Strategic Planning Goals—draft in response to campus-wide meeting with University College, Learning Communities, Honors College, and Library, 9/23/10

University College:

Continue to Foster a Culture of Academic, Scholarly, and Creative Excellence

UCA's conditional-admission program, University College, was created to assist returning students and students with academic need in making a successful transition into college life. In support of the State of Arkansas' efforts to increase the level of college graduates in the State, the program offers underprepared but academically-able students transitional coursework in mathematics, reading and writing, as well as a one-hour study-skills and orientation course, University Studies (UNIV 1100).

Challenges: In a state in which 50% of graduating high school seniors require remediation in mathematics, and a growing percentage also require remediation in writing and reading, UCA and other institutions of higher education must either "take students where they are" and strive to bring them up to levels of college-readiness, or watch their enrollments decline. If we take seriously the challenge to raise the college-graduation rate of Arkansas, we are going to have to take developmental education seriously, as well.

- Establish incentives and rewards for students who come in average and do really well their first year or within their own disciplines
- Increase opportunities for active learning—for example, create an enhanced service-learning program

Provide a Learner-Focused Environment for All Students

With its focus on assisting students in making a successful transition into college life, University College provides students with transitional and General Education courses taught by faculty dedicated to working with at-risk students, as well as intensive advising by full-time professional University College academic advisors, and ready access to peer tutoring through the Academic Success Center.

Challenges: University College faculty take seriously the program's mission to meet the needs of at-risk students, and continually strive to improve their pedagogical methods and adopt "best practices" in teaching in order to reach these students. However, there remains a need for increased support and resources from the University towards this end, in order to further the program's ability to provide a "student-focused environment." Among such needs are resources to reduce class size and teaching loads, as well as to increase faculty access to professional development.

- Train student workers in all offices to do their jobs professionally because they are the face of the department, or hire professional staff to fill reception positions

Commit to Ongoing Improvement and Innovation in Facilities and Technology

Because research on best practices for working with developmental students encourages the provision of "immediate feedback," the University College mathematics faculty incorporated use of an online instructional program, MyMathLab, into instruction for the Intermediate Algebra course in 2003. Based on the success of this program, UC faculty decided to add the MyWritingLab and MyReadingLab programs into the curriculum for the writing and reading courses in Fall 2010.

Challenges: Instruction conducted in smart classrooms and computer lab rooms has shown a marked improvement in outcomes, but faculty access to such instructional environments remains limited. More and updated instructional technology, as well as an additional computer lab for instruction would greatly improve UC's effectiveness.

- Centralize and strategize technology upgrades—perform them at times of least student/faculty/staff demand
- Support communication through multiple platforms

Increase Engagement with External Partners

The University College Director and faculty have worked in conjunction with a variety of outside organizations, including Upward Bound and the Education Renewal Zones Initiative, funded by the State of Arkansas, to promote educational achievement in the State.

- Publicize the good work we do, the grants we receive, the services we provide, and student successes; de-centralize public relations or create a faster vetting process for getting press releases out
- Commit some resources to community colleges as a way of recruiting students and collaborating with those faculty
- Create partnerships with local businesses and corporations to meet their needs (e.g., ATU is teaching Spanish to employees of a local corporation)

Promote Diversity in All Areas

University College supports educational achievement for at-risk students, many of whom are first-generation college students, students from low-income households, members of ethnic or racial minority groups, or international students. (Typically, 40 percent or more of UC students are African American, Hispanic, or international.) UC also serves many of UCA's incoming non-traditional students, particularly those returning to college from the workforce.

- Embrace developmental education—act on the fact that it's an integral part of the university's educational mission

- Educate faculty on how to integrate international students into their classes better; expand the training already in place through IDC

Focus on Integrity at All Levels of Action

University College faculty and staff work closely with entering students to introduce them to the requirements and expectations of the University environment, including issues concerning academic integrity. The University Studies course (UNIV 1100), in particular, provides a venue for reviewing academic skills needed for success, but also campus policies such as the Academic Integrity Policy.

