

**University of Cincinnati**  
**Recommendation to the Board of Trustees**  
**For Action**

**Date: June 3, 2016**

**Title: University of Cincinnati College Completion Plan Update**

**Synopsis:** Language in Amended Substitute. H.B. 59, or the Biennial Budget Bill of the 130<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, requires each college, university and adult career technical center in the University System of Ohio to develop an institution-specific Campus Completion Plan that is consistent with the institution's mission and strategic priorities. Legislation further states that these plans are to be updated every two years.

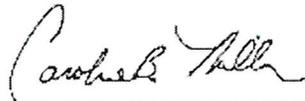
It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approve the University of Cincinnati's revised College Completion Plan which outlines UC's success strategies and metrics related to retention, graduation rates, time to degree, academic success, financial literacy and assistance.

**APPROVED**

**JUN 16 2016**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Prepared by:



Caroline B. Miller  
Vice Provost, Enrollment Management

Reviewed by:



Beverly Davenport  
Sr. Vice President for Academic  
Affairs & Provost

**FOR BOARD OFFICE USE ONLY:**

Recommendation Number: 16.6.21.03

Date of Board Approval: 6/21/2016

Submitted by:



President

---

# Complete College Ohio

---

---

# **Complete College Ohio**

---

**University of Cincinnati  
College Completion Plan  
Phase 2  
June 21, 2016**

## Table of Contents

### I. Executive Summary, p.5

### II. Introduction, p. 9

*University Mission, Barriers to Persistence and Completion Goals*  
*UC Recognition for Student Success and Quality Education*  
*Advancing the Culture of Success*  
*Guiding Principles*

### III. Strategic Practices and Initiatives, p. 17

#### ***Advising and Technology, p. 18***

##### *Existing Strategies*

1. Provide Robust, High-quality, Personalized Academic Advising
2. Tailor Support to Transfer and Transition Students
3. Reinforce Specialized Advising for Major Selection and Exploration
4. Invest in Technology-based Tools and Systems to Facilitate Completion
5. Re-establish a University-wide Early Warning System

 **Signature Initiative: UC Graduation Promise**

#### ***Financial Support and Literacy, p. 25***

##### *Existing Strategies*

6. Address College Costs and Increase Affordability
7. Reduce Textbook Costs
8. Coordinate Financial Services and Education for Students

##### *Proposed Strategies*

9. Increase Need- and Merit-based Funding

 **Signature Initiative: Financial Literacy Coalition**

#### ***Curriculum and Culture, p. 29***

*Existing Strategies*

10. Improve Gateway Courses, Placement, and DFW Grades
11. Expand Learning Communities
12. Apply Analytics to Increase Success at Course and Program Levels
13. Strengthen General Education
14. Increase Prior Learning Awards and Alternative Course Credit
15. Reinforce a Culture of Connection, Community, and Inclusion

*Proposed Strategies*

16. Develop a Collaborative Peer Education Initiative

 **Signature Initiative: Center for Student Success**

**IV. Further Investigation, p. 37**

**V. Workforce Development Priorities, p. 40**

**VI. Appendices, p. 43**

***Appendix A: University Undergraduate Student Profile***

***Appendix B: Retention and Graduation Rate Data***

***Appendix C: Additional Enrollment Data (either part of document or second document)***

# I. Executive Summary

---

*University of Cincinnati*

*College Completion Plan*

---

## **Executive Summary**

For more than a decade, the University of Cincinnati (UC) has focused on an aggressive expansion of its student success initiatives within the framework of a high-quality education. Since 2003, UC has significantly increased student success, demonstrated by a 14% increase in student retention for first-time, full-time students and a 17.8% increase in 6-yr. graduation rates. The University (main campus) has earned recognition for its distinct programs that enhance student retention and completion and has been nationally acknowledged as number one for best educational value. UC's two regional campuses serve an important role in providing access to higher education, and, while strongly committed to student success and completion, these colleges with open admission face additional challenges in improving retention and completion rates -- though both are seeing gradual improvement via Reverse Transfer.

The development and execution of this Campus Completion Plan provides an excellent opportunity for the University of Cincinnati to refine existing strategies and to develop new initiatives to increase timely degree attainment and rates of completion. With this purpose, a task force of 17 faculty, staff, students and administrators from the three UC campuses was charged in December 2013 to develop this plan and update in 2016. This update does not reflect major changes, rather refinements, as we believe we have the right design for UC.

### **Completion Goals**

The university will build upon the UC Academic Master Plan, "UC2019," and the currently emerging 15-year vision, "Creating Our Third Century," which outline specific retention, graduation, and time-to-degree goals to attain by 2019. Our initial goal was to increase retention and graduation rates by 1% a year. Main campus increased retention by 4 percentage points and graduation rates by 2 percentage points. Both Regional Campuses saw retention increase by 3 percentage points and graduation rates by 4 percentage points (See Appendix B). URM retention rates are on par with "so called majority rates" though there is still work to do regarding graduation rates.

### **Strategies to Accomplish the Goals**

To accomplish these goals, we identified 16 current and proposed strategies under the overall goal to "Advance a Culture of Success" on the main and regional campuses. Within three groupings—(1) Advising and Technology, (2) Financial Support and Literacy, and (3) Curriculum and Culture—we identify the current strategies to be enhanced and new strategies to be implemented. In addition, the signature initiative in each group is a "big idea" that brings together many of the smaller strategies proposed within a section and is one that will require significant cross-unit planning and resources.

## **1. Advising and Technology**

UC's goal of providing high-quality, personalized academic advising to all students is expected to significantly improve completion rates. While many best practices already exist, enhancements to advising include the following:

- appropriate student-to-advisor ratios
- intrusive, outreach-oriented advising for all students
- expanded advisor training
- specialized advising for major selection and transition pathways
- new technologies to improve documentation and tracking of student progress
- implementation of a university-wide early warning system.

The signature initiative is "The UC Graduation Promise," which is both a communication strategy and pact with students that outlines specific steps required to be on-track for timely graduation.

## **2. Financial Support and Literacy**

Unmet financial need of undergraduate students and affordability issues are the greatest impediments to student retention and degree completion. To address these, fundraising activities are underway for increasing need-based scholarships. A textbook affordability committee is investigating and promoting cost-reduction strategies. The university will create a comprehensive financial aid literacy initiative that involves education and coordinated messaging to staff, faculty, and students.

The signature initiative is to create a Financial Literacy Coalition that will engage separate university offices in collaboration to offer financial counseling, coaching, and literacy education for all students.

## **3. Curriculum and Culture**

Curricular enhancements will address key gateway courses, particularly math and STEM courses, and those with the highest rates of D, F and W grades (DFW rates.) New assessments and review of required course placements will enable program modifications where needed. Posting mid-term grades and expanding the use of mid-term course evaluations will address student success at the course level. Full implementation of UC's Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Task Force recommendations will increase the award of alternative forms of earned credit and advanced standing, moving students more efficiently to degree completion.

UC's student life and academic community, based upon a commitment of "inclusion of all," is well positioned to advance a culture of success. Building on the existing offerings, the university will promote inclusion through virtual communities and strategic messaging. UC's award-winning and highly successful Learning Communities program will be expanded, both to provide more available seats and to include colleges not currently participating.

The signature initiative is the creation of a Center for Student Success that will align academic resources to help all students integrate their academic and career planning, their coursework and learning, and their curricular and co-curricular student experiences from admission to graduation.

### **Further Investigation**

The task force identified other strategies that require further investigation. One recommendation is to expand student learning portfolios so that this practice becomes a signature of the UC undergraduate experience. More study is needed to determine the various initiatives, student behaviors, and university policies that affect student completion, along with the potential benefits of investing in a comprehensive data analytics system to support our commitment to student success.

## **II. Introduction**

---

*University Mission, Barriers to Persistence and Completion Goals  
UC Recognition for Student Success and Quality Education  
Advancing the Culture of Success  
Guiding Principles*

---

The University of Cincinnati has long been focused on providing students with quality educational experiences that result in the awarding of degrees and certificates. There is in place an established suite of strategies and services designed to enhance student retention and success, and the commitment to providing such services, paired with UC's growth in retention and graduation of students over the past 12 years, are testaments to this. At present, UC graduates 65% of our first-time, full-time baccalaureate students and an additional 15% transfer to other colleges and universities. Legislation included in H.B. 59 allows us to look more closely at our opportunities to refine current strategies and pursue innovative approaches to further ensure timely degree attainment and increased rates of completion.

A task force of 17 faculty, staff, students and administrators (see Appendix B) was charged in December 2013 to provide UC's "Campus Completion Plan." To fully accomplish this plan, we will build upon the UC Academic Master Plan, "UC2019," and the currently emerging 15-year vision, "Creating Our Third Century," which outline specific retention, graduation, and time-to-degree goals for 2019. Our initial goal was to increase retention and graduation rates by 1% a year. Main campus increased by 4% and graduation rates by 2%. Both Regional Campuses saw retention increase by 3 percentage points and graduation rates by 4 percentage points (See Appendix B). In addition to focusing on the campus completion plan requested by the state, the task force also provided three "big ideas" called "Signature Initiatives" that can move the dial on UC student completion.

## ***University Mission, Barriers to Persistence, and Completion Goals***

### **University of Cincinnati Mission**

Most of the 44,200 students who enrolled at the University of Cincinnati this year did so with the intent to graduate. As a major, urban research university with a medical school, professional schools, and two regional two-year campuses, we are positioned to provide an accessible educational environment embedded in exceptional and unique learning opportunities. Our mission is:

*The University of Cincinnati serves the people of Ohio, the nation, and the world as a premier, public, urban research university dedicated to undergraduate, graduate, and professional education, experience-based learning, and research. We are committed to excellence and diversity in our students, faculty, staff, and all of our activities. We provide an inclusive environment where innovation and freedom of intellectual inquiry flourish. Through scholarship, service, partnerships, and leadership, we create opportunity, develop educated and engaged citizens, enhance the economy, and enrich our University, city, state, and global community.*

One of the most remarkable characteristics of the university is our student body profile. We are attracting increasing numbers of National Merit Scholars and international students. Few research-intensive national universities also enroll such high percentages of both Pell-eligible and first generation students, whose college persistence and completion rates are generally far lower than other students.

Many of these students find access to higher education through UC's two regional colleges, which admit any student with a high school diploma or GED. Serving nearly 10,000 students from diverse backgrounds and with varied levels of preparedness, the regional colleges create life-changing opportunities for students who often face particular challenges in acclimating to the rigors of college or in managing life issues while pursuing their educational dreams. With small class sizes, dedicated faculty, and support mechanisms in place, the regional colleges serve a major role in preparing students directly for the workforce or for providing clear pathways from the associate degrees into the third year of UC's baccalaureate programs. While presenting challenges to overall retention and completion rates, this access mission is an important and highly worthy endeavor of the university.

### **Barriers to Persistence and Completion**

The U.S. Department of Education's College Affordability and Transparency Center issues a College Scorecard on public higher education institutions. This tool allows students and parents to see comparisons across universities to assess college affordability. Scorecards for the University of Cincinnati can be found by campus:

[University of Cincinnati – Main Campus](#)  
[University of Cincinnati – Clermont College](#)  
[University of Cincinnati – UC Blue Ash](#)

Based on institutional type, UC's main campus is reflected in the "medium" range for costs and the "high" range for graduation rates. UC's regional colleges are in the "medium" range for costs, but in the "low" range for graduation rates. Student loan default rates have declined to 7.5% second lowest in Ohio.

