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FOCUS ON STUDENT SUCCESS

Student Success is the accomplishment of favorable or desired student outcomes. At the institutional level, these outcomes are typically indicated by:

- Retention, persistence and graduation rates
- Holistic development including financial literacy, soft skills development, global experiences, internships, volunteerism and social responsibility
- Preparation for lifelong success including readiness for personal and civic success as well as career advancement
- Career readiness and placement rates (including jobs, graduate education, military service and entrepreneurship), including the acquisition of relevant licenses and certificates

STUDENT SUCCESS METRICS

Enrollment

- Undergraduate: 10,750
- Undergraduate Online: 500
- Transfer: 1,500
- Rural: 2,700
- Pell: 5,600
- Graduate: 3,250
- Graduate Online: 500

Student Retention and Persistence

- First-year Retention 85%
- General Education Course Completion: 90%

Student Advancement Graduation Placement

- 4-year Graduation: 40%
- 5-year Graduation: 50%
- 6-year Graduation: 55%
- Degrees Awarded: 2,100
- STEM Degrees Awarded: 450
- Job-rich Degrees Awarded: 18% increase
- Degree efficiency: 19
- Gender Difference Degree Efficiency: 18
- Placement: 50-70%

Holistic Development

- Internships: 30-35% of juniors and seniors
- Global Experience: 10% of students
- Licensure and Certification
Mission and Purpose

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University advances knowledge through scholarly exchange and transforms society with exceptional teaching, learning, discovery and community engagement. An 1890 land-grant doctoral research institution with a distinction in STEM and commitment to excellence in all disciplines, North Carolina A&T creates innovative solutions that address the challenges and economic needs of North Carolina, the nation and the world. (Approved by the UNC Board of Governors, March 23, 2018.)

At the very core of the mission is the institution’s commitment to student success. Our business is higher education; our commitment is to excellence in programming and support, to ensure that students learn, grow, graduate and go on to live impactful lives.

A college degree is a strong currency in the job market, which is the leading factor for thousands of students entering N.C. A&T each year. The goal is for all of our students to be successfully enrolled and retained as well as to persist; attain internships, professional licenses, add-on certificates and global experiences; earn their degrees and start their careers.

Strategies for Student Success outlines the institution’s strategic initiatives that will create the momentum for preparing all students to progress toward their degrees in a timely manner. Additionally, these strategies will support our high achieving students, but are particularly targeted to our most vulnerable student populations, including:

• Athletes as they must constantly juggle the demands of education and athletics. Athletes in their first year of college are especially vulnerable
• Underperforming students, with grade point averages at or below 2.5
• Students with a pattern of repeating courses, e.g., MATH 101 and 102; 103 and 104; 111 and 112; or lower division courses in their disciplines, e.g., ACCT 221
• First-year undergraduate students
• Undergraduate male students
• First-semester community college transfer students
• Non-traditional students, including adult students, economically challenged students and students from rural environments
• International students, and
• Students who live off-campus

The Strategies for Student Success for the Next Academic Year Include: Enhancements in Academic Advising; Department Chair Professional Development; Faculty Training in Pedagogy; Focus on Mathematics; Supplemental Instruction and Tutoring; Learning Communities; and Motivating the Murky Middle to Greater Success.
Data-driven Decision Making

Data-driven decision making is necessary for improving systems and processes. However, gathering, analyzing and using data are critical steps in the decision-making process that are often ignored while critical decisions are made based almost entirely on a few anecdotes. It is important to make accurate and relevant data an integral part of evaluating each of the strategies. The following points are important:

1. Consider the 2018—2019 academic year to be the baseline year for the purpose of gathering assessment data.
2. Determine the purpose, goals and major activities of the strategy and any related initiatives.
3. Begin with clear descriptions of the participants—current status, for example, grade point averages of students in a living/learning community (LLC) or teaching evaluation and other demographic data for those faculty who are participating in the pedagogical training. The data gathered will be determined by the goals of the initiative, as it is critical to know the extent to which the goals have been met.
4. Gather assessment data once or twice per year, as needed. The annual report for the initiative should share the data and clearly articulate the extent to which progress has been made to meet goals, and the next steps (closing the loop)—discontinuing, modifying, improving or scaling up.
5. Continue to use anecdotes as a part of the narrative to tell the story, and carefully present anecdotes to compliment data.
6. Use the data to help determine who should receive awards and recognitions, if any.
7. Use the data to strengthen the case for budgetary support for continuing initiatives.