As a program unit, University College also upholds all policies and guidelines as outlined in the Faculty and Staff Handbooks, and abides by University procedures regarding budgeting and employment.

Challenges: University College currently consists of 15 faculty members, one half-time director, and one Administrative Specialist II. Additional faculty are also hired each fall to teach the UNIV 1100 classes. With all of these personnel, and more than 600 students enrolled in UC classes each semester, the program's administrative staff (one Admin Specialist and a half-time director) are stretched quite thin. The program needs (and the students deserve) additional staffing in order to ensure compliance with all University rules and procedures in a timely fashion.

- Make decisions based on data (e.g., students in lab classrooms do better in math classes)
- Hire more institutional researchers so that meaningful data can be easily accessed
- Make it easier to contact Public Relations and IT
- Clarify the processes and authority for interdepartmental decision-making
- Hire an ombudsman with authority to speak to the BOT

Learning Communities:

Continue to Foster a Culture of Academic, Scholarly and Creative Excellence

- Continue fostering faculty-student interaction by using full-time faculty as resident masters and administration.
- Continue and strengthen faculty, departmental, and college partnerships with specific academic colleges, e.g. STEM Residential College, EDGE Residential College.
- Continue partnerships that strengthen curricular coherence, e.g. general education, use of interdisciplinary common readers, afterWords (the residential colleges' first-year writing competition), STEM Art Project.
- Develop partnerships with tutoring centers to come into the residence halls to welcome students to those services in the short term

Provide a Learner-Focused Environment for All Students

- Foster a campus-wide community of learners by providing programs such as residential colleges, a commuter college program, clustered- and linked-classes, and first-year seminars and courses.
- Continue to work closely with Student Affairs, Housing and Residence Life, Admissions, the Counseling Center, and other essential non-academic units.
- Continue a commitment to student-centered engagement, knowing that data show higher retention and graduation are the result.
- Implement a faculty- and student-satisfaction survey for student services such as financial aid, IT help desk, etc.

Commit to Ongoing Improvement and Innovation in Facilities and Technology

- Maintain a residential college forward-thinking commitment to teaching and learning with technology.
- Reconfigure the structure of residential colleges into 4-year programs based, perhaps, on the individual academic colleges (e.g., STEM)

Increase Engagement with External Partners

- Continue and expand service-learning opportunities for learning community students, e.g. EDGE program.
- Expand service and civic engagement with Habitat for Humanity, Heifer Project International, the Humane Society, CAPCA, and other area agencies.

Promote Diversity in All Areas

- Work closely with International Engagement to increase and support greater numbers of international students in residential college programs.
- Work closely with International Engagement to develop study abroad opportunities.
- Continue recruiting students of color into the residential colleges, expanding an emphasis on Arkansas Hispanics in keeping with the University's interests

Focus on Integrity at All Levels of Action

- Follow policies and procedures in regard to fiscal matters and care/use of university property.
- Act ethically and with integrity regarding all learning community data collection, research, and dissemination of information.

Honors College:

Continue to Foster a Culture of Academic, Scholarly, and Creative Excellence

- Grow the emphasis on undergraduate research as pedagogy—increase frequency of undergraduate scholarship and exemplary studies by integrating more fully the thesis tutorial with departmental honors to lead to a set of practices where undergraduate research becomes more a part of the approach of undergraduate education
- Reward faculty mentorship of undergraduates and faculty-student collaboration on projects with increased travel funding and reassignment time; perhaps add an annual award for mentorship to complement awards in teaching, research, and service
- Participate in NCUR (National Conference on Undergraduate Research)
- Subscribe to an electronic platform where undergraduate research could be "published" and made accessible nationally instead of just being stored in the Torreyson archives
- Develop an advising process to identify and nurture candidates for major national scholarships (Rhodes, Mellon, etc.); establish an office to support this endeavor with professional staff that has membership in NACADA (National Academic Advising Association) and NAFA (National Association of Fellowships Advisors). Recognize that in this and other endeavors professional staff are critical to bridging academic and student services
- Grow the emphasis on service learning; establish an office of service learning and student engagement, join Campus Compact, and aim for the Carnegie Community Engagement classification
- Increase funding for the summer research stipends program
- Increase funding for student travel and student research
- Develop a culture of assessment