This demonstrates that the relative value of a degree earned at the University of Cincinnati is very high as compared to the costs. In fact, an article issued by PolicyMic.com in August of 2013, which was based upon the Department of Education's Transparency initiative, ranked UC as having the highest educational value in the nation: ["Top 12 Colleges Where Students Get the Best Bang for the Buck"](#).

However, the key student profile and campus context factors that continue to most impede persistence and completion of UC students remain significant. They include: unmet financial need, Pell-eligibility status, first generation status, and under-preparedness in math.

### ***Unmet Financial Need***

As of 2013-14, undergraduate students' unmet financial need based on total costs of attendance (or total budget) at UC is an overwhelming 250.6 million dollar total for nearly 19,000 students. This includes costs of tuition, fees, room and board, books and supplies, and miscellaneous expenses. At UC, this sum has increased by 65.8% in the past six years. This number is important because it reflects the full costs associated with the ability to continue and complete a degree.

Students' unmet financial need based only on UC tuition and fees, however, is a much smaller sum: \$5.6 million. This sum accounts for 1,472 students, which is 6.4% of the students who filed a FAFSA (see Appendix D.) This total has actually reduced over the course of a six-year period by 0.4% and is the lowest that it has been since before the 2008-09 academic year.

### ***Pell-Eligibility Status***

The percentage of students who are eligible to receive federal Pell grants is significant. At 28%, this rate is unusually high for a research-intensive, national university though it has declined from 32% two years ago. Beyond students' often compromised ability to pay for higher education, many of these students are helping to manage heavy financial and personal demands within their low-income families as well. The associated impacts to student success are often based on the financial issues, but also include personal challenges and work demands that may require additional student support.

### ***First Generation Status***

UC has become known as a leader in support of first generation students. With more than 24% (a low estimate) of our students coming from families whose parents did not attend college, there are special challenges in helping to educate a student whose personal supports are not familiar with the college environment or how to most effectively support a college student. UC's [Gen-1 Theme House](#) has received national attention and awards for the success of the program to overcome some of these obstacles and help students to succeed. However, the program is small and expensive. More scalable means of supporting these students must be employed to support the university's enrollment of this high-need population.

### ***Math Under-preparedness***

Of the 30% of UC undergraduates who need remedial education, almost all need it in mathematics and mostly on the Regional campuses. Curricular innovation and support to help students become college-ready and succeed in math as quickly as possible is necessary. Math is the most significant curricular barrier that impedes positive degree progression and graduation. It is also the most significant factor in limiting student ability to choose an otherwise desired course of study.

### **Completion Goals for 2016-2018**

The UC Academic Master Plan UC2019 and the currently emerging 15-year vision, Creating Our Third Century, have outlined specific goals that we aspire to achieve in student retention, progression and graduation. The university's shared vision places "students and learning at the center."

UC2019 Academic Master Plan and Creating Our Third Century goals to accomplish by 2019 include:

- Raise retention rate to 90% for baccalaureate and 70% for associate's
- Raise graduation rate to 75% for baccalaureate and 50% for associate's
- Raise graduation rate for Black and African-American students to meet university goal of 75%
- Improve time-to-degree measures by 10% for graduate students and undergraduates in non-coop required programs

Emerging goals in Creating Our Third Century as currently proposed include:

- Create a Center for Student Success
- "Right-sizing" our enrollment to 47,000 students (9% increase)
- Scholarships to attract and retain competitive, diverse students
- Curricula and experiences to increase cultural competence and career pathways
- Expanded co-op, experiential, and interdisciplinary learning
- Enhanced diversity via increases in under-represented minority (URM), international and out-of-state students

## ***UC Recognition for Student Success and Quality Education***

For more than a decade, the University of Cincinnati (UC) has been focused on aggressive development of its student success initiatives within the framework of a high-quality education. Since 2003, there has been a significant increase in student success including a sharp rise in first-time, full-time student retention from 77% to 88% and increased graduation rate from 48% to 65%.

In line with this 14% increase in student retention and 17.8% increase in graduation rates, the University has earned the following recognition of our commitment to educational quality and success:

1. Listed as #1 nationally for return on educational investment: [“Top 12 Colleges Where Students Get the Best Bang for the Buck”](#) (policymic.com, 8/26/13). This article was based specifically on the measures being advanced by the U.S. Department of Education for college completion.
2. Public University of the Year (The Washington Center, 2013).
3. Top tier of The Country’s Best National Universities (U.S. News and World Report, 2013).
4. Received the inaugural award from the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (AAPLU) as the overall Economic Development and Innovation University (2013).
5. Top 13 Colleges with the Best Internship or Co-op Opportunities (U.S. News and World Report, 2013).
6. Listed third among “Up and Coming Schools” (U.S. News and World Report, 2013).
7. Recipient of the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award (Insight Into Diversity, 2013.)
8. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data reflects that students are more satisfied with academic advising at UC than other large, Ohio 4-yr. publics and our identified peer institutions.
9. UC’s Center for Exploratory Studies was published as an exemplary practice for undecided students in the National Academic Advising Association monograph, *Advising Special Populations* (2007).
10. UC’s Gen-1 Theme House has been highlighted in national news outlets including the New York Times, NBC Nightly News, Inside Higher Ed, and USA Today for its innovations in supporting first generation college students.
11. Cited in Vincent Tinto’s recent book *Completing College: Rethinking Institutional Action* (2012) for quality practices in our work with underprepared students.

## ***Advancing the Culture of Success***

Consistent messages around high expectations for success as well as engaged and supportive faculty and administrators create a university environment in which students can thrive academically and develop the core foundational skills that lead to persistence and graduation.

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) cited “attentive leadership” and “focus on the individual student” as the “two important characteristics that create and define” institutional cultures of success (“Promoting a Culture of Student Success,” April 2010.) Implementation of a coordinated, university-wide “Culture of Success” initiative for the University of Cincinnati would include several specific changes to university policy, structure, marketing, and resourcing. Critical to the implementation of this university-wide initiative are shared partnership between student-centric faculty, professional staff and administrators, and well-informed students. The key components of this philosophical approach are summarized below:

### ***“Timely Graduation” or “Stay on Track” Messaging***

UC marketing experts would develop a campaign to be expansive and encompass associate and four- and five-year baccalaureate degree programs with recommendations of faculty, advisors and student support personnel reinforcing behaviors and strategies that promote timely degree completion and graduation.

### ***Faculty and Administrator Commitment to Completion***

Faculty and staff at all levels of leadership should consistently communicate their commitment to student success and degree completion, congruent with maintaining standards of academic excellence, both outwardly and in the allocation of resources and policy decisions. Important stakeholders of this “culture of success for students” initiative should include everyone from the Provost and senior leadership through faculty and front-line professional staff.

### ***Inclusive Best Practices and Messages***

Programs and messages that resonate with targeted populations at-risk for stopping out or not completing such as students from regional campuses, exploratory students, veterans, commuter students, students with disabilities, first generation students and under-represented minorities.

We anticipate that many pervasive and less structured shifts in culture should also occur as a result of the 16 discrete strategies and three signature initiatives proposed in the remainder of this document.

## ***Guiding Principles***

There are several principles that must guide our decision-making as we plan university activities and allocate resources to further foster an environment of college completion. These principles will provide a sound framework to ensure the integrity of our efforts.

### ***Students at the Center***

The student-centered university is an environment that fosters the success of a diverse body of individual students and provides them with an actively responsible role in their successes. In this environment, faculty provide student-centered resources and instruction to maximize learning outcomes. We will seek and establish best practices in our application of university-level protocols, as well as being appropriately responsive to the needs and challenges of our students as individuals.

### ***Strategic Leadership***

The efforts associated with UC's college completion goals must be strategically planned and wisely led. This includes an invested senior leadership team, thorough consideration of effective organizational structures and communications, empowerment of faculty and staff, and careful programmatic design to elicit specific educational outcomes. Alignment of university resources, unified services, streamlining and coordination are a priority when of benefit to students.

### ***Sustainability***

We must establish and maintain adequate administrative infrastructure to deploy the university's expanding college completion initiatives in a sustainable manner. Organizational alignment, prioritization and technology can help to accomplish this to some degree. Across the university and centrally, personnel time will be demanded in new ways to build systems, provide services, and maintain operations associated with student academic records, analysis, and degree progression.

### ***Cutting Edge Innovation***

We will advance the university's existing cutting edge innovations in student success and experiential learning to further permeate our institutional efforts. We will also continue to actively investigate and develop new models and technological applications that increase college completion and success in employment and life after college. UC aspires to be a first-choice destination for students, faculty and staff.

### ***Ethics & Educational Quality***

UC will enrich the educational environment by reinforcing quality and diversity of the student body in our admission practices, student engagement and satisfaction, strategically targeted enrollment growth, and enhanced retention and graduation rates. We will ensure that our approach to student success enhances student access and continues to reinforce the high quality of a degree earned at the University of Cincinnati.

### ***III. Strategic Practices & Initiatives***

---

***Advising and Technology  
Financial Support and Literacy  
Curriculum and Culture  
Conclusion***

---

## Advising and Technology

### *Existing Strategies*

#### Strategy 1: Provide Robust, High-Quality, Personalized Academic Advising

**Current standing:** All UC colleges provide academic advising support, but the level of support varies considerably from passive to robust and “intrusive” or outreach-based. The inconsistency gap has narrowed as approximately 20 additional advisors have been hired over the last two years. All but two colleges are now quite close to the NACADA standard of 300 to 1. While faculty serve as effective mentors in each college, formal faculty advising is deployed in few UC colleges due to the growing complexity, training and time demanded of advisors.

At present, it has become increasingly rare for UC students to move through their entire education without the benefit of personal academic advising. Advisor staffing levels have improved but there remains a deficit of approximately 10 advisors. Even so, at some points in the academic year it is possible for students to wait up to two weeks or longer to get an advising appointment. Although our student satisfaction with advising at UC outpaces our peers<sup>1</sup>, there could be greater impact for more students, and particularly on retention and graduation rates with a stronger and more intentional advising program.

**Proposed Enhancements:** The following enhancements will help us to move from a model of inconsistent quality and resourcing to a high-quality, intrusive advising model:

- i. Achieve and maintain appropriate advising ratios.<sup>2</sup>
  - Establish truly intrusive advising models with outreach from advisors to their students across all colleges.
  - Ensure timely student access to advising appointments and guidance.
- ii. Ensure that every UC student has an identified, trusted and coordinated academic support network.
  - Assign every UC student at least one academic advisor and one faculty mentor. Include a peer leader and/or other campus supports as appropriate.

---

<sup>1</sup> National Survey of Student Engagement, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> This is an action item in the UC2019 Academic Master Plan.

