Welcome
By Lon Moeller, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of University College

Welcome to the start of another exciting school year at the University of Iowa. Although parking in Iowa City is a little harder to come by compared to the summer months, there is no place I would rather be than on campus at the University of Iowa at the start of a new academic year.

As I think back to my time as a UI student, I am reminded of how the Iowa undergraduate experience has changed. From Orientation, to On Iowa!, to living learning communities, to the Learning Commons, to the Iowa Challenge, to Pick One, to first-year seminars, to SWAT/SI, and to other initiatives supported by the Student Success Team (SST), the undergraduate experience at Iowa supports students in finding their success, both in and out of the classroom. The work of the SST has been critical to the transformation of the Iowa undergraduate experience. Thank you.

Given the general challenges universities face these days, and the specific challenges we face at the UI, the upcoming academic year is an important one. With those challenges, however, come great opportunities. The SST mission statement emphasizes our role in developing ideas and implementing initiatives “that foster undergraduate achievement.” This year is a time for us to be creative in our ideas, thoughtful in our planning, and bold in our initiatives.

I would encourage you to attend the SST Fall Retreat, which is scheduled for Friday, October 3rd, 2014, from 8:30 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. at the University Club (1360 Melrose Avenue in Iowa City). The focus of the Fall Retreat will be on maintaining and enhancing the Iowa undergraduate experience. We need your ideas, your passion for the UI, and your continued commitment to the success of our students. Please join me at the SST Fall Retreat on October 3rd.

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You@UI

You@UI, an academic and student life open house for prospective high school and transfer students, will be taking over campus on Saturday, October 25th. This campus visit experience, the largest the UI has ever hosted, allows students to craft their visit to fit their interests. With over 50 sessions to choose from, You@UI will give prospective students the opportunity to experience “everything Iowa” from academic sessions to student leadership opportunities to living on campus. Over 40,000 prospective students received a save the date email to this event and an estimated 3,000 students and guests will attend.

Every campus visitor will receive a credential-style VIP pass which gives them access to campus and residence hall tours, a free lunch in one of the campus marketplaces, free entry to the CRWC, 20% discount at the Iowa Hawk Shop, and discounts at participating local restaurants and shops. Students will end their experience with an exciting capstone event at Kinnick Stadium.

You@UI is an outcome of the Committee for Undergraduate Recruitment Initiatives (CURI). CURI was charged by Lon Moeller, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of University College, to identify new ways we can collaborate across campus to recruit undergraduate students to Iowa.

Many current students will be helping out with the event, and faculty and staff are also encouraged to volunteer. Keep an eye out for an email in the coming weeks about potential volunteer opportunities.

Please contact Tom Paulsen (thomas-paulsen@uiowa.edu) or John Laverty (john-laverty@uiowa.edu) if you have any questions or would like more information.
“Badges at the Library” awards students who actively engage with the UI Libraries services, programs, and spaces for a wide variety of achievements and accomplishments. Some activities for which students can earn digital badges include:

- Visiting and learning about each of the UI branch library locations
- Attending Express Workshops or other programming in the Learning Commons
- Borrowing books and resources from the Libraries
- Attending Statistics Tutoring or Writing Center Tutoring sessions in the Learning Commons
- And more!

Information about the program, including how to sign up, is available on the Learning Commons website.

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Experiential Learning at the Pomerantz Career Center

By Jenny Noyce, PCC Career Advisor

The Pomerantz Career Center helps students develop their leadership, cultural competence, and professionalism through experiential learning opportunities.

Community-Based Learning

The Community-Based Learning program connects students with service opportunities through visits with community partners, individual advising, faculty connections with agencies for service-learning courses, and partnerships with Fraternity and Sorority Life and other student groups to record volunteer hours through the Community Involvement Log.

Community-based learning benefits students in multiple ways: exposure to people of diverse backgrounds, increased self-confidence and self-efficacy, contact with potential mentors, career exploration, skills and knowledge related to future employment, and the opportunity to apply knowledge outside of the classroom. Since the Community Involvement Log’s inception in 2012, there have been more than 2,500 entries where students are tracking their volunteer hours. Hawkeyes are definitely meeting the Iowa Challenge of service!

Career Leadership Academy

Eight Career Leadership Academy (CLA) students from various disciplines and one instructor travelled to Xicotepex, Mexico over the 2014 spring break to conduct a service learning project in conjunction with four other UI academic teams (Pharmacy, Dentistry, Sociology, and Theater Arts) and Rotary District 6000 in Iowa. CLA students took on the project of cleaning and painting all the classrooms and bathrooms at Francisco Valesco Marion II elementary school in an economically challenged neighborhood of Xicotepex. Through this service-learning project CLA students were able to better understand and work on cross-cultural leadership skills building, teamwork, and how they can transfer this deeper learning to their future careers.

Internships

Many students are also involved with internships. 350 students reported internships in summer 2013 to the Pomerantz Career Center, 132 in fall 2013 and 124 in spring 2014. The Washington Center Internship Program also continues to draw students; 17 students attended the program in the summer of 2013 and 9 in the summer of 2014. Other students are also participating in experiential learning not associated with the Pomerantz Career Center; there are more than 50 for-credit courses offered for undergraduate students involving internships or practicums.