In summary, each strategy will have an assessment plan and data will be gathered to determine the extent to which progress has been made to meet targets.
First Year Experience (FYE) Competencies

Mission
The First Year Experience program (FYE) at North Carolina A&T provides a set of meaningful experiences designed to develop confident, highly competent and successful career-ready graduates. The experiences, directed at our students, are shaped through the following seven competencies:

1. **Academic Achievement.** Achieve academic excellence by carefully following the correct curriculum for the major. Avoid taking courses out of sequence.

2. **Aggie Traditions.** Learn the history and traditions of the university. Embrace the core values of the university and work to achieve the institution’s goals.

3. **University Resources.** Identify and utilize student support services appropriate to individual needs in order to support student success.

4. **Diversity and Inclusion.** Engage in behaviors that promote social justice, equity and inclusion, consistent with the university diversity and inclusion goals.

5. **Financial Literacy.** Understand and embrace the foundations of financial management and begin to make informed financial decisions.

6. **Personal/Professional Development.** Develop and articulate personal and professional aspirations through co-curricular involvement.

7. **Health and Wellness.** Embrace a healthy lifestyle through activities that promote physical activity and healthy behaviors.

Engaging Students
STUDENT SUCCESS STRATEGIES:
2018—2019

The following student success strategies will be implemented during the 2018—2019 academic year. Each college, with undergraduate programs and the Center for Academic Excellence, will provide a written performance report by June 30, 2019. A template will be provided for preparing the report. The unit reports will be used to compile a comprehensive report for the Division of Academic Affairs. This report will form the main agenda item for the 2019 Deans Retreat at the end of August 2019, when plans will be made for the 2019—2020 academic year.

The following pages present the student success strategies for 2018—2019:

1. Enhancements in Academic Advising
2. Department Chair Professional Development
3. Faculty Training in Pedagogy
4. Focus on Mathematics
5. Supplemental Instruction and Tutoring
6. Learning Communities
7. Motivating the Murky Middle to Greater Success
Continuing Student Success Initiatives

Several student success initiatives that are continuing from the 2017—2018 academic year, include:

- The **Male Student Success Initiative**, which yielded a Male Mentoring Program with the objective of improving academic standing and improving the number of male students that are eligible to return to school each subsequent semester. This is measured by:
  
  1. Participants in Good Standing
  2. Participants on Academic Probation
  3. Participant Suspensions and Dismissals
  4. Participant Withdrawals from the University

- **Financial Literacy Programming**, which include the Financial Literacy Day; a new financial literacy website with course modules available for student access; exposure to financial literacy in the Freshman Seminar Courses; Project Success Emergency Aid; and the use of Cohort Default Rate Management Solutions. Financial Wellness will become an integral part of the University with well-defined qualitative learning outcomes. The specific student learning outcomes expected for each class are:
  
  - Freshmen: a) Borrowing Money  
  - Sophomores: a) Understanding Interest  
  - Juniors: a) Staying Out of Debt  
  - Seniors: a) How to Buy a Car

  b) Money Management  
  b) Understanding the Credit Score  
  b) Investment (Wealth Management)  
  b) How to Buy and House

- **1st Day Textbook Program**, which will be piloted in spring 2019 for Biology 100 courses. Students will purchase their digital textbooks when they enroll in the course, thus having their course materials ready on the first day of classes.
Enhancements in Academic Advising

Academic advising is more than a student support service, it is a core requirement for all academic programs. And, students need to be guided from orientation to graduation, with the goal being to help each student complete their degree requirements in his or her major within 4 years. Steady progress toward the degree often requires more than helping students select their classes. It is imperative that each student is assigned an academic advisor.