- Ensure that every UC student’s advising experience is highly personalized and coordinated. The new Student Information System can help with clear, shared documentation and support role assignments.
  - Advance a relationship development model between students and their advisors to establish a sense that someone students know and trust is “watching out for them.”
  - Establish these relationships via early outreach before freshman orientation. Students can meet and be advised by their “permanent” advisor at Freshman Orientation.
- iii. Systematize specific intrusive advising interventions for all students.
- Every undergraduate student will develop and continually update a personalized advising plan (see technology-based tools strategies).
  - Implement a mandatory academic review each semester for every student which is created by advisors and sent to the student. This must be facilitated by efficient technologies.
  - Implement a mandatory pre-graduation review process during the junior year or in the penultimate semester of associate degree programs.
  - Require students to meet with advisors during at least their freshman year (existing in various formats in most, but not all colleges).
  - The success of underrepresented minority (URM) students and first-generation students are impacted most of all by intrusive advising and mentoring. Include Student Affairs program staff (ex. Ethnic Programs and Services, Gen-One, etc.) as part of the student’s assigned support network.
- iv. Align with best practices.
- Ensure that all UC advising programs are high-quality models based on established national and internal best-practices in units such as Honors, Athletics, Center for Exploratory Studies, College of Nursing, Lindner College of Business, etc.).
  - Establish a common plan of touch points for every student’s advising across the 2-years (associate), 4-years (baccalaureate) or 5-years (co-op) of the students’ programs.
  - Practice active teaching to reinforce learning outcomes of advising, with infusion as possible in course-based formats. Develop an advising syllabus.
- v. Professional development for professional and faculty advisors.<sup>3</sup>
- Provide more extensive university-level training and development of professional staff advisors.

---

<sup>3</sup> This is an action item in the UC019 Academic Master Plan.

- Create a faculty advisor/mentor training program. Provide faculty with tools to facilitate conversations about life and careers after graduation.
  - Promote the faculty role in individual student completion as mentors and career advisors whose greatest impact is in higher-level and highly personalized conversations with students. Avoid deploying faculty time primarily for routine course planning, unless serving as the student's primary assigned advisor.
  - Develop a faculty mentor resource website and a faculty mentor syllabus.
  - Encourage faculty and professional advisors to work together to promote student success.
- vi. Infuse financial literacy into academic advising.
- This is explained in the “Signature Initiative” for a financial literacy coalition.
- vii. Ensure quality of graduate student advising resources.
- Modify the graduate school website to provide greater organization and clarity of processes and expectations.

## **Strategy 2: Tailor Support to Transfer & Transition Students**

**Current standing:** UC established the Center for Pathways Advising and Student Success (CPASS) in the spring of 2016. This model will support students in transfer, transition and major changing status in making wise choices about academic pathways, time-to-degree completion, graduate vs. undergraduate options, etc. There is a documented need for a dedicated program to smooth transfer and transition pathways.

**CPASS and an associated Task Force will** provide the following enhancements will provide better support and guidance for transfer and transition students to ensure timely degree attainment:

- i. Establish a “Campus Transition” program.
- Establish an implementation team focused on student transition processes.
  - Provide advising specifically designed to create a smooth student transition and degree progression between regional campuses and main campus.
  - The partnership between UC and Cincinnati State, called “Cincinnati Pathways” should be part of this program and has explicit new advising requirements.
  - Begin clearly identifying and tracking goals and target programs of regional campus students who intend to transition to main campus.
  - Formalize advisor assignments and connectivity between campuses.

- ii. Design a new Transfer Student Orientation program.
  - This effort is currently underway to improve the transfer student experience.
- iii. Ensure that degree audit tools are available to prospective students.
  - This effort is also currently underway to improve the transfer/transition experience.

### **Strategy 3: Reinforce Specialized Advising for Major Selection & Exploration**

**Current standing:** The Center for Exploratory Studies (CES) provides highly personalized, intrusive advising and programming on major selection and academic planning for 1700 exploratory (undecided) students and over 3500 total UC students considering a change of major each year. Major declaration is generally encouraged by the end of the first year. This center’s model has been published in the National Academic Advising Association monograph, *Advising Special Populations* (2007), as an exemplary practice for undecided students. This is due to the combination of specialized advising and curricular experiences these students can access for exploration of major and career pathways. Following the establishment of CES in 2003, students who choose to enter as “exploratory” (typically viewed as “at risk”) now have higher retention and graduation rates than other declared students with similar profiles. Both regional campuses have recently implemented exploratory programs as well. In its new Exploratory Studies program, UC Blue Ash has designated advisors, a specific first-year experience course, and a pilot peer-mentoring component. CPASS will extend the reach of CES.

**Proposed enhancements:** The following enhancements would help to further increase the persistence of exploratory students and major-changers:

- i. Mandate advising for exploratory students every semester, not just first-year students and those with more than 60 hours (most often transfers). Best-practice for this high-need population of students is closer to 200-250.
- ii. Exploratory students will be strongly encouraged to declare a major by the end of their first year of study. Mandated major declaration timeline policies can simply disguise the students who still most need assistance. Intensive advising intervention and outreach is preferred in lieu of such a policy. Establish major selection counseling at the regional colleges prior to orientation. Students in two-year programs are seriously delayed if they spend even one semester in a program that is not suited to their interests and abilities.

- iii. Coordinate a university-wide strategy on exploratory pathways to include multi-campus adoption of the CES nationally-recognized best practices. Partner with the Career Development Center and the Division of Professional Practice and Experiential Learning (ProPEL) to offer professional development about career advising for other university advisors across colleges.

#### **Strategy 4: Invest in Technology-based Tools and Systems to Facilitate Completion**

**Current Standing:** Investing in appropriate technologies that facilitate a seamless, cohesive advising system and clarity of curriculum and requirements will maximize UC's personnel investment in student support. UC has been operating with a homegrown student information system (SIS) and DARS degree audits that allow advisors and students to check student progress towards graduation. The prior legacy system was not designed with academic advising as a priority. However, student and advisor usage of degree audits produces up to 44,000 audits per month. We are currently deploying a 46 million dollar, two-year implementation of a new Student Information System (*PeopleSoft*). This system will provide shared documentation that will better coordinate advising efforts. It will also allow for the development of a regularly updated graduation plan for each student, an improved degree audit system, and faculty and advisor portals. Life cycle deployment began in August 2015 and will conclude Summer 2016 with the advisement and financials modules.

**Proposed enhancements:** The following enhancements will assure that campus technology resources are being fully leveraged to increase graduation:

- i. Develop a Graduation Plan for every student within their first year and update each semester with an accurate graduation date.
- ii. Encode new degree audits with expanded functionality. (Accomplished)
- iii. Maintain accurate curricular pathway information & publications.
- iv. Ensure clearly articulated pathways between regionals & main campus. (Focus of current taskforce)

#### **Strategy 5: Re-establish a University-wide Early Warning System**

**Current Standing:** Early warning is one of the most effective strategies to enhance student academic success. UC. UC completed a pilot implementation of Starfish Early alert on our Blue Ash campus and with gateway math courses during 2015 -16. Plans in in place for a more comprehensive deployment in 2016-17 encompassing UC Clermont and additional gateway courses.

**Proposed Enhancements:** The following steps should be taken when expanding and re-establishing a campus-wide Early Warning system:

- i. Identify the capacity within the new SIS system to extend the reach of Starfish Early Alert increase student retention and success as well as student/faculty communication.
- ii. Embed early alert university-wide for key gateway courses and make it key to the culture of success.
- iii. Strategize a university-wide protocol for advisor response to early alert “flags.” This will be particularly important in classrooms containing students from multiple colleges (primarily Arts & Science courses).
- iv. Prepare faculty to understand their role as primary in students’ individual course success, compared with the advisors’ role to monitor the student’s overall academic success.
- v. Consider implementing mid-term grades and early-term grades as part of the early alert process.
- vi. Integrate with efforts of peer education, residence halls, and other student supports.
- vii. Enhance recently implemented intervention strategies for early warning students at the regional colleges.

## *Signature Initiative*

### **The UC Graduation Promise**

**Proposed Implementation:** Prospective college students and their parents want to know that students will have support and structure to graduate on time before choosing a university. Articulating this ongoing promise of partnership with students would be a positive culture shift at UC. Such a strategy was implemented with great success during Semester Conversion in 2011-2012.

The UC Graduation Promise would ensure that students will graduate on time if they:

- Develop and maintain an updated graduation plan with their advisors by the end of the first year.
- Complete at least 30 credit hours per year toward degree requirements.
- Plan graduation timelines based upon choice of major and academic programs.
- Receive academic advising each semester to verify on-track progression & planning.
- Register for classes during priority registration.
- Follow degree requirements.

Though the causality of this relationship has not yet been explored, it is also noteworthy that UC's retention rate for a first-time, full-time freshman seeking a baccalaureate degree who takes 15 hours or greater is significantly higher (85.9%) than for students who take less than 15 hours (79.8%). The difference is significantly greater for first-time, full-time students seeking associate degrees (70.7% vs. 52.6 %.) UC Blue Ash is already exploring offering certain groups a "complete in two years" program that requires students to sign a pledge/agreement that they will attend full-time and according to a set schedule for their program.

Implementation of this idea at the university level can begin in Fall Semester of 2016 after the establishment of the new degree audit and academic planning tools in PeopleSoft. It will also be contingent upon several of the recommended strategy enhancements included within this document.

## ***Financial Support and Literacy***

### ***Existing Strategies***

#### **Strategy 6: Address College Costs and Increase Affordability**

**Current standing:** Unmet financial need of undergraduate students at UC is the largest contributor to impediments in student retention and graduation success. Nearly 17,000 UC undergraduate students have unmet financial need based on their total college costs. The sum for those students reflects an overwhelming \$372M million. This is important to acknowledge because students' ability to persist in college is based largely upon financial factors.

In addition, UC continues to enroll a high percentage of Pell-eligible students (28%) for a research-extensive university. We have taken measures to keep costs as low as possible, including freezing tuition and fees for 6 or the last 8 years. Although our relative national ranking for cost is in the center of the "medium" range, we continue to be concerned with the student cost of college attendance and will continue to find means to make educational attainment at UC affordable.

**Proposed enhancements:** The following enhancements will further support improved affordability:

- i. The UC Foundation is working with the Office of Enrollment Management to establish the Student Need Scholarship Funds. Faculty Staff have funded the Red and Black Challenge and President Ono established Bowties – both directed at serving needy students. Fundraising for student need will be a continued strategy within the university's Third Century initiative
- ii. The university will continue to find resource efficiencies. This is part of our ongoing strategy to help keep student cost as low as possible. One example is the current proposal to close the university between the winter holidays and readjust new and future employee vacation benefits to save costs. Utility cost savings would also be significant.
- iii. The university will continue to direct expenditures toward those activities which most effectively support student success – advising, learning communities, pedagogical development in gateway courses.
- iv.

#### **Strategy 7: Reduce Textbook Costs**

##### **Reduce Textbook Costs**

**Current standing:** The University of Cincinnati is strongly committed to lowering the cost of textbooks and other learning resources for our students. UC has created a partnership led by the Provost's Office that includes our UC Faculty and Faculty Senate, Student Government, our bookstore partner (Follett), UC@IT, and the Division for Administration and Finance and is utilizing multiple strategies to reduce student spending on course materials. Overall, we see an opportunity to leverage new technology, open educational resources, and the

collective buying power of our students to reduce costs, improve delivery, and better serve student needs. Last year UC saved student more than \$2.2 million through a variety of strategies, including:

Rent-a-Text – University of Cincinnati Bookstores is in the sixth year of its Rent-A-Text Program, which provides savings up to 80 percent off the price of new textbooks. Last year the program saved students more than \$1.8 million as compared to purchasing new books. More than 24,100 books were rented, which was 28 percent of the total number of textbooks sold during the last academic school year.

