campus to assist students. Participants then apply their newly-acquired skills by discussing a variety of case study scenarios in small groups. Upon completion of the program, participants sign a UNCG Cares Pledge, signaling their commitment to provide students in distress with support and assistance.

At the end of the session, participants who have agreed to follow the UNCG Cares Pledge receive a color copy of the Pledge to display in their offices and a logo sticker, which they are encouraged to use.

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LinkUp: Bridging Academic Support and Cultural Resources to Strengthen Student Outcomes

Recognizing the need for additional support structures for first-generation and underrepresented freshmen students, the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) and Student Academic Services collaborated to create the LinkUp program. The LinkUp program provides comprehensive information on how to use UNCG’s academic support services and cultural resources. The aim is to help these students during the college transition process by creating a support system that may not have been available to them prior to attending college.

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Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives.

- Willa A Foster

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The program begins with a two day orientation prior to the start of the academic year. The orientation includes information sessions with UNCG students, staff and faculty on topics such as financial aid, academic advising, cultural communities, resources, and networks within the UNCG and Greensboro communities. During the semester, two consulting sessions are set up for the students to meet with LinkUp staff. These meetings offer an opportunity for students to discuss how they feel about their adjustment period. These individual meetings also allow the student to share additional support needs with the LinkUp staff. In addition to the consulting sessions, OMA will host various information sessions. This semester, they plan to hold a workshop or program on declaring a major as well as setting career goals.

Student Academic Services plays a vital role in the LinkUp program by providing a supplemental academic advising and support network for students. Each LinkUp participant is invited to attend two individual advising sessions during the course of the semester.

Student Academic Services utilizes “Appreciative Advising.” This approach encourages students to explore their academic and personal strengths and passions and to discover how to align them with academic goals and career plans. The LinkUp program will be evaluated based on three criteria: satisfaction, retention, and student learning. Student learning outcomes will be measured based on standards from the Framework for Assessing Learning and Development Outcomes (FALDOS) and the Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). Freshman to sophomore year retention will be examined as well as freshman to senior year. LinkUp participants will be matched with non-LinkUp participants based on similar entrance and background variables.

In summary, the LinkUp program strives to build a solid foundation for first-generation and underrepresented freshmen students during their freshmen year in hopes that each student will eventually matriculate in a timely and successful manner.
Spotlight on the New Student Survey
Findings from Fall 2007

Dr. Erin Bentrim-Tapia, Director, Student Affairs Assessment

The 2007 New Student Survey was administered to SOAR participants on the second day of the 2-day orientation program. The Office of Orientation reports that there were approximately 2,500 students in attendance for nine sessions of SOAR. Of this number, 94% participated in the survey session. On the 10th day of classes, enrollment of first-time, degree seeking freshmen was 2,189.

Highlights
- 82% of respondents expected to be continuously enrolled at UNCG until they graduate while 10% expect to transfer due to their major.
- 53% of respondents considered UNCG their “first choice” college while 36% responded that UNCG was their “second choice” college.
- 46.5% reported they chose UNCG because of the academic reputation.
- 38% of respondents expected to work 10 – 19 hours per week.
- 48.5% of respondents anticipated studying 1-10 hours per week (outside of the classroom).
- 39.7% reported that Math is their WEAKEST academic skill (16.8% report writing).
- 31% reported that Math is their STRONGEST academic skill (23% report English).
- When doing research for class, 33.5% of respondents considered information found on the internet to be as trustworthy as information found in books.
- 89.9% reported they expect to be always or usually satisfied with the social and out-of-class opportunities that are available.
- 82.4% of respondents planned to live on campus.

Fall 2007 resident headcount enrollment was 16,386 (14,875 FTE), including 13,154 (12,375 FTE) undergraduates and 3,232 (2,501 FTE) graduate students. 11,527 (88%) of undergraduate and 1,295 (40%) of graduate students were enrolled on a full-time basis. 68% of undergraduate students were female. 8% of undergraduate and 15% of graduate students were from out-of-state. 21% of undergraduate and 14% of graduate students were African-American. 31% of undergraduate students lived in residence halls.

The Fall 2007 extension headcount was 771 (an additional 528 resident students took extension courses), making the total university student headcount 17,157.

Preliminary Study Results Point to Increased Need for Recreational Facilities

Ms. Kim Clark, Campus Recreation

As UNCG’s student enrollment continues to grow, so does the need for additional recreation facilities. In 2005, the Department of Campus Recreation conducted an internal needs assessment as the first step of a long term facilities plan. The needs assessment consisted of three components: current conditions of recreation facilities, a comparison to other institutions, and comparison to national standards.

Current conditions were examined by reviewing the square footage of existing activity spaces, usage statistics of all facilities, as well as university demographics and enrollment projections. In order to compare UNCG’s recreation facilities to other institutions, staff conducted a Campus Recreation Facility Benchmark Study among colleges and universities within the southeast region of the U.S. The last section examined existing recreational spaces in comparison to the national standards from the National Intramural Recreational Sport’s Association. The internal needs assessment identified a number of space deficiencies among activity areas such as outdoor field space, fitness spaces including weight and cardio space, fitness studios, and a pool.

After a closer examination of the internal needs assessment, the university hired an outside consulting firm to conduct a Campus Recreation Facility Feasibility Study. In the Fall 2007, the firm of Brailsford and Dunlavey was hired to conduct this study.

Brailsford and Dunlavey worked very closely with Campus Recreation staff and other university staff to develop a detailed understanding of the institution’s mission, stakeholders, customer groups, and strategic project objectives. The process included (1) a visioning session to define educational outcomes, community development, recruitment and retention, and financial goals for recreational services; (2) six focus groups with students, faculty, and staff to gain information regarding recreation preferences; (3) a web-based survey, administered to current UNCG students, to identify recreation preferences and the demand for activities; and (4) a demand analysis to project demand for recreational activities based on data collected during the web-based survey.

The Department of Campus Recreation is currently working with the firm to finalize the report. The preliminary findings indicate a need for additional cardio, weight room, and fitness studio spaces, outdoor fields, and a pool. Details of the study will be summarized in a final report that should be completed and delivered to the University. Results of this study will assist the Department of Campus Recreation and the University with future plans for recreation facility modifications and expansions.