THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON
University Retention and Completion Plan

UNIVERSITY MISSION

The University of Akron, a publicly assisted metropolitan institution, strives to develop enlightened members of society. It offers comprehensive programs of instruction from associate through doctoral levels; pursues a vigorous agenda of research in the arts, sciences, and professions; and provides service to the community. The university pursues excellence in undergraduate education and distinction in selected areas of graduate instruction, inquiry, and creative activity.

STUDENT BODY PROFILE

The University offers many programs from associate degrees to baccalaureate degrees of varying competitiveness, to world-ranked graduate programs. For students seeking bachelor's degrees, college preparedness has been increasing as the University has put in place Pathways for Student Academic Success, a multi-year strategy beginning in fall 2012, to guide students to the academic path best suited to their needs.

Total UA enrollment for fall 2019 was 19,218: 16,407 undergraduates, 2,366 graduate students and 445 law (2,811 combined graduate and professional).

- Full-time students made up 71.99% of the student body; part-time students, 28.01%.
- Ethnically underrepresented (African American, American Indian, Asian American, Hispanic American, Native Hawaiian, and two or more races) students made up 19% of the student body.
- Adults (25 years and older) made up 12.38% of the undergraduate population.
- First-generation students represented approximately 57.46% of undergraduates (38.65% of first-time freshman).
- 74.89% of new, bachelor's degree-seeking freshmen entered UA with a "college-ready" profile (ACT 21 or higher; HS GPA 3.0 or higher).
- 30.61% of our undergraduate students were Pell eligible (38.75% of first time freshman).

The faculty and staff at The University of Akron value student development and academic success above all other goals. As a metropolitan university, Akron is experiencing many of the challenges that higher education faces today, particularly for public institutions that are inclusive in nature. The impact of COVID, yet unmeasured, will have lasting impact on the student experience.

The retention and completion strategies selected for this document have been chosen based upon the following principles:

The University of Akron

1. Accepts a broad range of student-preparedness levels
2. Strives for inclusive excellence to support a very diverse population of students
3. Strengthens support frameworks and resource programs to reach the depth and breadth of preparedness
4. Increases focus on retention and completion with particular attention to the student's first year, where most attrition occurs
5. Develops and implements specific strategies based upon best practices in student development and persistence for the diverse population of students we serve.

BARRIERS TO PERSISTENCE AND COMPLETION

1. Pell Eligibility

The University's large percentage of Pell-eligible students faces particular challenges in both the transition to and persistence through college. Approximately 30.61% of our students are Pell-eligible. The retention and completion goals of this plan offer a clear vision for improving student academic success and eliminating the aforementioned barriers to completion at the University, with great attention to this group of students.

2. First Generation

The University's large percentage of first-generation students faces particular challenges in both the transition to and persistence through college. Approximately 57.46% of our students are first–generation college attendees (38.65% of first time freshman). Throughout this plan, several engagement strategies will be outlined to increase first-year retention, persistence to degree and career placement that are designed to meet the specific needs of this sector.

3. Academic Preparedness

The Fall 2019 first-time, full-time new freshman cohort included 2647 students. Breakdown by admission pathway include:

- Direct Admit – 1370 students (51.75% of the full cohort)
- College Ready – 715 students (27% of the full cohort)
- Emergent – 553 students (20.89% of the full cohort)

Retention by pathway (compared to the Fall 2018 new freshman cohort) include:

- Direct Admit – 83.3% (compared to 82.6% for Fall 2018 – 0.7% increase)

- College Ready – 74.3% (compared to 68.6% for Fall 2018 – 5.7% increase)
- Emergent – 57.1% (compared to 50.2% for Fall 2018 – 6.9% increase)

The Fall 2019 first-time, full-time new freshman cohort included 29.56% students taking at least one remedial course. During the two year period for the 2018-2020 retention and completion plan, the percentage of first-time, full-time freshman for Fall 2019 taking at least one remedial math course was 28.9 in 2018 and 28.1% in Fall 2019. Our general education mathematics requirement, which includes at a minimum the mastery of core statistical concepts or college algebra, presents a significant challenge for our students. The suspension of ACT/SAT testing during COVID will impact placement and future measures.

In evaluation of the last three years of placement testing data, math placement testing is the highest need for incoming students. Over half of the incoming students require placement testing (56.3%); 89.3% of students selected for testing are selected for math testing. From 2018 to 2019, the need for overall testing has dropped with increased admissions criteria (65.5% to 56.3%). Additionally, the volume of students needing more than one placement test has dropped 8% since 2017.

Placement Testing Evaluations for Incoming Freshman by Year

	2017	2018	2019
Total Students Evaluated for Testing	3,628	3,277	3,131
No Testing Required	1,252 (34.5%)	1,448 (44.2%)	1,368 (43.7%)
Testing Required	2,376 (65.5%)	1,829 (55.8%)	1,763 (56.3%)
Math Testing	2,164 (91.1%)	1,620 (88.6%)	1,574 (89.3%)
2 or more areas	1,198 (50.4%)	817 (44.7.9%)	750 (42.5%)

In Fall 2019, the median high school grade point average for first time freshman was a 3.54, with median ACT of 23 and SAT of 1130. For Fall 2018, the median high school grade point average for first time freshman was a 3.50, with median ACT of 23, and SAT of 1130.