Price Match Guarantee- If a student finds a lower price on an in-stock comparable condition textbook locally or online the UC Bookstores will match the price right at the register. While some restrictions apply, this program is showing great potential in continuing to reduce the cost of course materials to students.

Home-Grown E-Books – The Center for Excellence in eLearning is launching its first eTextbook Project. A group of 10 faculty from four different colleges or units – the College of Nursing, McMicken College of Arts and Sciences, UC Blue Ash College and Division of Professional Practice – will work throughout spring and summer to develop their own interactive textbooks using iBooks Author, avoiding the high cost of going through a publisher. The team will be supported by eight UC instructional designers and instructional technologists. UC also is partnering with The Ohio State University and the University of Oklahoma to identify a course taught on all three college campuses for the development and support of a shared e-book.

E-books – UC is negotiating with publishers to lower prices and include consideration for multi-year access to materials. This strategy is particularly effective for larger enrollment courses with a consumable required text such as a workbook for required homework. Savings for 2015-16 are estimated to exceed \$400,000

**Proposed enhancements:** Continued efforts including supporting a common reader platform.

## **Strategy 8: Coordinate Financial Services and Education for Students**

**Current standing:** The One Stop Student Service Centers serve as a resource to students seeking help with both financial aid and billing in addition to registration-based services. A financial literacy specialist was recently hired in the main campus One Stop Center. In addition, some outreach is being done (mostly via mass emails) by the Student Financial Aid Office to educate students in regards to Satisfactory Academic Progress expectations, loan aggregate limits, effects of failing to successfully complete classes, and other barriers to success. Any student that submits an application for an alternative loan (private loan through a bank or other lending institution) must complete an “alternative loan counseling” process. Historically speaking, alternative loans have a very high interest rate and are more likely to be defaulted on than federal student loans. UC provides outreach to prospective and confirmed

students, before they even get to UC, to help ensure they understand the types of aid available, what they need to do to secure that aid, and where to go if they have questions. We have also started seeking out current students who have an outstanding balance but still have remaining aid eligibility and are providing them with personalized, one-on-one financial aid advising. The focus of this is to make sure students are aware of all of the financial aid options available to them, and to help guide the students through the process required to secure that additional funding.

Although UC Blue Ash students receive services from the central Financial Aid Office, the college has recently developed a financial aid FAQ sheet to increase student, staff, and faculty awareness of basic issues. The college now includes financial aid presentations in its FYE courses. UC Clermont has also reorganized to a One Stop Model.

**Recent enhancements:** The steps below further facilitate coordination across integral service groups:

- i. Learning Communities, Orientation and First Year Experience classes are both be used as a resource to help educate students on billing/financial aid issues that are most likely to lead to a student being unable to complete their program.
- ii. An increase in financial aid staff allowing for more targeted outreach and other direct contact with students regarding any issues they are having with finalizing their financial aid and getting their bill paid. They are also using the “To do” list within our new student system to educate/advise students.
- iii. The One Stop Center has funded an Electronic Media students to create videos which better explain frequently misunderstood processes.
- iv. Incorporate education for students regarding managing room and board costs, credit card use, and other daily living financial management.

## ***Proposed Strategies***

### **Strategy 9: Increase Need- and Merit-based Funding<sup>4</sup>**

**Proposed Implementation:** Increasing the university’s institutional aid capacity (need and merit-based) will help UC not only attract and retain competitive, diverse students, but it will also help close the need gap, thereby increasing accessibility and opportunity for prospective and current students. Actions to be considered include:

- i. Financial assistance could be used as an incentive for “bread and butter” students (i.e. award “continuing student” scholarships to motivate students to achieve/maintain strong GPA’s).
- ii. Enhance diversity strategies

---

<sup>4</sup> This is a key strategy in UC’s Creating Our Third Century planning initiative.

- iii. Create academic achievement awards/scholarships for upper-class students.
- iv. Build on investment in scholarships for students in Gen-1, Honors, and National Merit programs.
- v. Grow scholarships and grants that help fill the unmet need gap that the majority of students experience.
- vi. Review utilization of current funding sources for student scholarships to determine if they are being used in the most effective manner.
- vii. Review the UC Institutional Aid portfolio to assess the need/merit balance and alignment with UC opportunities.

**The rationale for all of these has been built and provided to the UC Foundation. Fund Raising for student aid will be a cornerstone of the upcoming campaign.**

## *Signature Initiative*

### **Financial Literacy Coalition**

**Implementation:** A university-wide coalition to significantly increase the financial literacy of UC students has been established. The coalition is working toward this goal by developing programming which provides financial coaching, financial counseling, financial literacy education, and financial awareness to UC students. The coalition includes staff from: One Stop Student Services Center and One Stop Centers on the regional campuses, the Student Wellness Center, the Economics Center (the largest center of its kind, this center is focused on the financial literacy for the K-12 environment and is affiliated with UC), the Student Financial Aid Office, and the Bursar's Office. This coalition is:

- i. Coordinating resources that are currently available within each office.
- ii. Utilizing first year experience groups, learning communities, academic advisors, Greek life and other groups on campus to assist with student financial education.
- iii. Ensuring that students are receiving clear and consistent messages reaching as many students as possible.

The coalition is increasing the communication between key campus offices involved in student financial awareness and thus augmenting rather than duplicating efforts, resulting in resource savings that is being diverted to other enhancements in student financial literacy.

## *Curriculum and Culture*

### *Existing Strategies*

#### **Strategy 10: Improve Gateway Courses, Placement and DFW Grades**

**Current standing:** UC's "Great Gateways" initiative began in 2015 as a way to strategically enhance academic experiences common to the greatest number of our students. The program seeks to coordinate and establish lasting partnerships, develop financial and human resources through strategic investments, and as a community strengthen and build upon courses that are foundational to greater academic excellence and vital to the health of our university. This program coordinates pedagogical support, academic support, e-Learning support, and data analysis and collection to improve student outcomes in gateway courses. Last year the initiative provided funding and support for the following:

- A redesign of the Calculus and Applied Calculus sequences to accommodate flipped and semi-flipped learning experiences via a summer-long curriculum-design pilot.
- Redesigns/refinements of four Chemistry courses via a week-long course design that included sections in Organic Chemistry, Biochemistry, and Analytical Chemistry
- Conference attendance for three Biology faculty to redesign courses at the National Academies of Science Summer Institute to Improve Undergraduate Science Teaching
- A Graduate Assistant to support the collection, analysis, and reporting of student success data in Physics and other STEM areas (in direct support of Adrian Hall and Leigh Smith)
- Individual faculty consults for Calculus, including support for sections within the Langsam Active Learning Classroom.

DFW reports by class and section are available for all courses through the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Council and require the associate deans to provide a report of their strategies to improve student success.

UC Clermont's College Success Program (CSP) is designed to improve marginally prepared students' academic performance, course completion, term-to term persistence and year-to-year retention. A priority in participating in the program is given to the incoming matriculate student whose scores are below college-level in two to three areas (reading, writing, and mathematics). Students who actively participate in the program consistently outperform non-participants in GPAs, course completion rates, persistence and first retention rates.

**Current Enhancements:** To build upon these initiatives, we determined that much of the focus should be on Mathematics. These strategies are in various stages of development and monitored for efficacy:

- i. Focus on Mathematics, including the following:
  - Better prepare students for the math placement test so they are not taking it "cold."
  - Supplement or refine the UC Math Placement test so that it makes better distinctions for developmental course placement, particularly for the regional colleges.
  - Examine the developmental math courses leading to the college math requirement. In some cases students have to take too many semesters of developmental math before they are ready for college math. This is especially true at regional campuses. UC Blue Ash has formed a task force to revisit developmental course structures.
  - Consider expansion of summer bridge or other intensive instruction that might help students move to a higher level math course earlier.
  - Develop a student-friendly document on math success rates based on MPT scores to reinforce appropriate course and math resource utilization.
- ii. Identify strategies for other gateway courses, including the following:
  - Reading and writing enhancements as needed.
  - Enhance utilization of tools such as ALEX to implement just-in-time teaching of math alongside of science.
  - Expand the use of peer education models such as those used by our faculty in pilots for physics and biology.
  - Consider moving students into more appropriate STEM courses after first test or providing intensive supplemental instruction. Biology pilots similar to the math approach are currently underway. Resources will be necessary if this pilot is expanded beyond this year and/or to additional academic disciplines.
  - Coordinate annual meetings between administrators of our student support service offices, the vice provost for undergraduate affairs, CET&L, and the appropriate faculty and course coordinators for our critically large gateway courses. These meetings would serve to share knowledge and experience of success strategies and ensure that each course had addressed certain issues related to success.

## **Strategy 11: Expand Learning Communities**

**Current standing:** Learning Communities (LC) are curricular structures that enroll small groups of 15-23 students together into a cluster of related courses, forming an educational package. In addition to taking classes together, learning community students meet at pre-scheduled times either to study, work on team projects, or plan social and service related activities. Faculty, academic advisors, peer student leaders, and other invited content experts partner to create learning connections across classroom, experiential, and co-curricular contexts.

1. The Learning Communities program has demonstrated significant retention and course performance success for participating students. Expand participation in Learning Communities so that all baccalaureate students are in an LC or a similar curricular structure (for example, DAAP studios, CCM performance cohorts).  
Update: Enrollment in Learning Communities has grown to reach 63% of the first-year class with an additional 11% of students enrolled in studio or performance cohorts (CCM and DAAP) for a total of 74% of students engaged in small cohort learning structures. The primary focus area for remaining expansion is for students enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences.
  
2. Strengthen the role and alignment of the LC educational package for integrative learning purposes. This would include creating more connection of learning across the LC courses.  
Update: FYE&LC implemented improved faculty communication processes in 2015-16 and is in the formative stages of planning additional new strategies for enhanced faculty development, communication, and collaboration in order to strengthen integrative learning outcomes. Currently, students enrolled in Learning Communities in 15FS reported on their evaluation (2161 respondents) that the Learning Community strengthened their ability to connect what they are learning in one class to content of another class (70%) as well as to connect their current experience to longer-term goals (79%). Also relevant to integrated learning, students indicated that the LC helped them learn about and access enhancing experiences like research, study abroad, community service, or others (83%) and to reflect on their goals and how they will achieve them (84%). Overall, student satisfaction with their Learning Community experience is high, with 86% recommending the experience to incoming students.
  
3. Strengthen the role and alignment of the LC educational package to more specifically address student mastery of learning outcomes in gateway courses.  
Update: A tool for collecting student performance data in gateway courses has been developed, which has allowed us to begin examining the impact of packaging these courses into Learning Communities. Enrolling in STEM gateway courses as part of a Learning Community appears to have a substantial positive impact on student performance. For example, in Fall Semester 2015, 269 students with freshman classification enrolled in Biology I through their Learning Community. Of those, 55.7% (150 students) earned a grade of B or higher and 19.7% (53 students) earned a DWF grade. In contrast, 256 students with freshman classification enrolled in the course outside of any Learning Community. Of the non-LC freshman students only 31.6% (81 students) earned a B or higher grade and 41.8% (107 students) earned a DWF grade. Data is similar for other STEM courses including Calculus, Chemistry, and Anatomy as well as Psychology.
  