The three primary approaches to effective academic advising are:

1. **Developmental advising**, which is focused on helping students explore and define academic, career, life goals and pathways; develop problem-solving and decision-making skills; and foster a relationship between the advisor and student.
2. **Prescriptive advising**, which is the traditional advising approach, focused primarily on providing students with information directly related to their academic programs and progress, such as academic policies, major/program requirements and course selection.
3. **Proactive (Intrusive) advising**, in which the contact is always initiated by the advisor rather than the student as a result of an early alert or the student being part of a vulnerable population. Participation in the early alert progress reporting is required of all faculty.

Academic advising is usually provided by the academic units, except in a few cases where the Center for Academic Excellence assists with 1) freshman advising, and 2) all undeclared/undecided students and advising loads in large departments, such as Journalism and Mass Communication, Human Performance and Leisure Studies and Criminal Justice. All sophomore to senior level advising is done by faculty in their respective academic departments.

Research shows that students progress through a degree program more efficiently when colleges and faculty play an active role in advising. Two initiatives might help to enhance academic advising: (a) Better prepare faculty for academic advising, and (b) Recognize excellence in academic advising. Improvements in academic advising will lead to improvements in retention and persistence rates.

Other strategic moves to place professional advisors in closer relationships with deans, chairs and their majors, will be implemented.

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<th>Activities and Timelines</th>
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<td>Academic Coaching Certification</td>
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<td>Academic Advising Tracking System</td>
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<td>Academic Advising Liaison for Each College</td>
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<td>Possibility for Core Curriculum for Meta Majors</td>
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<td>Improved General Education Curriculum</td>
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<td>Improved Scheduling of Courses</td>
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Department Chair Professional Development

In the academic enterprise, department chairs are first-line supervisors. And, as Gmelch & Schuh (2004) noted, department chairs are in a position to help shape a culture where student learning is the central focus of faculty, staff and students. Department chairs have many responsibilities that directly impact student retention and persistence, including:

- Ensuring the rigor, relevance and currency of the curriculum
- Scheduling enough courses at the right times and combinations to support smooth matriculation of students, including those who fail courses and need to retake them. It is critical that they know how to use data on DFW rates to aid in scheduling, including summer scheduling
- Approving course substitutions
- Assigning academic advisors and mentors
- Prioritizing and spending limited operational budgets
- Hiring, deploying, evaluating and continuously developing instructors and professors
- Maintaining an unshakeable focus on student success (curricula maps for student learning outcomes)
- Cultivating an improvement-oriented climate for and among students and faculty and a systems understanding of the life cycle of the student

Managing the responsibilities of the position will not come naturally for most chairs. Most will need to be trained in effective ways to manage and support both faculty and students. Structured, yet flexible training will be provided for all department chairs, beginning in the fall 2018. The training will be done in collaboration with CLOE, Division of Human Resources.

Among their many responsibilities, chairs are expected to lead their faculty in the assessment of student learning outcomes for communication, critical thinking, disciplinary expertise and research/creative engagement and annually provide data to the university’s assessment system in a timely manner.


“There may be no more important role for a department chair than helping to cultivate a working environment where getting better every day – as a teacher, learner, scholar, advisor–becomes the norm.” – Schuh and Kuh (2005)
Faculty Training in Pedagogy

Student learning depends on the ability of faculty to serve as effective teachers and mentors. Although every faculty is an expert in their discipline, most faculty have not been exposed to the science of teaching and the effective pedagogies that lead to high quality student learning. They may rely on “telling” their students what to know or how to do something. However, good teaching is more than knowing the content, and it requires much more than walking into the classroom and telling students what they need to know. Students, parents and university administrators understand the need for good teaching and institutions have responded by developing strong faculty development programs that focus on improving the teaching and learning process.