4. Financial Literacy and Management

Because we have many students who are Pell Grant eligible and the first generation in their families to seek post-secondary education, they arrive to the University with limited financial literacy skills. The challenges here are most apparent with regard to financial aid regulations, regular budget management and the utilization of refunds for college related expenses. It is evident that we must provide education and support to these students to enhance and enrich their financial literacy skills to forestall potential issues with debt, personal finances and student loan repayment.

5. Part-time Enrollment

Over 5,011 of our students attend part time (28.1% of total enrollment) and many juggle work and family responsibilities. In Ohio, part-time students seeking a bachelor's degree have eight-year graduation rates less than 15% . This measurement does not include the challenges in timely degree completion and accurate tracking for students who earn credits from several institutions.

COVID will change student preparedness levels and financial resources increasing the need to assess and intervene with student supports.

PROGRESS TOWARD INITIAL RETENTION AND COMPLETION GOALS

Our retention and completion goals for 2018-2020 were met with moderate success and will continue to be fundamental goals.

1. The first-year retention rate goal of 72% was exceeded by 3.6 points. As of fall 2019, the first-year retention rate is 75.6% (first-time, full-time Akron Campus bachelor's-degree seeking students). This is a 4% increase over the Fall 2018 first-year retention rate of 71.6%;

2. Although the six-year graduation rate goal was 42%, the current six-year graduation rate is improving, with the 2012 six-year rate at 43%, and the 2013 six-year rate at 51% (first-time, full-time Akron Campus bachelor's degree seeking);

3. The job/graduate school placement rate goal of 80% was exceeded by seven points. As of fall 2019, the job/graduate school placement rate is 87% (undergraduate degree recipients); and

4. To date, the development of a strategy to reduce student cohort achievement gaps, particularly in first-year retention, remains a priority.

RETENTION AND COMPLETION GOALS FOR 2020-2022

Our retention and completion goals for 2020-2022 are both aggressive and realistic:

1. Enhance student support services and early alert initiatives to respond to students needing resources, including crisis response and financial literacy (debt accumulation, repayment and regular budgeting);

2. Develop and implement a college-centered academic advising model that balances academic degree program and career guidance and delineates course registration processes;

3. Design and launch programs that support degree progress that respond to broad preparedness levels;

4. Develop student engagement activities to address student connections, counter feelings of isolation, and support mental health, among others, within current and possible future realities associated with social distancing and health priorities;

5. Increase efficiency in degree completion through revised class scheduling process, including offering course options during times when students need them;

6. Address the needs of underrepresented students through intentional support including supplemental academic advising, learning communities and other strategic initiatives (such as racial equity and social justice);

7. Tailor the Akron Experience first-year seminar course content to meet the specific programs in colleges and majors;

8. Identify and train campus on high impact curricular and co-curricular activities;

9. Assess execution of course delivery, campus support services, and new initiatives implemented as a result of COVID-19 to identify impact, gaps, and opportunities to continue practices/initiatives as a part of normal business practices; and

10. Expand experiential learning and research opportunities to all undergraduate programs.

RETENTION AND COMPLETION STRATEGIES

1. Pathways to Student Academic Success

Guiding students to the academic pathway that will contribute most to their success is paramount to providing a strong Akron experience. The need for the Pathways strategy was evident in the data collected at the University, as it was found that the most underprepared students (ACT<17 and HS GPA<2.5) had less than a 10% chance of obtaining a bachelor's degree in six years. The Pathways strategy addresses the varied student preparedness levels by offering different entryways with tailored academic support.

The Inclusive Pathways approach addresses college preparedness based on several

academic indicators and identifies students according to their preparedness levels: College-ready and Emergent.

College-ready students include those directly admitted to an academic program of study and those of higher preparedness who need to fulfill additional requirements at the institution as a pre-admission student:

- Pathway admission based upon a sliding scale by high school coursework, high school grade point average, and standardized test scores (ACT/SAT). Students admitted with a higher academic profile are admitted directly to their academic program of study.
- Demonstration of high achievement throughout high-school and ready to pursue academically challenging coursework that leads directly to degree completion.

Emergent students include those admitted to the University with a requirement of completing a set of prescribed courses and/or activities during their first year of enrollment as a condition of further enrollment and admission to an academic program of study:

Pathway admission based upon a sliding scale by high school coursework, high school grade point average, and standardized test scores (ACT/SAT).

- High school GPA demonstrates the ability and desire to achieve through personal effort, benefitting from admittance as pre-majors and the receipt of intentional, intensive, and if necessary, intrusive support for major readiness.

Our fall 2019 first-time, full-time (FTFT), bachelor's degree-seeking students had an average ACT of 23 and a 3.54 high school grade point average. With a strategic focus on the pathways strategy, the University remains focused on increasing first-year retention and six-year graduate rates. We have improved our pathway strategy over this two-year period, with our first-time, full-time, new freshman cohort for Fall 2019 showing retention rates of 83.3% for our Direct Admits, 74.3% for College Ready, and 57.1% for Emergent, compared with the Fall 2018 cohort, which saw retention rates of 82.6% for Direct Admits, 68.6% for College Ready, and 50.2% for Emergent.