4. Explore the expansion of FYE to include Learning Communities on the regional campuses.  
Update: Blue Ash piloted Learning Communities in two areas in Fall 2015 with plans to continue in at least the Art program for Fall 2016.

## Strategy 12: Apply Analytics to Increase Success at Course and Program Levels

**Current standing:** We are actively using assessment data and tools to responsibly identify curricular opportunities for student success and improvement. This includes a) reviewing the placement of courses in the curriculum through the Cross College Committees (CCC); b) reviewing data in regards to student success in new semester-based curriculum and modifying programs as necessary (this is part of the program assessment work that begins in 2014-15); and c) considering use of classroom assessment techniques and early student course evaluations to help faculty improve course teaching.

UC Blue Ash is performing an extensive analysis of poor performing, non-returning, and non-completing students that involves mapping students' academic paths and course-taking patterns to identify specific course or program roadblocks.

**Proposed enhancements:** In addition, we expect to:

- i. Recommend implementation of mid-term grades in gateway courses to alert students of academic difficulty early in the term. (Approved by student Senate and in review by Faculty Senate).
- ii. Work carefully with the implementation of the new SIS to ensure no functionality or necessary data are lost regarding the connectivity of courses and the curriculum, student learning outcomes, and course attributes such as type of experiential learning or the degree to which a course addresses the GenEd outcomes.
- iii. Expand and improve the use of teaching evaluations by all students for all courses to have this data for course improvement and faculty development.

## Strategy 13: Strengthen General Education

**Current standing:** One of our important initiatives is to evaluate new semester-based GenEd options and strengthen as necessary. To do this we will use annual GenEd assessment data to evaluate student achievement of baccalaureate learning outcomes. This process takes place annually each spring. Last year we began a pilot to assess the program by using the American Association of College and Universities' Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) rubrics. That pilot was successful and is being expanded this year.

UC also began an effort to identify the need for, develop, and coordinate online offering of General Education courses to allow student to schedule courses efficiently while preventing duplication.

**Proposed enhancements:**

- UC is considering refining our GenEd offerings to provide heightened attention to diversity and inclusion. Faculty Senate is taking the lead on this initiative in partnership with UC students and the Office of Undergraduate Affairs.
- The College of Arts and Sciences (UC's largest college with among the lowest success measures is in the process of completing a thorough GenEd review.

## **Strategy 14: Increase Prior Learning Assessment and Alternative Course Credit**

**Current standing:** One of the most accessible ways for students to strategize for timely degree completion is by earning college credit for knowledge gained prior to arrival on campus or outside of the classroom experience. This year UC deployed a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) task force which issued a list of recommended actions to advance the university's means of evaluating and awarding credit through PLA. This initiative is primarily targeted to advance time-to-degree for adult learners. In addition, the amount of advanced standing that a new student brings to the university through advanced placement (AP), international baccalaureate (IB), post-secondary (PSEOP), and dual enrollment credit can reduce time-to-degree by up to a year.

**Updated Standing:** A small PLA-working group has convened to translate the information outlined in the original CCO document and PLA Task Force Report into tangible on-campus policies and processes. Key offices have been identified for the implementation of new PLA workflows, including the increase of departmental-developed exams and the implementation of a thorough Portfolio Assessment rubric and program. Specific details are provided below.

**Proposed Enhancements:** To increase the rate of students acquiring prior learning credits, we need to

### **1. Increase awards for PLA and other forms of alternative credit.**

**Update i:** There was a slight decrease in the rate of PLA advanced standing credits awarded between 14FS and 15FS; however, this number may be affected by the transition to a new student information system. Within the overall advanced standing population; however, many less-traditional PLA options did increase. These include PLA awards recognizing learning gained via "life experience," credit by exam, and "outside coursework."

### **2. Adopt a full implementation of the PLA Task Force Report recommendations**

**Update ii:** The PLA Task Force Report focused on several initiatives in advance of the State's most recent PLA Framework recommendations. UC has currently identified a single-stop, PLA processing policy. This proposed policy has been presented to the Academic Affairs Committee of Faculty Senate, Associate Deans and the full Senate – with endorsement. Departments will identify all PLA-eligible 1,000- and 2,000-level courses, as well as an appropriate PLA mechanism. A dedicated staff person has been proposed to coordinate all PLA applications, and the application process has been designed to require both degree-alignment confirmation with advising staff and faculty-development of assessment measures. The portal, which is slated to be live by Fall 2016 Semester, will promote all PLA-eligible courses, include an online application process, and allow for tracking of all advanced standing applications and student outcomes.

## 15: Reinforce a Culture of Connection, Community & Inclusion

1. Create virtual communities, celebrations and strong university connection for on-line students

**Update:** The Division of Student Affairs is updating all websites with current information, social media platforms that target on-line students and commuter students. For example, we're incorporating #UCYourStory, a passive program with short videos introducing co-curricular programs especially those designed to build community, Student Affairs staff, and ) and information such as LGBTQ stories (blogs) to help students connect with what is happening in identity based units such as the LGBTQ Center. All websites are also being updated in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act to provide accessibility for all students, faculty and staff.

2. Create gathering space and programs to enhance social inclusion for non-traditional or non-residential students such as a commuter or veteran student lounge

**Update:** A proposal has been completed to submit to the Vice President for Student Affairs requesting a standalone Commuter and Off-Campus Services department. FS16 is the proposed timeline for identification of an appropriate space for a Veterans lounge space on campus. The lounge spaces in the campus Student Life building have been renovated to create multifunctional spaces for study and/or group interaction.

3. Per semester events offered by academic departments to specifically welcome students to the community and meet faculty informally

**Update:** The Division of Student Affairs hosts student welcomes each Fall semester for each of the following identity groups: Asian, Hispanic/Latino/a, LGBTQ, and African American students. Currently, there are two additional receptions; one for Black Graduate Students and one for Hispanic/Latino students to connect with faculty and staff. Individual colleges host welcoming events at the beginning of each semester students to provide opportunities for informal faculty engagement.

**Proposed enhancements:** Further efforts to reinforce this culture should

- i. Develop an online "who to call" list that is easily accessible to all front-line faculty and staff in an effort to reduce the feel of bureaucracy.
- ii. Equip parents of first generation students with the information they need to support college completion of a first generation college student.
- iii. Ensure sufficient resourcing of Testing Services, Veterans and Disability Services.

## ***Proposed Strategies Update***

### **Strategy 16: Develop a Collaborative Peer Education Initiative**

**Update:** The Peer Education Network was created in Fall 2015 under the leadership of the Directors of First Year Experience and Academic Excellence and Support Services. The mission of the Peer Education Network is to improve student learning, retention, progress towards degree, academic satisfaction, and similar student success measures utilizing peer education.

To date, PEN has conducted a fact finding scan of peer education activity and authored an internal white paper on the state of peer education at the University of Cincinnati, and begun development of selected sharable resources. Moving forward, PEN will:

- Continue ongoing strategic planning
- Develop a structure for engaging all peer education supervisors across the university to ensure consistent use of high quality practices and to generate efficiencies and innovations across the university
- Expand and maintain a web-based resource repository (framework currently in development)
- Create an annual scan of peer education activity at UC
- Develop an annual, university-level reporting and assessment tool for peer education
- Establish cross-unit professional development programs for faculty, staff, and peer educators
- Prepare presentations and papers for submission to peer-reviewed journals and conferences
- Submit proposals to external funders

Host local and national workshops and institutes on peer education

## ***Signature Initiative***

### **Collaborative for Student Success**

**Proposed Implementation in Progress:** Collaborative for Student Success models, wherein several connected support centers are aligned via shared planning, space or resources in order to effectively and collaboratively promote student success, are increasingly common on university campuses. These centers generally make resources more accessible and visible to students, improve efficiencies and facilitate staff-to-staff communication about individual students and university-wide initiatives to assure that services are cohesive and intentional.

UC's proposed Collaborative for Student Success will establish new partnerships between offices in Student Affairs, Enrollment Management, and Academic Affairs to help all undergraduates to thoughtfully integrate their academic and career planning, coursework and learning, experiential learning, and curricular and co-curricular experiences from the time they are accepted to UC through graduation. By coordinating the efforts of UC's professional advising centers, advising resources, academic support services, analytics on student success and course-based improvements, the Center for Student Success will provide infrastructure, coordination, and leadership to more fully realize the vision for UC's signature undergraduate experience called Integrated Core Learning (ICL).

The impact of many of these programs is outlined within this document, as is their need for expansion and increased coordination across programs. Fully resourcing the Success Center will not only enhance the operations of these offices, but help to mitigate some of their current challenges. In addition, UC administrators will investigate which additional resources will prove integral to the establishment of a Center for Student Success; these may include life skills and financial literacy mentoring, new peer education programming, and experiential learning supports, among others.

To accomplish these changes, the following steps will be necessary and are in progress:

- i. Develop a common vision and guiding principles for all of the offices and activities that support student success.
- ii. The Center for Pathways Advising and Student Success (CPASS) has been created and is being staff – This will be a cornerstone of the Collaborative
- iii. More fully resource and staff proven academic support offices such as Learning Assistance Center programming (Math and Science Support Center, Writing Center, Tutoring, Coaching, etc.).
- iv. UC is the process of merging our Co-op and Experiential Placement Services (ProPEL) with Career Services to leverage the talents of both team to enhance Career Education and Readiness.
- v. Continue to build collaborative connections across academic support services in the colleges including the regional campuses and other university units, as appropriate.

## ***Conclusion***

This suite of 16 existing strategies and their proposed enhancements are specific areas in which the university can make progress toward more sharply targeting our student persistence and graduation rate goals. Some of these strategies are related and interdependent. Among them are national best-practices, many of which have been proven to be successful within the university but may need to be expanded to reach more students. In addition, the three signature initiatives are “big ideas” that can help us truly move the dial on college completion. It seems we are very much on the right track with our efforts around retention and persistence. In most cases, these strategies simply need to be prioritized and resourced for implementation.

## ***IV. Further Investigation***

---

***Areas of Inquiry to  
Promote Completion***

---

## IV. Further Investigation

The following ideas and strategies require further investigation before specific implementation strategies can be recommended.

### 1. Review University Policies to Better Support Completion

This task force recommends assembling a reviewing body to explore policies that could improve student degree progression. Considerations may include review of grade replacement, “fresh start,” academic standing, course withdrawal limitation, late course additions, and graduation policies. This review must be conducted with respect to the Student Information System implementation timeline. With system deployment work can begin in Fall 2016

- Consider whether limiting “W” grades to no more than five per student would enhance student success and progression.
- Investigate success and applicability of college models in which grades are not formally transcribed in a student’s first year.
- Mid-Term Grades
- Grade Replacement/Forgiveness
- Administrative withdrawal strategies

### 2. Review Effectiveness of Supports for Distance Learning Students

Distance learners are a student population with similar needs for academic support as other students. Because most do not spend time on-campus, however, we must determine how to effectively meet their needs in a distance format. This population includes the following demographics:

- Average age is 35 years old (vs. 23 for non-distance learners)
- 55% graduate students and 44% undergraduates
- 24% students of color
- 83% female and 13% male
- Majority are part-time students (this is 15% for non-distance learners)

Access to appropriate student services, advising, and academic services and resources should be planned with this population in mind.

**Status:** Task Force Charged and almost ready to present recommendations

### 3. Identify the impact of university processes and supports on completion rates of unique populations, including international students, transfer and transition students, veterans, adult learners, under-represented minorities, first generation students, and students with disabilities.