The University of Michigan’s Center for Research on Learning and Teaching— the nation’s oldest such initiative—conducts 2,800 consultations a year, more than double the number of a decade ago, said Matthew Kaplan, its interim director. The university also runs “teaching academies” that all new hires in most of its schools are required to take. Some departments hold monthly “How Learning Works” sessions, too, Kaplan said. (Source: http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/national/article24772048.html)

This student success initiative will include:

- The reestablishment of the Academy for Teaching and Learning, with new branding (the Center for Teacher Excellence—CTE), by August 2018. The Center will promote research-based pedagogies that foster student academic engagement, learning, and success. The focus will be to ensure that all faculty receive the support they need to improve their pedagogical skills, thus enhancing the learning experiences for students. Confidential consultations will be a part of the services provided to faculty.
- An annual Spring Symposium—a 1 daylong event devoted to helping teachers of all disciplines focus on how to teach, and to learn strategies for more effectively engaging students—will be available to all who teach on our campus, regardless of rank or tenure status.
- A team of eight selected faculty fellows who receive a release from three credits of teaching each semester to work with their colleagues to enhance the pedagogical skills of faculty.
- A series of speaker events and workshops devoted to the development of pedagogical skills among faculty.
- Book clubs and study circles in which faculty meet regularly to engage in a deep study of the art and science of teaching.
- The establishment of Faculty Learning Communities in which a cross-disciplinary team of faculty engage in an active, year-long study on a selected topic related to teaching and learning.
- Teaching Squares, which are designed to help faculty gain insights into their own teaching by visiting other faculty’s classrooms to gather ideas and offer feedback.
- Building a Faculty Commons in the library to include IT related to online teaching and learning, ADVANCE IT, CTE and CASL (if the project is funded).
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<td>Establish the Faculty Commons on the ground floor of Bluford Library</td>
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<td>Host a day-long pedagogical seminar each spring semester</td>
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<td>Organize faculty book clubs and study circles</td>
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<td>Support faculty learning communities</td>
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<td>Establish a program of Teaching Squares</td>
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Focus on Mathematics

The D/F/W rates for the General Education Mathematics courses are among the highest in the University. As gateway courses, they are critical to the continued matriculation of our students. They are also the reason so many students become stuck and even drop-out or are suspended from school. The problem is not unique to North Carolina A&T.


> Some will argue it [algebra] is essential since it’s the gateway to all mathematics and teaches problem-solving and critical thinking. They are absolutely correct — and they absolutely miss the point. For too many students, algebra is not the gateway to mathematical literacy. It is the gatekeeper."

This student success initiative began at N.C. A&T in the late spring/summer 2018. The challenge of being successful in mathematics courses in unmistakable. Two approaches to better serve our students as they meet that college mathematics requirements are:

1. **Math Pathways.** As described by the Dana Center at the University of Texas, Austin ([https://dcmathpathways.org/learn-about/partner-disciplines](https://dcmathpathways.org/learn-about/partner-disciplines)), Math Pathways allow “Faculty and departments in other disciplines [to] work with mathematics faculty to ensure that courses within the pathways are designed to prepare students adequately for their programs of study and other quantitative needs in their lives. Partner disciplines set the default or preferred mathematics requirements for their program.”

   The conversation has already started with the Department of Mathematics, and a pilot project is set to begin with the College of Business and Economics in the fall 2019. One new mathematics position has been given to the College of Science and Technology to support this new initiative. Members of the current Math faculty will participate in professional development activities to prepare them as the project advances.