In Fall 2020, we implemented the Akron Rising Scholars initiative. The program is designed to increase access to the university by admitting students through a holistic review criterion whom were previously denied admission to the university. The Holistic Review Committee reviews each applicant and evaluates admission based upon several criteria:

- College Prep Track in previous high school coursework
- Grade Point Average trends

- ACT/SAT test scores
- Letters of recommendation
- Personal statements and/or Common App essay
- CCP coursework, if applicable
- Local six-county region

Students admitted through Akron Rising Scholars participate with additional and intentional wrap around support and academic services, including Summer bridge, tutoring, and access to a Retention Coordinator. In Fall 2020, the program enrolled168 students, with targeted retention rate of 75% to the second year.

Students previously admitted under the Preparatory pathway are admitted to University of Akron's Wayne College, where they maintain their status until successful completion of 24 credit hours in good standing and successful completion of all remedial coursework. At that time, they are invited to join the main campus in full standing. They are also invited to attend a community college in good standing and to then apply for a transfer Akron Guarantee Scholarship upon successful completion of 12 credit hours with a cumulative college grade point average of a 3.0 or higher.

2. Early Alert Initiatives

Help-A-Zip and ZipAssist

The Help-A-Zip referral program was put in place in Fall 2015 to provide resources for students who are facing distress or are in jeopardy of leaving the University. Faculty, staff, parents, community members, peers, and students themselves can make a referral to ZipAssist on behalf of an enrolled student. A team of campus experts are then assigned to assist students with navigating University resources and finding needed services. Referrals are typically made for the following areas of concern: academic, personal/social, mental health, tuition/fees, emergency financial, and textbook assistance.

Through intentional communication and education to campus, the Help-A-Zip referral program experienced a 400% increase in FY18 as compared to the previous two years of the program. The success and utilization of the program has continued with an average of 625 referrals received each semester. On average, each student referred to ZipAssist through the Help-A-Zip program interacts three times with the staff. Students have the

opportunity to set goals, review Degree Progress Reports, discuss budgeting strategies, are provided campus/community resources and receive holistic mentorship.

Interim Progress Reports

Research has demonstrated that the earlier students have contact with full-time faculty, the more likely they are to remain in school and succeed. The combination of full-time faculty contact with professional advisor and staff guidance and intervention improves retention and persistence. Although faculty and staff contact take many forms, measurable feedback in relation to student progress includes the use of early-term progress reports, primarily for the 100- and 200-level courses, where faculty enter satisfactory or unsatisfactory indicators during the second to fifth week of the term. With this information, colleges and advising units are able to generate reports from the system to craft outreach to those students identified at-risk for failing a course(s). Outreach includes email and telephone calls to invite students in to discuss interventions to create success toward those courses. Interventions include tutoring, office hours, additional academic advising appointments, and additional resources such as counseling. In addition, the University is developing strategic and consistent deployment and utilization of the Brightspace platform for grade keeping and communication with students.

3. Student Emergency Financial Assistance (SEFA)

In May 2017 the University was selected as a national recipient of a $660,000 grant provided by the DASH Emergency Grant, supported by the Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation & Affiliates. The grant, now called the Student Emergency Financial Assistance (SEFA) program on campus, provides emergency assistance for undergraduate students facing an unexpected hardship. Through a referral system, students work with Zip Assist staff to determine eligibility and resources available, both on campus and within the community. The program is aimed at supporting low-income students with an Expected Financial Contribution of $7,000 or less. The maximum grant a student can receive (one-time grant period, 2017-2019) is $1,000 toward non-tuition related expenses.

During the pilot period of the Student Emergency Financial Assistance Program, 435 students received one-time assistance, amounting over $334,700 in support. Data collected through the National Student Clearinghouse confirms the program's success with over 99% of students remaining in higher education as a result of the one-time emergency aid. Supplemental support programs, such as Campus Cupboard and ZipsTech, were created considering concerns learned through student interventions with SEFA. Successful fundraising efforts have continued

to sustain this and other emergency financial support programs.

4. Retention and Completion Grants

The retention and completion grant program targets a group of academically eligible students at risk for attrition. Specifically targeted are students who (a) are at risk for being dropped for non-payment prior to the beginning of each semester; (b) have completed at least 15 credits in good academic standing; (c) are Pell eligible; and (d) have unpaid balances that typically total less than $2,000. Our research suggests the top two reasons students stop out of college are financial and personal issues. Additionally, as is the case at institutions across the nation, a majority of UA students who are dropped from classes for non-payment are in good academic standing and simply cannot return due to finances. Between Summer 2018 and Spring 2020 (AY18-19 and AY19-20), 220 retention and completion grants were awarded. Of the 220 recipients, 131 graduated (59.6%), while 61 are currently enrolled (27.7%). Only 28 recipients did not persist (12.7%).