4. **Identify discreet behaviors that lead to students being successful and graduating on time**, such as meeting with an advisor to develop a plan, meeting regularly to review that plan and make change, etc. Determine how those behaviors can be rewarded or incentivized to get more students to do them. Learn more about groups of students that are not doing what they should (in terms of securing financial aid, paying their bill on time, etc.) so that we can identify ways to help.
5. **Identify which UC student supports are having the greatest impact on student success and completion.** SIS and Blackboard analytics being explored to determine best approach.
6. **Provide support through mentoring in the development of “life management skills.”** Students often do not have or exhibit the management skills that are critical to accessing the resources or information they need to achieve their short and long term goals. In many cases, prior to arriving on campus their lives have been managed by parents or, as for students who are first generation college students, they have had limited opportunities to acquire the necessary skills. It’s often assumed that college students are equipped with the foundational competencies needed to be independent and successful in a completely new environment.

#### 7. **Learning Portfolio Model as a Signature UC Experience**

The current University Honors Program model for electronic Learning Portfolios could become a signature aspect of every UC undergraduate’s educational experience. Portfolios are used to help students make meaning of their education and thoughtfully craft their educational experience to prepare for “what comes next,” ensuring the academic experience is connected to and constructed with a clear goal or vision for after college. This is an as-yet unrealized goal of the Integrated Core Learning (ICL) signature model for undergraduate education at UC.

Learning Portfolios capture personal, curricular and co-curricular experiences that uniquely and richly describe each individual student. They demonstrate student overall educational and career goals as well as plans for experiential learning, course selection, academic support, co-curricular activities, advising, etc.

There are multiple free portfolio tools available to students online via Weebly, Wix, Google and others. Student URL addresses and passwords for these can be stored in a university database or student information system. Faculty mentoring would also be a key strategy to help deploy the reflective learning aspects of this initiative. This “big idea” is powerful, and yet significantly resource intensive in advising time. It requires the lowest possible advisor caseloads to accomplish.

## ***V. Workforce Development Priorities***

---

***UC and Ohio's Workforce***

---

## V. Workforce Development Priorities

The University of Cincinnati has been a globally recognized frontrunner in the development of workforce-ready college graduates over the past 110 years. The Cooperative Education (co-op) program was started at UC by Dean Herman Schneider in 1906. Today, UC facilitates in excess of 5,800 co-op work terms annually with more than 1,000 Ohio employers. The University is investing considerable resources into making experiential learning opportunities such as co-op, internships, undergraduate research, practica and clinical experiences available to all students enrolled at the University regardless of their major. The University is also launching cross-disciplinary UC Forward courses offered as multidisciplinary projects designed to create graduates prepared to apply integrated knowledge to solve today's problems. UC's cutting edge programs in service learning, entrepreneurship, and global learning initiatives prepare students that are technically and culturally ready to enter the workforce.

The State of Ohio's workforce development priorities and needs are categorized by the JobsOhio key industries and business functions. In 2014-15, UC graduated almost 11,000 students with undergraduate degrees, graduate and professional degrees and certificates, which include significant feeders to every one of the JobsOhio key industries and business functions. According to a 2012-13 survey of graduating seniors, 49% were headed for employment (45% full-time), 23% were planning graduate or professional school or post-baccalaureate coursework and 2% were planning military service or volunteer activity such as the Peace Corps. Among those planning to work full-time, 13% were headed to employment within a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) area and 79% of students who reported accepting full-time employment said the position was related to his/her respective major. As of the deadline to apply for graduation, 24% were seeking employment. Many UC graduates qualify for jobs across multiple JobsOhio industry categories and regional in demand occupations:

Strategic industry categories: 1) Bio Health, 2) Finance, Insurance, and IT, 3) Advanced Energy, 4) Consumer Products, Brand Development, and Creative Services, 5) Food Processing and Agriculture, and 6) Advanced Manufacturing, Polymers, Automotive, and Aerospace.

Regional in demand occupations: 1) Engineering (Chemical, Electrical, Computer, Civil and Mechanical), 2) Design (Public Relations Specialist, Graphic Design), 3) Business (Accounting, Management, HR, IT, Marketing), 4) Health Care (Nurse Practitioners, Nursing), 5) Construction (Construction Management, Civil Engineers), and 6) Physical Science (Chemists).

These initiatives have been supported by three successive Ohio Means Co-op and Internship (OMIC) grants having a total budget exceeding \$3 million. The grants have allowed the University of Cincinnati to serve as a lead institution in work force development in the SW Corner of Ohio. The grants have allowed the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, Xavier University, The College of Mount Saint Joseph, Rio Grande College and University, Shawnee State University, and Great Oaks to share and develop best practices in workforce development.

The University has over the past two years invested significant resources in the development of more effective Career Education Pathways. In the summer of 2015 the Office of the Provost charged a cross campus committee to develop more "Effective and Expressed Career Pathways" that allow students build a career ladder all the way from admission to graduation, and successful transition to a professional career. The Career Pathways plan is expected to be developed by the end of summer semester 2016.

In the fall of 2015 the University implemented a structure in which the Lindner College of Business established its own Career Services and Experiential Learning Office having the objective to integrate classroom learning more effectively with co-op and internships.

Two regional colleges – UC Blue Ash and UC Clermont - contribute significantly to development of the Ohio workforce. Together, the colleges offer nearly 30 applied or technical associate degrees that prepare students for employment in areas, such as manufacturing engineering, information technology, electronic media, as well as in a host of health professions, including but not limited to nursing, radiologic technology, dental hygiene, health information systems, medical assisting, and emergency medical services. Other opportunities requiring shorter length education and training to contribute to the Ohio workforce in health care are offered by the regional campuses. For example, one year certificates can be obtained in paramedic education, medical assisting, and surgical assisting. Other opportunities that can be obtained in one semester or less include state tested nurse aide training, pharmacy technician, phlebotomy, EKG, splinting and casting, EMT-Basic, First Responder, and CPR/First Aid.

Through stackable certificates and pipeline programs outlining pathways from workforce training and certificates to advanced degrees in the various health care areas that have been identified as a need in the Greater Cincinnati metro area, the regional campuses are strategically located and equipped to produce graduates to contribute to the workforce. Regional campuses offer short-term certificates in areas such as accounting that can be used to qualify immediately for jobs and also count toward associate degree programs. Two online one year post associate degree certificates, Physician Practice Management and Healthcare Privacy and Security, will provide curriculum to prepare students to take the CPPM and CHPS credentials. The Physician Practice Management certificate prepares students in managing a physician practice for revenue cycle, compliance regulations, human resources, health information and general business processes. The Privacy and Security certificate is designed to prepare students to implement, administer comprehensive privacy and security programs in all types of healthcare organizations. In addition, the new project to develop the Martin Luther King/Interstate 71 interchange is anticipated to bring 6,000 new jobs to Uptown Cincinnati, mostly in health care.

## ***VI. Appendices***

---

***University Undergraduate Student Profile  
Retention and Graduation Rate Data  
Additional Enrollment Data***

---

## Appendix A: University Undergraduate Student Profile All Campuses

University Student Profile.

Fall 2015

Student Demographic	Entering		Returning		Transfer		Total	
	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total
Total	6331	100.0%	24791	100.0%	2096	100.0%	33218	100.0%
Enrolled Part Time	301	4.8%	6010	24.2%	818	39.0%	7129	21.5%
Not Degree/Certificate Seeking			1909	7.7%	36	1.7%	1945	5.9%
Financial Need - Pell Eligible	2017	31.9%	6598	26.6%	767	36.6%	9382	28.2%
Remedial Education Needs	2026	32%	7437.3	30%	440	21%	9965	30%
Female	3129	49.4%	12774	51.5%	1267	60.4%	17170	51.7%
Male	3202	50.6%	12017	48.5%	829	39.6%	16048	48.3%
Under 18	240	3.8%	952	3.8%	2	0.1%	1194	3.6%
Age 18-24	5965	94.2%	19099	77.0%	1184	56.5%	26248	79.0%
Age 25 and Older	126	2.0%	4740	19.1%	910	43.4%	5776	17.4%
Ohio Resident	5669	89.5%	21867	88.2%	1548	73.9%	29084	87.6%
High School-to-College Factors								
Average High School GPA	3.3		3.3		3.1		3.3	
Average ACT or SAT	24.3		24.4		23.0		24.2	
Race / Ethnicity								
<i>American Indian / Alaskan Native</i>	12	0.2%	53	0.2%	5	0.2%	70	0.2%
<i>Asian</i>	198	3.1%	732	3.0%	58	2.8%	988	3.0%
<i>African American /Black</i>	659	10.4%	2071	8.4%	257	12.3%	2987	9.0%
<i>Hispanic</i>	202	3.2%	662	2.7%	79	3.8%	943	2.8%
<i>International</i>	183	2.9%	965	3.9%	73	3.5%	1221	3.7%
<i>Native Hawaiian/ other Pacific Islander</i>	6	0.1%	25	0.1%	5	0.2%	36	0.1%
<i>Multi-racial</i>	192	3.0%	624	2.5%	54	2.6%	870	2.6%
<i>White</i>	4519	71.4%	18205	73.4%	1451	69.2%	24175	72.8%
<i>Race/ethnicity not reported</i>	360	5.7%	1454	5.9%	114	5.4%	1928	5.8%

## Appendix B: Retention and Graduation Rates

### Retention and Graduation Rates Entering Cohort Year 2003 to 2014

#### Uptown Baccalaureate Seeking

Entering Cohort	Adjusted Cohort	Retained			Graduation Rate		
		1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4 year	5 year	6 year
2014	4,578	88.3%					
2013	4,429	86.2%					
2012	4,105	84.6%	76.0%				
2011	4,242	85.6%	76.9%	72.5%	29.5%		
2010	3,870	84.7%	76.6%	72.8%	31.6%	59.9%	
2009	3,618	84.5%	76.5%	70.9%	28.9%	59.6%	64.7%
2008	3,144	84.6%	77.4%	72.2%	28.0%	59.8%	64.9%
2007	3,528	82.9%	74.3%	70.0%	25.0%	57.5%	63.4%
2006	3,120	82.0%	73.8%	69.6%	23.8%	55.2%	62.1%
2005	3,114	80.0%	71.2%	66.4%	22.2%	51.7%	58.6%
2004	3,005	78.7%	70.0%	64.3%	21.3%	49.0%	55.7%
2003	2,763	77.5%	68.2%	64.7%	20.3%	48.8%	54.9%