2. **Improved Pedagogical Skills for Math Instructors.** The University will invest in training mathematics professors in the most effective instructional methods, including methods that might be used with students who are having difficulty learning math. A project proposal has been submitted to have the University math professors work with highly successful math teachers from the public schools to jointly develop methodologies that will work effectively with our students. An integrated strategy is being developed jointly for immediate implementation by Department of Mathematics and the Provost’s Office (Dr. Regina Williams Davis).

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<td>Pedagogical Training for General Education Mathematics Instructors</td>
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<td>Mathematics Training/Coaching with Guilford County Teachers</td>
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<td>Discipline-relevant Mathematics Pilot with Business and Economics</td>
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<td>Development of Math 101E-Online Course</td>
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Supplemental Instruction and Tutoring

Supplemental Instruction (SI) and Tutoring have been used to help students who are having difficulty with learning a variety of content. These two strategies will be used with our vulnerable populations to give them additional opportunities to master the difficult content. While tutoring has one individual—peer or faculty—working with the student, supplemental instruction usually involves working with a group of students, not individuals. Both can be effective. SI avoids the remedial stigma often attached to traditional academic assistance programs since it does not identify high-risk students, but identifies high-risk classes. SI is open to all students in the targeted course; therefore, pre-screening of students is unnecessary (https://studentsuccess.louisiana.edu/sites/studentsuccess/files/Arendale.pdf). The Center for Academic Excellence (CAE) will identify the courses that will be included in the SI program, and the SI team will be trained and supervised by the CAE.

This student success initiative was implemented at N.C. A&T in the fall 2017. In the fall 2018 we will begin to carefully monitor and evaluate this program. The Center for Academic Excellence will coordinate the SI program. All hired individuals for the SI team will be trained through the Paraprofessional Institute for Peer SI Leaders, Peer Tutors and Peer Mentors through the Center for Academic Excellence.

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*Tutoring has been found to be an effective instructional support strategy, resulting in improved learner performance.*

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To be most effective, peer tutoring needs to have a high focus on curriculum content, therefore the University’s initiative will include embedding the tutors into critical courses, with the goal of having them hear exactly what their tutees hear, thereby making them more prepared to be effective tutors. Additionally, online tutoring is available to students, having started in the spring, 2018. *Upswing*, the online tutoring resource, is now available 24/7 to all enrolled students, at no charge. Students may now log into [www.ncat.upswing.io](http://www.ncat.upswing.io) using Aggie One ID credentials to access tutors from some of the best colleges across the country, including UNC-Chapel Hill, Vanderbilt, Rutgers and New York University.

Tutors and SIs will be hired to work with high D/F/W courses that are a significant challenge for students, especially for the most vulnerable students. This initiative will begin in the Fall 2018.

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### Activities and Timelines

| Supplemental Instruction and Tutoring | A | S | O | N | D | J | F | M | A | M | J |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Supplemental Instruction and Tutor Training |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Tutor Embedding in Courses |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Supplemental Instruction |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Evaluate after each Semester |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
Learning Communities

A learning community is, essentially, a group of people who share common academic goals and attitudes and choose to work together to achieve those goals. They exist in many environments, including on college campuses. Learning communities provide a space and a structure for people to align around a shared goal. Effective communities are both aspirational and practical. ([https://developingchild.harvard.edu/collective-change/key-concepts/learning-communities/](https://developingchild.harvard.edu/collective-change/key-concepts/learning-communities/))

A variety of informal learning communities may already exist on our campus. Below is a list of living learning communities, which are residential communities where freshmen students with a common interest reside in the same residence hall. They typically share at least one course together and a faculty/staff member interacts with the students regularly outside of the traditional classroom. The currently active living learning communities are:

- Honors - Dowdy and Cheatham White
- International
- Aggie MEN (Formerly Project M.A.R.C.H.)*
- S.I.S.T.E.R.S.**
- TRIO Student Support Services
- The Noble House (Nursing)
- FIT (HPLS)
- STEM
- ICEE

While there is anecdotal evidence to demonstrate their impact, no systemic evaluations are done. During the 2018—2019 academic year, all university-recognized Learning Communities/Living Learning Communities (LC/LLC) will receive greater supervision and baseline assessment and impact data will be gathered at the end of each semester to ensure that effective decision making can be done to improve or scale this support system. Efforts will be made to fund LC/LLC so that very active coordinators can be present in the residence halls engaging students in learning outside of classes.