5. Developmental Academic Advising

Academic advising transitioned into a decentralized system with an additional focus on a developmental model intended to provide teaching, service, and one-on-one focus to each and every student. Consistent with college action plans, UA will continue to improve college-based student advising, with special attention to at-risk students. This focus was observed through the University's strategic planning process, wherein an initiative was implemented to require all students meet with an academic advisor within their first 60 credits of completion. Included is UA college and faculty advisors monitoring all pre-majors to ensure that these students expeditiously find a major in which they can succeed, including a smooth transition to another degree-granting college when appropriate.

6. Akron Guarantee Scholarship

The University developed the Akron Guarantee Scholarship for new freshman students entering the Fall 2017 class, guaranteeing annual renewal so long as the student remains in good academic standing (a 2.0 GPA, modified to 2.50 GPA in Fall 2020). The scholarship also includes automatic yearly upgrades as students earn 30, 60, and 90 credits, totaling up to $3500 (modified to $2250 in Fall 2020) and provides a larger total eight-semester scholarship than a traditional scholarship. The Akron Guarantee Scholarship was created as a retention tool to provide financial support to a greater range of undergraduate students and to increase their chance of graduating in four years with less debt. The program was further enhanced for Fall 2018 by providing the Akron Guarantee Scholarship to transfer, adult, and returning (not

attending any other college/university for three or more years) students.

The Akron Guarantee Scholarship has been effective in retaining new freshman to the university. The Fall 2019 first-time, full-time new freshman cohort saw 94.36% retention from fall to spring semester, compared to 78.38% for those who did not receive this scholarship (total fall to spring retention rate of 89.1%). This same cohort saw an 83.74% retention rate at census following the first year, compared to 58.48% for those who did not receive this scholarship (total retention rate at census of 75.42%).

In addition to the Akron Guarantee Scholarship, the University has added targeted scholarships to student with funding gaps. In Fall 2019, the University established a scholarship (Hail We Akron Scholarship) to assist low income students who, after all other financial aid sources are exhausted, have a gap between the amount of financial aid received and their total cost of attendance. Students in this situation are often low-income grant recipients who do not have parental support through personal payments or parent loans to help meet their remaining cost of attendance. These students often do not enroll or only complete one semester because of these financial barriers. During the 2019-2020 award year, 116 students received a total of $259,178 to help them overcome their funding gap and begin or persist in their educational pursuits.

Due to the success of the Hail We Akron Scholarship and the essential support it provides, it became the example for additional scholarship development. In Fall 2020, the University introduced the We Rise Together Scholarship in celebration of our 150th anniversary and for the purpose of helping students overcome financial barriers. This scholarship is also awarded to help overcome funding gaps and to promote retention and persistence.

7.   First-Year Student Success Seminar

The University offers a student success course, The Akron Experience: University 101, that combines topics related to first-year experiences with career-planning elements to engage students early in their academic careers. The Akron Experience: University 101 is required of all new baccalaureate degree-seeking freshman admitted on the emergent pathway, a pathway identified as being at higher risk academically. College-ready students are strongly encouraged to participate in this course. This course has further developed through the identification of clear, first-year student learning outcomes. The course is strongly connected with the degree-granting college in which a student is majoring, allowing for exploration of major and career paths within those colleges and access to specialized wrap-around services

provided by the colleges. The course has further developed within the Learning Communities program through addressing the pertinent areas of campus resources, building academic and non-cognitive skill sets, and reinforcing the theme specific to each Learning Community.

In Fall 2019, 761 students were enrolled into the Akron Experience course. As of Fall 2020, 69% of the Fall 2019 cohort who took the Akron Experience course are still enrolled at The University of Akron.

	Fall 2019 Cohort	Still Enrolled Fall 2020	Retention Rate
Enrollment	761	522	69%
Grade Earned			
A to C-	641	491	77%
D+ to D-	30	11	37%
F	65	15	23%
WD	25	5	20%

In Fall 2018, 818 students were enrolled into the Akron Experience course, with 62% retained into Fall 2019.

	Fall 2018 Cohort	Still Enrolled Fall 2019	Retention Rate
Enrollment	818	507	62%
Grade Earned			
A to C-	674	480	71%
D+ to D-	35	10	29%
F	89	13	15%
WD	20	4	20%

8. Learning Communities

Students participating in learning communities engage in structured learning experiences that foster connections with their peers, establish relationships with their faculty members and academic advisors, and enable them to form positive connections to the campus community. Utilizing the information gathered from these experiences enables us to identify what aspects of the learning communities influence retention. Data indicate that the learning community structure shows much promise in increasing first-year retention rates, with current success at 78%.

Moving forward, faculty teaching in learning communities will work in collaboration across courses to increase integration across the curricula and provide experiences that promote both

the academic and social integration of first-year students. In addition, a more comprehensive assessment of the program will include qualitative data from participating faculty with assessment of first semester persistence, as well as first-year retention, GPAs, and overall student satisfaction for all student participants.