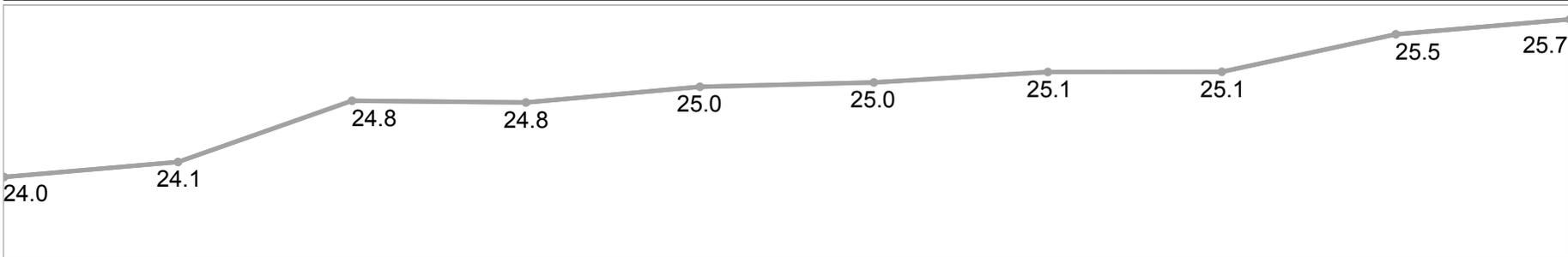
**Blue Ash Associates Seeking**

<b>Entering Cohort</b>	<b>Adjusted Cohort</b>	<b>Retention 1 year</b>	<b>3 Year Graduation</b>
<b>2014</b>	1,158	64.3%	
<b>2013</b>	921	61.3%	
<b>2012</b>	928	59.1%	12.3%
<b>2011</b>	926	54.5%	8.6%
<b>2010</b>	933	60.2%	8.8%
<b>2009</b>	807	58.0%	11.0%
<b>2008</b>	589	61.5%	9.7%
<b>2007</b>	504	56.5%	7.7%
<b>2006</b>	484	61.2%	11.8%
<b>2005</b>	499	61.1%	8.8%
<b>2004</b>	433	58.4%	8.5%
<b>2003</b>	451	63.2%	10.9%

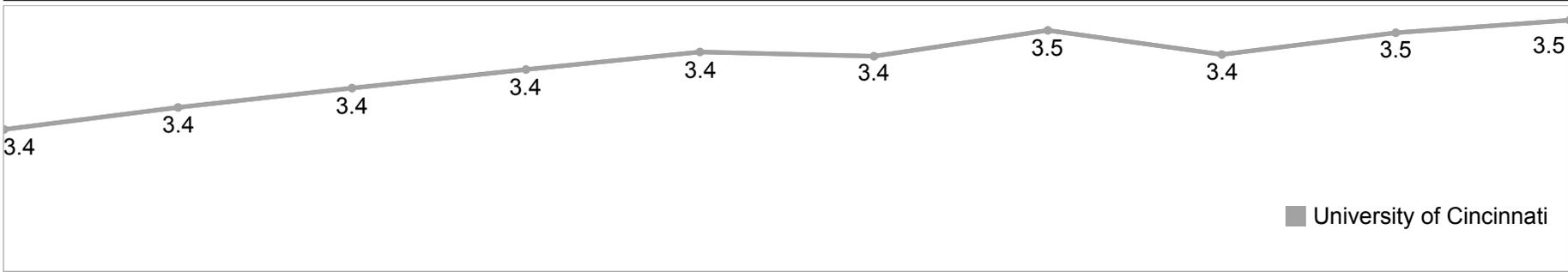
**Clermont Associates Seeking**

<b>Entering Cohort</b>	<b>Adjusted Cohort</b>	<b>Retention 1 year</b>	<b>3 Year Graduation</b>
<b>2014</b>	549	59.9%	
<b>2013</b>	668	56.4%	
<b>2012</b>	645	57.1%	19.1%
<b>2011</b>	732	53.3%	15.2%
<b>2010</b>	775	60.6%	16.6%
<b>2009</b>	773	56.1%	16.6%
<b>2008</b>	666	63.7%	15.9%
<b>2007</b>	556	60.4%	14.6%
<b>2006</b>	481	59.0%	15.0%
<b>2005</b>	513	62.0%	15.5%
<b>2004</b>	381	64.8%	16.5%
<b>2003</b>	408	61.8%	19.6%

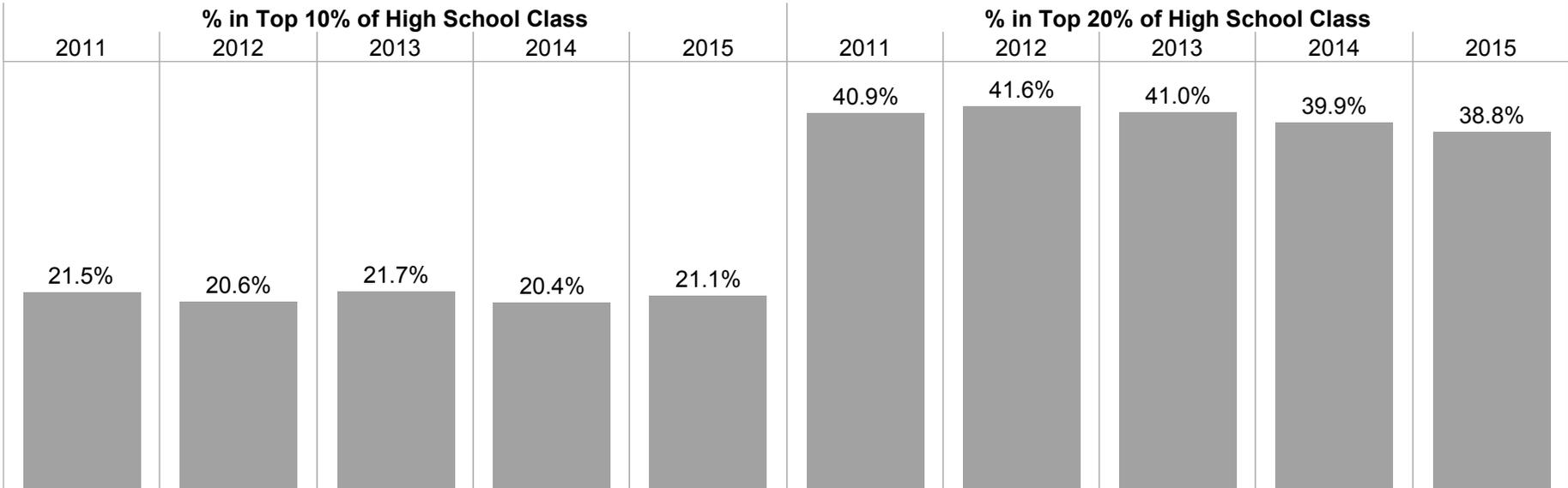
 **University of Cincinnati**  
**First-Time Full-Time Baccalaureate Degree Seeking Students**  
**Average ACT Score**