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<td>Hiring and Training of Additional LLC Support</td>
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<td>Learning Communities Working Effectively</td>
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* Aggie MEN is a mentoring, advising and cultural development program designed to enhance the academic progress of first-year minority male students and engage upperclassmen males in leadership development. The Aggie MEN (Male Empowerment Network) will be a Residential Living Learning Community consisting of 500 males in Cooper and Curtis Residence Halls. The intent is to implement additional academic support programing where they reside (a student success grant is supporting the initiative).

** S.I.S.T.E.R.S. (Students Inspiring Success Through Education Retention and Service) is a two year retention-focused mentoring program designed to promote overall academic and social development in women. This program fosters intellectual, personal, and professional growth through the development of positive relationships within the local and campus communities. S.I.S.T.E.R.S. will create a deeper appreciation for excellence in education, service to the community, and finer womanhood.
Motivating the “Murky Middle” to Greater Success

About 33% of undergraduate college students fall into a group that is sometimes called the “Murky Middle,” with grade point averages falling between a 2.0 and 2.99. They are passing and about 20% of them eventually graduate (Ed Venit; 2015; https://www.eab.com/technology/student-success-collaborative/members/infographics/murky-middle). However, these student often underperform and are rarely sought by those by recruiters for jobs or for graduate education.

Most student success initiatives target students who are at risk of failing (below 2.0 grade point average), those who often fall into the vulnerable populations described earlier. And, most enrichment activities are directed at the highly talented students. Students in the Murky Middle perform at an acceptable level to remain in school, but underperform and eventually fail to graduate or fail to transition into desirable employment or higher education. These students need more attention and more targeted support systems.

Charlie Tyson (2014; https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/09/10/maximize-graduation-rates-colleges-should-focus-middle-range-students-research-shows), noted that research based on 60 institutions suggest that students in the Murky Middle have been largely neglected by academic support systems.

Each college is encourage to design programs to serve and support students in the Murky Middle and to carefully monitor and assess the impact of each initiative. The assessments and analyses of these programs will lead to a broad set of initiatives to be adopted for the 2019—2020 academic year.
**THE PROCESS**

**Plan**
Build a team to coordinate the initiative; define team members’ roles and responsibilities; identify a team leader and the administrator to whom the team will report. Especially in Year 1, guide the team as it develops its statement of purpose, two to three strong goals, and clearly states its evaluations. The framework should include the launch date, data-gathering timelines and a basic budget.

**Implement**
Launch the initiatives by September 30, 2018. Have regular team meetings to respond to issues/needs/challenges/etc. that arise as the initiative is implemented. Actively listen and tweak as is necessary to be responsive to the needs of those being served. Gather data from each group of participants.

**Continuously Improve**
This should be considered as, quite possibly, the most important step in the process. In this step, the data gathered through formal and informal evaluations are used to determine the improvements that should be made to the initiative. If it is clear that the program is not adding value, it should be recommended for discontinuation. Strategies to improve or scale up the initiative should be included in the planning for continuing the initiative—semester or academic year.

**Reward**
Build in rewards that acknowledge accomplishments, but be careful not to confuse effort and accomplishments. Prepare an annual Student Success Report that tells the story of successes and accomplishments and features the academic unit that demonstrates the most significant impact on serving students and faculty and evidencing improvements on the various metrics associated with the programs, e.g., retention and graduation rates, teaching evaluations, etc.
Student Success Committee Members

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**Note:** The Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering has no undergraduate
IF BETTER IS POSSIBLE
GOOD IS NOT ENOUGH!

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