Fall to Fall Retention for Learning Community Students			
Semester	Retained		Total
	N	%	N
Fall 2019	608	75.06%	810
Fall 2018	563	70.46%	799
Fall 2017	443	72.74%	609

9. Alternative Forms of Credit

Decreasing the time to degree completion is a top priority, and several initiatives are currently in place. College Credit Plus, Advanced Placement, Career-Technical Credit Transfer, Akron Early College High School, CLEP, credit by exam, International Baccalaureate and military training and experience can be used to allow a student to complete a bachelor's degree in just three years. In 2018-2020, over 3700 students were awarded more than 45,000 semester credit hours.

10. Decrease Number of Credit Hours to Degree Completion

The University of Akron is working diligently to streamline graduation requirements so that most bachelor's degree programs can be completed in 120 semester credit hours, and associate degree programs can be completed within 60 semester credit hours without compromising accreditation requirements.

	Semester Credit Hours Required for Degree Completion	Number of Programs	Percentage of Programs
Bachelor's Degree Programs	127-152	87	39.19%
	121-126	16	7.21%
	120	119	53.60%
Associate Degree Programs	66-72	5	10.42%
	61-65	16	33.33%
	60	27	56.25%

11. Mentoring Services

Peer Mentoring

- Coordinated through the Office of Multicultural Development, provides peer mentors for nearly 300 historically underrepresented first-year students. Peer Mentors are successful sophomores, juniors and seniors who have demonstrated the ability to relate well with first-year students from varied ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds. They serve as role models who lead and support incoming first-year students by setting a positive academic example, encouraging mentees to make good decisions and to utilize campus resources that include tutoring, counseling, meeting with their academic advisors and faculty members, and getting involved with campus activities. During Fall 2019, the Office of Multicultural Development Peer Mentoring Services served 224 students, of which 126 were fully immersed in the mentoring and wrap around services provided by the office. This yielded a 63.5% retention rate of our fully immersed students, as compared to 55.4% of the underrepresented freshman not served by the program. During Fall 2018, the Office of Multicultural Development Peer Mentoring Services served 144 students. This yielded a 54.5% retention rate of students served through this program.

Military Services Center Veteran Peer Advising Program:

- Military Services Center Veteran Peer Advising Program in collaboration with Student Veterans of America connects incoming student veterans with student veterans already on campus in order to help them navigate college life, identify challenges, and refer them to the appropriate resources on or off campus. Our Peer Advisors are members of The University of Akron military community who are not only knowledgeable about resources available, but the understanding of the challenges unique to veterans as they transition from military to campus life. Overall contacts (outreach and interactions) for 2019 were 290; 2018 overall contacts were 350.

12. Learning Assistant Program

The learning assistant program is designed to help students succeed in traditionally difficult courses that tend to be the "gateway" courses (mostly mathematics and science classes) to successfully completing the degree program. Compared with students who do not have learning assistants, students with learning assistants earn three to four more credits per semester, are less likely to drop courses and have a greater chance in successful course

completion.

Courses over the 2018-2020 retention and completion plan cycle involved with the Learning Assistant Program included Analytic Geometry Calculus, I, II, and II, Differential Equations, Anatomy and Physiology, Principles of Chemistry I and II, Elementary Classical Physics I and II, Organic Chemistry, General Genetics, Principles of Biology I and II, and Beginning Arabic. During the 2019-2020 academic year, 634 students made use of the Learning Assistants Program totaling *5413 visits (*numbers down in the spring due to COVID-19) (22 Learning Assistants, 22 sections of courses). During the 2018-2019 academic year, 861 students made use of the Learning Assistants totaling 6412 visits (20 Learning Assistants, 22 sections of courses).

13. Career Services for Students and Graduates

Career Services provides career guidance and opportunities that lead to retention and persistence to graduation and fulfilling career goals upon graduation. Career development leading to retention and persistence to graduation is encouraged through:

- Career advising, which includes major and career exploration and job search opportunities.
- Use of the "Connecting UA Majors to In-Demand Jobs in Ohio Initiative" to help students explore majors and in-demand occupations which provide the most job opportunities upon graduation, and to help bridge the workforce gap in Ohio.
- Preparation for and connection to experiential learning opportunities necessary for career placement.
- Development of career readiness skills.
- Career goal setting through identified "career checklists" from freshman year to graduation.
- Participation in networking opportunities with employers which leads to job placement upon graduation.
- Graduate school planning.

The University of Akron surveys spring graduates of undergraduate programs to determine their career outcomes. For Spring 2019, 82% of graduates who earned a bachelor's degree participated in at least one experiential learning experience before graduating. UA's Spring 2019 Career Outcomes Rate was 87%. Career Outcomes Rate is the percentage of graduates who earned an undergraduate degree and are employed full time, part time, or continuing their

education. The most recently reported national overall placement rate is 85.7% (source: NACE, 2018).

14. Retention Analytics

In 2017, the University developed institutional dashboards to establish key performance indicators and oversight in five critical areas: Admissions and Recruitment, Enrollment, Retention and Graduation, State Share of Instruction (SSI), and Scholarship. These descriptive analytics were incorporated with existing operational reports to rescope Enrollment initiatives and unify instructional discussions surrounding retention and persistence opportunities.