**Average High School GPA**

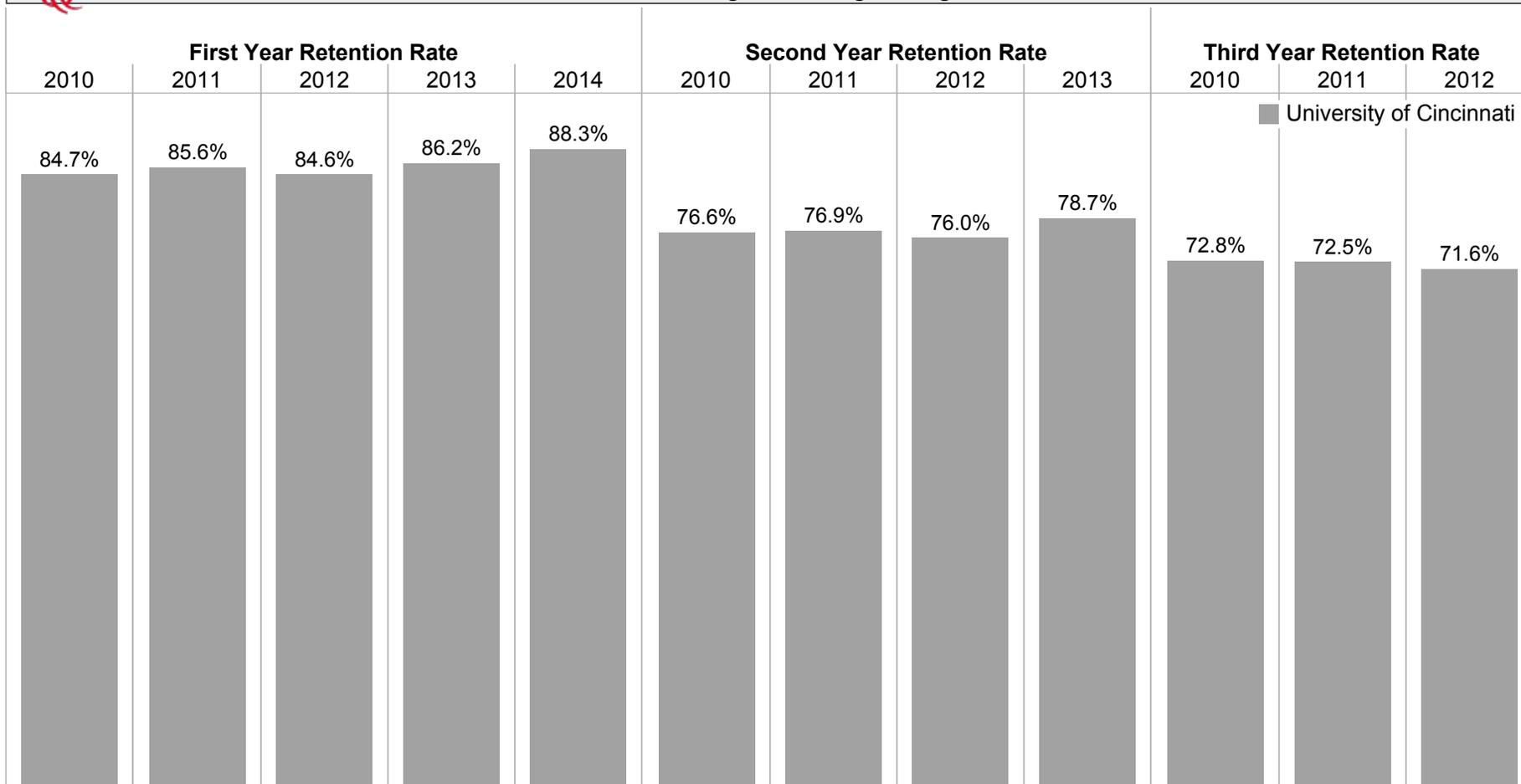


**Percent of Students in Top 10% and 20% of High School Class**





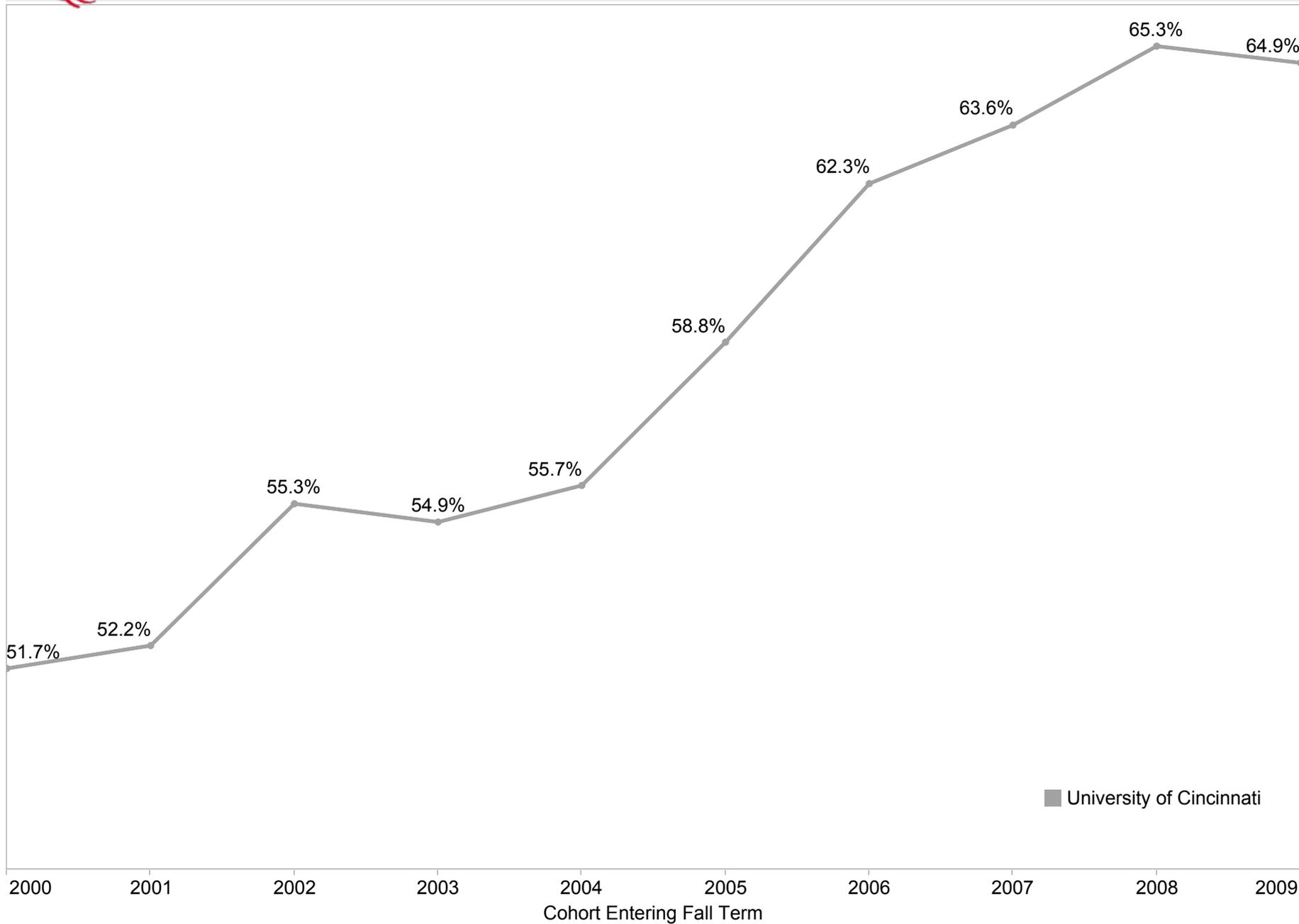
**University of Cincinnati  
First-Time Full-Time Baccalaureate Degree Seeking Undergraduates Retention Rates**



		2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>University of Cincinnati</b>	First Year Retention Rate	80.0%	82.0%	82.9%	84.6%	84.5%	84.7%	85.6%	84.6%	86.2%	88.3%
	Second Year Retention Rate	71.2%	73.8%	74.3%	77.4%	76.5%	76.6%	76.9%	76.0%	78.7%	
	Third Year Retention Rate	66.4%	69.6%	70.0%	72.2%	70.9%	72.8%	72.5%	71.6%		



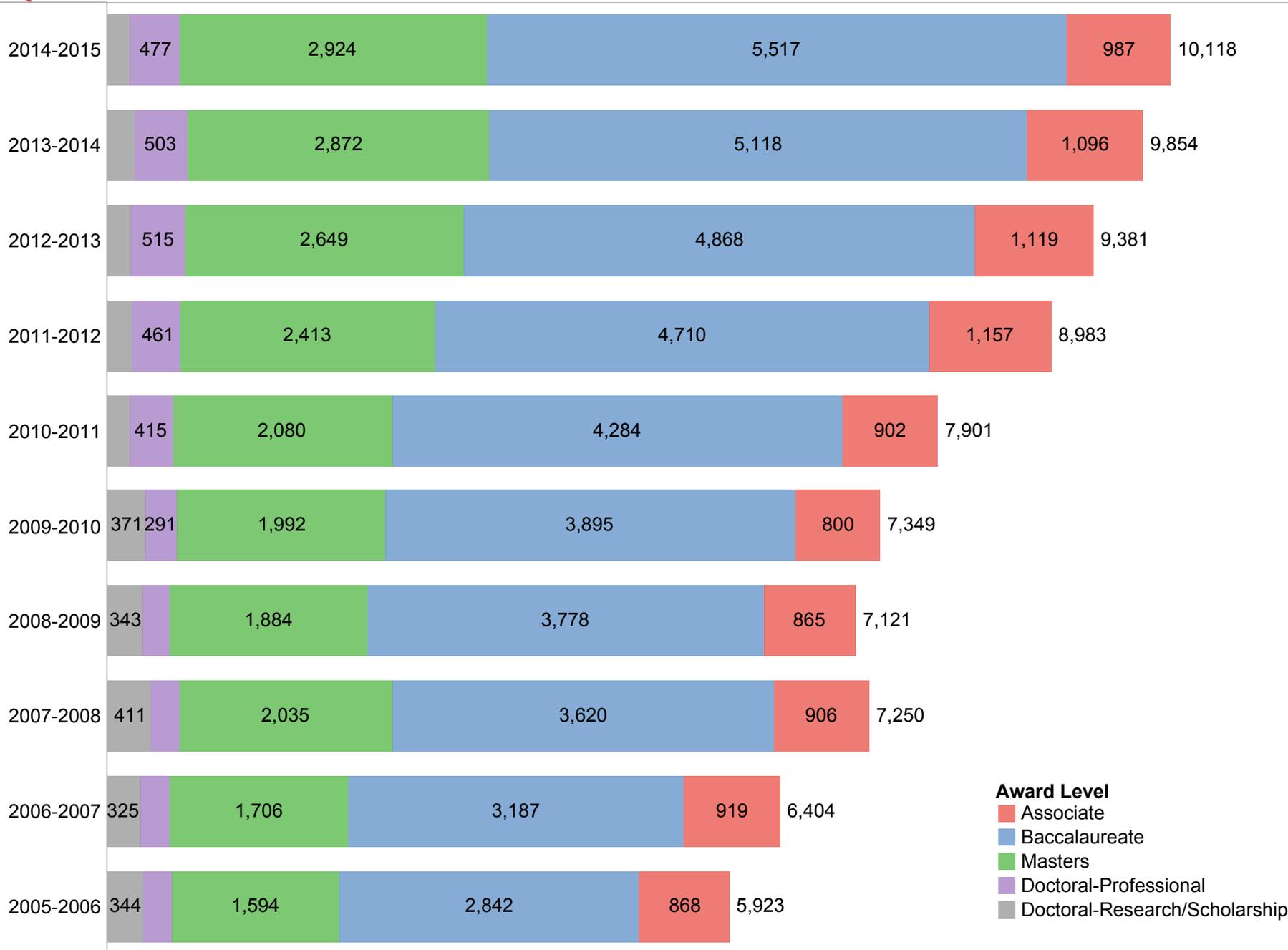
### University of Cincinnati First-Time Full-Time Degree Seeking Undergraduates 6 Year Graduation Rate



■ University of Cincinnati



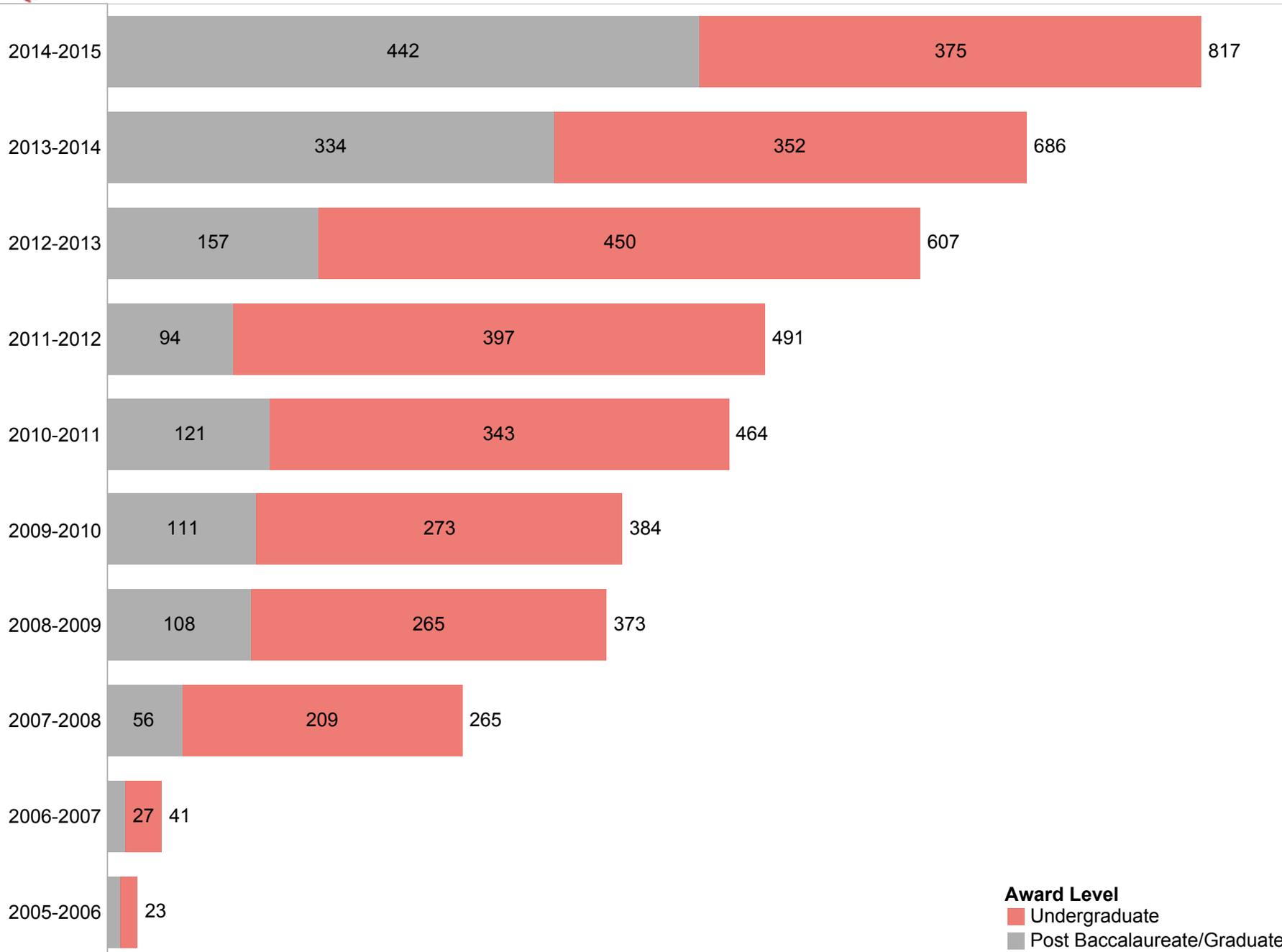
### University of Cincinnati Degrees Awarded



**Award Level**  
■ Associate  
■ Baccalaureate  
■ Masters  
■ Doctoral-Professional  
■ Doctoral-Research/Scholarship



**University of Cincinnati  
Certificates Awarded**



**Award Level**  
■ Undergraduate  
■ Post Baccalaureate/Graduate