From supervisor evaluations returned to the Pomerantz Career Center, University of Iowa interns excel in their positive attitude, motivation, eagerness to learn, ability to be good team players, and their work ethic. They are resilient by taking feedback and adapting. They brought strong communication skills to the workplace as well as respectful cross-cultural communication and an open mind. Supervisors thought students were still growing in their depth of maturity and sensitivity, as well as their confidence.

If you know of students who are interested in volunteering, service-learning, or finding an internship, please refer them to the Pomerantz Career Center for resources. There are advisors for every major, for leadership, and for community involvement.
Nestled on the southeast side of the third floor of Westlawn is University Counseling Service (UCS), an office that offers a variety of programs to support currently enrolled University of Iowa students’ success and wellness. Whether it is mental health consultation, individual or group counseling, or outreach services that focus on academic skills, communication skills, career choices, diversity, or personal or relationship issues, UCS has resources to expand students’ college and life skills. There are no costs for UCS services except for a materials fee for any educational testing that the student may complete, such as testing for attention problems or learning disabilities.

Sam Cochran, PhD, Professor (Clinical), Counseling Psychology Program at the UI College of Education’s Division of Psychological and Quantitative Foundations, licensed psychologist, and director of University Counseling Service says that the UI’s UCS office can be distinguished from other university’s counseling services in that UCS has a “consultant on duty” service.

Says Cochran, “This is the service that all students are channeled to when they call for an appointment. This service is a collaborative exploration of the student’s concerns with a goal of reaching a joint decision about the most appropriate way to address the student’s concerns.”

The menu of UCS services is the same for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students with one exception. UCS does offer a graduate student support group that is geared toward the unique needs of graduate students.

The top three academic related challenges facing students that UCS addresses are students’ failure to meet expectations in terms of grades and academic performance, study skills issues, and test performance and test anxiety issues. The top three personal or mental health challenges facing students that UCS addresses include anxiety, depression, and relationship problems. UCS offers consultations to students about their academic issues and their personal/mental health issues, and if warranted ongoing individual counseling to address concerns. Referrals to other appropriate services on campus that address academic needs such as the Writing Lab or tutoring services are also provided. Depending on the personal or mental health concerns, UCS might also connect students with Student Health & Wellness for medical evaluations or substance abuse counseling.

Although UCS has liaisons to each of the 11 UI Colleges as well as most offices that work directly with students such as Office of Student Financial Aid and Student Disability Services, UCS’s biggest challenge is how to get the word out to the general UI student population about their services.

Adds Cochran, "Also, how to motivate students who may be a bit reluctant to seek counseling services due to stigma or anxieties about what will happen in the UCS."

About 85% of students who come to the UCS are seen for 10 or fewer sessions. The average number of sessions for ongoing counseling is about 5 sessions.

To foster relationships between UCS and the general UI student population, UCS formed a Student Advisory Board (SAB) in 2013 to have undergraduate and graduate students meet with UCS Assistant Director for Outreach Dr. Kathleen Staley, to advise her and the UCS staff on issues relating to UI students and the UCS. The goals of the SAB are to: advise the UCS on matters of mental health outreach, provide input on various UCS agency decisions, encourage student advocacy for campus mental health issues, foster leadership skills, and be the UCS “eyes and ears” in the UI community.

The SAB is composed of 8 to 10 students who meet weekly and discuss ways the UCS can improve its services to UI students and to offer student insight into current student issues. SAB students listen to informational talks by the UCS assistant directors, explore the UCS website, and share their insights about student needs and how the UCS can better or more creatively meet these needs. Each SAB member completed a project in which they attempted to find new or improved ways to meet the needs of various student groups on campus. They worked on projects in their academic areas, in their classes, in their sororities, and in the residence halls. The students gained leadership skills, knowledge about the UCS and student psychological needs, and obtained valuable volunteer experience.

“"The SAB members make a valuable contribution to the UCS,” says Cochran.

Cochran says the main national trend addressing the UCS and other counseling services is the increasing numbers of students who arrive on campus with mental health concerns and treatment or referral needs. This is both good news and bad news according to Cochran.

“It is good news in that students are taking advantage of services to help them succeed,” says Cochran. For example, UCS established the Eating Disorder Awareness Advocates Program to raise awareness of eating issues across campus and to provide an avenue for interested students to learn about eating disorder issues, treatments available, and programs that can be delivered across campus to address these concerns. But Cochran adds that the struggle with the increasing numbers of students with mental health concerns on campus is that it strains the available resources to meet those needs.”

Students who might be thinking about utilizing UCS services need to know that UCS staff cannot disclose any information (including attendance at an appointment) about a specific student/client unless the student has authorized and submitted a Release of Information Form. It is important for students to know that the UCS honors the confidentiality of its students/clients (with the exception of the imminent threat of harm to self or others).

For more information about UCS services, please visit the UCS website.
Since its formation in 2006 the mission of the Student Success Team is to develop ideas and implement initiatives that foster undergraduate achievement within a safe, engaging, and inclusive campus community. The vision of the SST is to: bring together students, faculty, and staff for the shared purpose of fostering undergraduate student achievement; emphasize collaboration, communication, and commitment; ensure that all goals and projects are driven by research and ongoing assessment strategies that demonstrate our results.

Click here to join the SST.