Following the release of the dashboards, further development led to a predictive model to identify students in need of academic help, outreach, or intervention. The Tower Insights project further supplemented institutional reporting through machine learning and analytics models to give advisors early warning indicators for students who might not persist to the next term. Potential risks can also be scaled to identify difficult courses and use student performance in critical courses for prediction of student career outcomes. The project also includes individual student profiles, containing previous test and class performance, a career summary, and baseline demographics to help advising staff better understand a student's journey throughout their career.

Current initiatives include expanding the capabilities of reporting through analytics, further application of machine learning and artificial intelligence, and a shift to Microsoft Power BI reporting platform for greater collaboration and distribution of institutional reports. This opens the way to root cause analysis, identifying vulnerable populations, and more rigorous academic assessment in the context of serving the needs of students.

15. Adult Persistence and Retention Efforts

Many of the barriers adult students encounter at The University of Akron parallel those of traditional students. Most adult first-time college students are first-generation, middle to low-middle socioeconomic background, and have had some catalyst within the last year or two which has pointed them toward improving their skill levels through education. There was no original expectation of a degree from higher education.

The UA Adult Focus Center is in place to address these issues. Adult Focus works with potential, continuing, and returning adult students. For potential students it can mean explaining college admission processes, helping with applications for college and for FAFSA,

and assisting with the transition to being a college student. Continuing adult students require more help than traditional students. They need to learn navigation and access points, as well as experience academic advising with a holistic approach. Adult Focus works with the degree-granting colleges to provide additional support to keep these students enrolled. This support encompasses:

- Comprehensive wrap-around academic support, which begins with advocacy and academic advising.
- Scholarship opportunities for both full and part-time students.
- Educational programming to explain scholarships, how to find them, and how to apply.
- Access to referral to internal and community-based organizations to aid in retention.
- A free math skills program offered each semester for students or potential students who would test into remedial math. The goal is to improve their math scores sufficiently to place out of remedial classes to save both time and money toward degree.
- Commitment to building a sense of community and support through adult only student organizations and programming.

Adult Focus collaborates with College Now Greater Cleveland and Project Learn of Summit County. College Now Greater Cleveland is housed within the Adult focus complex three to five days per week. Data for students served per year include:

	UA Adult Focus	College Now Greater Cleveland	Combined
2019-2020	*684	*336	*1020 (*COVID-19)
2018-2019	897	697	1594

Retention and Completion Metrics

Metrics have been developed and separated into two general categories: general retention and completion metrics that will be reported for various bachelor's degree-seeking student cohorts, and initiative specific metrics. The student cohort groups include remedial, at risk pre-majors (ACT 17 or below and high school GPA of 2.5 or below), bottleneck Nursing and Engineering pre-majors, college-ready pre-majors (ACT 21 and a 3.0 high school GPA), first generation, Pell eligible, African American, Hispanic, adults 25+ years, learning communities and international.

General Retention and Completion Metrics:

- First-semester retention: Fall 2019 first-time full-time freshman retained into the spring semester at 89.1%. Fall 2018 first-time full-time freshman retained into the spring semester at 87.9%.

- First-year retention: Fall 2019 first-time full-time freshman retained at census at 75.42%. Fall 2018 first-time full-time freshman retained at census at 71.3%.

- Percentage of full-time students completing 15+ credit hours per semester: Fall 2019 first-time full -time freshman earned 15 credits by the end of the fall semester at 33.61%. Fall 2018 first-time full-time freshman earned 15 credits by the end of the fall semester at 32.1%.

- Percentage of full-time students completing 30+ credit hours in the first year: Fall 2019 first-time, full-time freshman earned 30 credits at the end of their first year at 30.1%. The percentage increases to 34% for those new freshman retained at the end of the first year. Fall 2018 first-time full-time freshman earned 30 credits at the end of their first year at 34.5%.

- Percentage of pre-majors matriculated into majors at 30 and 48 credit hours: Fall 2019 first-time, full-time freshman included 1128 pre-majors (total cohort of 2669). Of these 1128 students, 13.1% moved from pre-major into majors at the end of their first year (census). Fall 2018 first-time full-time freshman included 1312 pre-majors (total cohort of 2744). Of these 1312 students, 17.8% moved from pre-major into majors at the end of their first year (census).

Metrics will be tracked according to databases of record and distributed via operational reports. These reports will serve various audiences. External reports will reflect summarized data and high-level institutional accountability to provide student success and outcomes. Internal reports will be detailed additionally for student outreach, individualized attention, and guided advisory to students. These reports will be released or classified according to Federal and State laws, and in accordance with student data use policies at The University of Akron. Annual assessments will be conducted to verify results, ensure that proper action is being taken to achieve desired results, and to reexamine institutional priorities and opportunities.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

The University of Akron has over 30 programs that align with the nine JobsOhio key industries. An important ingredient to the success of the programs includes opportunities for students to engage in internships and co-op experiences. About half of the 30 programs have a required internship or co-op component. We will focus on increasing these opportunities for students, as our data indicate the positive impact on career placement. One example includes the successful hiring rate of co-op students; 50% of our students are hired by their co-op employer. Below is a just a small sampling of degrees offered at The University of Akron that align with each industry.