Provide a Learner-Focused Environment for All Students

- Maintain class sizes that are small enough to facilitate optimal learning
- Match enrollment growth with instructional resources
- Identify and assess critical learning skills, encouraging the expansion of courses that are intensive in writing, critical thinking, and oral presentation
- Endeavor to schedule noise-making work on campus at times less likely to interfere with classes
- Increase the number of courses offered that promote active learning pedagogies, such as
- experiential education, projects, service learning, and community-based education
- Grow co-curricular programming in the context of living/learning communities, designed to improve retention, enhance residential life, and foster citizenship
- Move away from proprietary educational hardware/software and turn to open-source technology that better allows students to transfer skills used in class to other settings
- Increase team-teaching, jointly offered courses, and inter- and transdisciplinarity
- Protect the environmental setting of the campus as building projects expand
- Use architectural plans and construction practices that allow the campus and its buildings to teach students about the value of sustainability

Commit to Ongoing Improvement and Innovation in Facilities and Technology

- Provide more coherent ways to help faculty and students maintain professional development in technology

- Choose technology based on helping students learn fungible and transferrable skills
- Emphasize interdisciplinary uses of technology in the classroom for real-world applications

Increase Engagement with External Partners

- Develop more internships with businesses and professional offices in the area
- Maintain and refine relations with alumni, aiding recruitment of strong students to UCA and placement of graduates in desirable professions
- Increase press coverage about the successes of our students, alumni, and programs
- Increase external resources to support teaching, research, and service through grants and fundraising and development
- Take steps toward community-based education (one step above service learning)
- Become a certified service-learning and/or community-based university (paradigm shift when there is an extracurricular evaluation of faculty and student work)
- Develop an inter-university committee to identify areas where universities and colleges can collaborate
- Emphasize learner-oriented partnerships with other educational entities (K-12, community colleges, adult learners)
- Create partnerships with the private sector for paid and unpaid internships

Promote Diversity in All Areas

- Increase out-of-state and international recruiting
- Seek diversity in socioeconomic status, first-generation college student status, and race and ethnicity status; track and make available information of these statuses to help recruiters achieve this goal
- Increase scholarships awarded to minority students
- Expand cross-national, cross-cultural, and global education
- Better meet the needs of the LGBTQ communities
- Expand Office of Minority Support with a more inclusive focus and create awareness that those services are available to all

Focus on Integrity at All Levels of Action

- Develop a culture of evidence-based decision-making
- Create an office of ombudsman, reporting to the Board of Trustees
- Create a whistleblower policy
- Develop a regularized schedule of audit reviews of administrative units
- Increase transparency and accountability to the public
- Re-examine the IRB process; in conjunction with focus on student research, create a parallel process for students, but not the same form as for faculty

Library:

Continue to Foster a Culture of Academic, Scholarly, and Creative Excellence

- Support library for an emphasis on undergraduate research; ensure training for faculty working with students on undergraduate research
- Create a single, accessible, visible source where students can learn about student services (Web page?)

Provide a Learner-Focused Environment for All Students

- Expand services during night hours and weekends (IT should update technology at a more convenient time—not 4:30 p.m. on a Friday when the library stays open until 5:00)
- Expand hours of necessary student services (e.g., bookstore, finances) to meet needs of students in evening and weekend classes
- Centralize student support services within a new library
- Require university studies, FYE, or Honors seminar class for every student
- Train student-service personnel to be interruptable-available

Commit to Ongoing Improvement and Innovation in Facilities and Technology

- Ensure that all students have training in basic technology skills
- Establish seminars based on academic needs rather than bureaucratic needs
- Fund the IDC commensurate with services provided and recognize attendance at IDC development sessions as legitimate for the purposes of performance review

Increase Engagement with External Partners

- Create an outside link to the *Bear Ledger* to make it more accessible to off-campus visitors

Focus on Integrity at All Levels of Action

- Educate the campus on copyright and fair use issues