



# Successful and Sustainable Student Success & Retention Strategies:

The Power of Cross-Divisional Collaboration  
at UNCW



UNIVERSITY *of*  
NORTH CAROLINA  
WILMINGTON

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# Presenters

## Dr. Washington – Director, Student Success & Retention

- 4 yrs, 8 months at UNCW
- 20+ years of experience in higher education
- Hobbies – Traveling, Hiking, Skydiving, and Wine tasting

## Dr. Meaney – Executive Director for Housing and Residence Life

- 3.5 years at UNCW
- 25 years of experience in Student Affairs
- I need a hobby



# Objectives

- Outline the collaborative process used to achieve key student success strategies
- Highlight the impact of cross-functional partnerships in fostering a shared student success vision
- Share lessons learned in overcoming obstacles and challenges to the collaborative process



# Introduction: The Need for Collaboration

- Student success and retention are critical priorities in higher education
- Sustainable outcomes require intentional, strategic collaboration across all university divisions
- Complex student challenges require holistic solutions
- Siloed approaches limit impact and sustainability
- Cross-functional partnerships foster shared ownership and vision



## Student Success Working Group

### CHARGE:

1. Develop an operational definition of student success at UNCW.
2. Catalog student success initiatives and identified opportunity gaps.
3. Review evidence-based practices to assess current strategies at UNCW and explore potential pilots or student success practices to implement.
4. Create a UNCW Retention Playbook.



## Process

- Review how other universities define student success
- Draft a definition of student success that aligned with the culture of UNCW
- Share the definition with campus
- Finalize the definition
- Leadership endorsed the definition
- Catalog student success initiatives across the university and identified opportunity gaps.
- Work with OUR to create a marketing campaign
- Share the definition with the campus community



# Operational Definition of Student Success

- Developed collaboratively to ensure alignment across divisions.
- Emphasizes academic achievement, personal growth, and campus engagement
- Serves as a foundation for all student success initiatives
- Allows for better assessment of initiatives and decision making regarding the addition of new programs or sunseting of existing programs



# Group Exercise

# Comprehensive Catalog of Initiatives

- Mapped all existing student success programs across campus
- Identified best practices, redundancies, and opportunities for synergy
- Facilitated resource sharing and improved coordination



# UNCW Retention Playbook



# Impact of Cross-Functional Partnerships

- Enhanced communication and trust between divisions
- Greater efficiency and effectiveness in addressing student needs
- Fostered a campus-wide culture of shared responsibility for student success



# Group Exercise

# Student-Focused Marketing Campaign

- Unified messaging and branding for student success resources
- Multi-channel approach: digital, print, events, and peer ambassadors
- Increased student engagement and awareness of support services



# Explore pathways to student success

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# Key Student Success Strategies Developed

## Operational Definition of Student Success

Clear, measurable, and inclusive definition to guide initiatives

## Comprehensive Catalog of Student Success Initiatives

Inventory of all programs and resources to identify gaps and overlaps

## Student-Focused Marketing Campaign

Engaging, informative outreach to raise awareness and participation

## Lessons Learned & Best Strategies

- Early and ongoing stakeholder engagement is key
- Data and feedback drive continuous improvement
- Celebrate shared wins to sustain momentum



# Conclusion

- Intentional collaboration leads to sustainable student success
- UNCW's model demonstrates the power of cross-divisional partnerships
- Next steps: Scaling initiatives and sharing best practices with other institutions



# Questions & Discussion