Advanced Manufacturing

Manufacturing Engineering Technology

This application-oriented program provides the solid technical foundation necessary to work in computer-based manufacturing. Graduates are prepared to work and communicate with engineers, scientists and production personnel. Coursework includes work measurement, manufacturing computer applications, quality control, robotics, and lean manufacturing.

Aerospace and Aviation

Aerospace Systems Engineering

Aerospace systems engineering is a specialized form of aerospace engineering that studies how the components of flight vehicles work together to create an efficiently functioning unit. This program, among the first of its kind, is unique from an Aerospace Engineering degree in that it teaches students aerospace engineering fundamentals as well as project management skills. This prepares them to move quickly into the role of project managers to eventually lead multidisciplinary teams. This program includes a mandatory co-operative education component that gives students on-the-job experience in an industry directly related to their studies.

Mechanical Engineering

Mechanical engineers design and analyze physical systems and are employed in a variety of industries in different capacities. Mechanical engineers play important roles in many types of companies, including automotive, petroleum, energy generation and conversion, aerospace, tire, consulting, chemical, electronic, and manufacturing.

The mechanical engineering undergraduate curriculum at The University of Akron is designed to give the student knowledge of the basic principles of the thermal/fluids, structures and motion, and controls systems of mechanical engineering and apply to real-world challenges. UA's well-established Engineering Co-operative Education program enables all engineering students to strengthen the connections between theory and practice in a professional setting and provides valuable industrial experience.

Automotive

Corrosion Engineering

UA launched the nation's first baccalaureate program in corrosion engineering. The program incorporates a multidisciplinary curriculum to train students to understand the origins of corrosion and manage its effects. Corrosion engineers research and develop methods to lower the environmental impact on roadways, bridges, power plants, windmills, manufacturing plants and pipelines. Corrosion engineers also design new materials and structures that will address emerging needs in a variety of industries including energy, chemical processing and pharmaceuticals. Along with a multidisciplinary approach that emphasizes strong science and engineering principles, the program integrates a strong management component to help students develop the skills that are necessary for executing "real world" projects. UA's well-established Engineering Co-operative Education program enables all engineering students to strengthen the connections between theory and practice in a professional setting and provides valuable industrial experience.

Biohealth

Biomedical Engineering

Biomedical engineers study and research the engineering aspects of biological systems to create new devices and procedures to improve health and quality of life. UA offers three areas of specialization that each combine a basic understanding of engineering principles with an appreciation of the life sciences: biomechanics, biomaterials and tissue engineering, or instrumentation, signals, and imaging. UA's well-established Engineering Co-operative Education program enables all engineering students to strengthen the connections between theory and practice in a professional setting and provides valuable industrial experience.

Biology

Biology is the fastest-growing field of science today. Its impact is carried to many fronts such as medicine and health care, the environment and climate changes, global population and food sources. Core courses provide the fundamentals of modern biology (e.g., principles of biology, evolution, ecology, cell and molecular biology, genetics). A student can earn a bachelor of science degree with a major in biology or biomedical sciences, and graduates are prepared for a variety of careers or for admission into medical, dental, veterinary, or pharmacy school.

Allied Health Care Administration

The Bachelor of Allied Health Care Administration (BAHA) degree is one of the fastest growing fields in healthcare. This online degree allows students both new and those holding an Associate of Applied Science degree to earn a bachelor's degree, often a requirement to move

into a supervisory or management role. Allied Health Care Administration managers work closely with clinical and administrative staff as they process, analyze, and report information vital to the delivery of health care.

Nursing

Nursing is concerned with the health of individuals, families, and the community. It combines science and social service skills in providing care to the sick and in the promotion of wellness. Nursing offers opportunities for many types of employment. Nursing education at the baccalaureate level synthesizes knowledge from nursing, humanities, social, cultural, physical, and natural sciences. It includes clinical practice in hospitals, other health care agencies and the community. Graduates are prepared to function as a nurse generalist in a variety of health care jobs.

Exercise Science

Exercise Science is the multidisciplinary study of human movement. Careers in this field range from improving human performance to preventing or treating hypokinetic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, obesity, some cancers, and diabetes. The Exercise Science undergraduate program prepares learners to become integral members of the health and wellness team as Personal Fitness Trainers, Strength and Conditioning Coaches, Health and Wellness Coordinators and Clinical Exercise Physiologist in the health and fitness industry and allied healthcare settings. The academic program also serves as a prerequisite bachelor's degree for admission into several professional graduate school programs including physical therapy, occupational therapy, physician assistant, medical school, Doctor of Chiropractic, athletic training, podiatry, and others.

Speech-Language Pathology

Speech-language pathologists work in various health-care settings as part of a team that evaluates and manages patients with speech and language problems and patients with swallowing disorders. Students can earn an undergraduate pre-professional degree in speech-language pathology and audiology to prepare them to pursue a master's degree, which is required to practice.

Audiology

Audiologists assess auditory disorders including hearing loss through hearing conservation programs and hearing protection devices. Students can earn an undergraduate pre-professional degree in speech-language pathology and audiology in order to prepare them for audiology doctoral school, which is required to practice.

Energy

Geology

Geology is the study of Earth's materials, structures and processes and how they've changed through time. This knowledge may be applied to exploration for natural resources, including metals, petroleum and water; understanding natural hazards such as earthquakes, volcanoes and landslides; addressing problems associated with environmental contamination; and investigating Earth's history to understand the evolution of life and global climate change. Geologists are employed by natural resource companies, environmental consulting firms, government agencies, nonprofit organizations and universities.

Civil Engineering

Civil engineers plan and design large-scale projects like bridges and power plants, study and solve societal and environmental challenges like providing safe drinking water, and design and maintain transportation systems. Students may tailor their education toward specialties like structural, water resources and hydraulic, geotechnical, environmental and transportation. UA's well-established Engineering Co-operative Education program enables all engineering students to strengthen the connections between theory and practice in a professional setting and provides valuable industrial experience.

Construction Engineering Technology

A degree in construction engineering technology prepares students for managerial positions in inspection, cost estimating, supervision and more.

Electrical Engineering

Electrical engineers design and develop systems ranging from massive power grids and global communications networks to tiny integrated circuits ranging from massive power grids and global communications networks to tiny integrated circuits inside computers and personal electronics. UA's well-established Engineering Co-operative Education program enables all engineering students to strengthen the connections between theory and practice in a professional setting and provides valuable industrial experience.

Financial Services

Financial Management

Today's business environment increasingly requires efficient management of firm assets. The Financial Management major trains students in the art and science of efficiently managing money.

Financial Planning

Financial planners help clients manage their money. In addition, planners often advise clients on personal goals such as buying a home or retiring. Students can enhance their professional credentials by completing educational requirements toward the Certified Financial Planner (CFP) designation.

Risk Management and Insurance

A degree in Risk Management and Insurance (RMI) trains students to identify, analyze, and manage financial and operational risks that are inherent in both personal and business settings. products. Students can enhance their professional credentials by completing educational requirements toward the following certifications:

- Property/Casualty and Life/Health Insurance Licenses-Approved pre-licensing education for insurance licensing. Students can earn certificates to sit for the State of Ohio insurance exams when meeting attendance requirements in designated courses.
- University Associate Certified Insurance Counselor (UACIC) – Students can earn the UACIC certification by successfully completing the coursework and exam required by the National Alliance for Insurance Education.

Accounting

The School of Accountancy's undergraduate accounting degree prepares students to pursue such certifications as certified public accountant (after completing the state-mandated 150 semester hours of college credits), certified management accountant, certified internal auditor, and certified information systems auditor. UA offers an Accelerated B.S./M.S. in Accounting and an Accelerated B.S./M. in Taxation degree as a seamless path toward obtaining the 150 semester credit hours needed to sit for the certified public accountant examination.

Business Data Analytics

A degree in Business Data Analytics is designed to meet the growing demand for professionals who can gather, sort and interpret large amounts of data to help businesses solve problems and operate more effectively This STEM-designated program combines coursework in business,

economics and data analytics to provide students the knowledge, skills and hands-on experience needed to develop data-driven solutions in finance, insurance and other industries.

Economics

Economics is the study of how individuals, households, businesses, governments and societies allocate their scarce resources. Students learn rigorous statistical analysis to investigate these changes which enables them to make statistically based arguments about public and private issues. A Bachelor of Arts in Economics earned at The University of Akron prepares students for the skills needed to enter the labor force or to advance to graduate/professional school.

Information Services and Software

Information Systems Management

Information Systems professionals perform the technology-related activities of companies. They perform a variety of duties, from constructing detailed business plans to overseeing network and Internet operations.   Working with upper management, they define the technical goals of the company and plan how to accomplish these goals. In addition, they maintain corporate Web sites, analyze the information needs of organizations, and supervise systems analysts, programmers, technical support and other employees. An undergraduate degree in information systems prepares students for careers in information systems professional and enables them to pursue technology-specific certifications.

Computer Engineering

Computer engineers design and develop hardware and software for all of these systems, ranging from software applications to communication networks to components in computing systems to small embedded sensors.Branches of computer engineering include operating systems, embedded systems design, digital circuits, algorithms, software development, and computer architecture among others. Important applications include wired and wireless networks, simulation, automation, digital control, sensing, robotics, "apps", data management, and many others. UA's well-established Engineering Co-operative Education program enables all engineering students to strengthen the connections between theory and practice in a professional setting and provides valuable industrial experience.

Polymers

Chemistry

The Bachelor of Science degrees in Chemistry and Chemistry with Polymer option offer greater concentration in chemistry and are accredited by the American Chemical Society. The B.S. in Biochemistry bridges the chemistry and biology disciplines and adheres to the standards established by the American Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. The B.A. degree allows students sufficient time to minor in another subject. Useful minors include biology, business, or a foreign language.

Chemical Engineering

The University of Akron's chemical engineering program teaches students the principles of transport phenomena, thermodynamics, and chemical reaction kinetics to solve problems. Chemical engineering requires a broad knowledge of science to solve problems involving the production or use of chemicals, improving the environment and making energy conversion more efficient. UA's well-established Engineering Co-operative Education program enables all engineering students to strengthen the connections between theory and practice in a professional setting and provides valuable industrial experience.