

Integrated Strategy for Undergraduate Retention, Success, and Preparation for the 21st Century

A team of senior administrators and faculty at the University at Albany worked together to develop an integrated strategy to provide undergraduate students with a rigorous and multifaceted intellectual experience. This strategy was developed with careful attention to the characteristics of the institution's undergraduate population, 45% of whom are first-generation students and half of whom come from families whose annual incomes are below the national median. Members of this team come from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, bringing a variety of perspectives to transforming the undergraduate academic experience and they worked with key campus units to improve students' chances of academic success and enhanced well-being. This strategy included:

Undergraduate Research: Jeanette Altarriba, Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education and Professor, Psychology (jaltarriba@albany.edu)

The development of a unified strategy to promote undergraduate research, leveraging departmental excellence and showcasing undergraduate research as a pathway to inquiry and post-graduate success.

General Education: Rick Fogarty, Ph.D. Associate Dean, General Education and Associate Professor, History (rfogarty@albany.edu)

A focused program that helps ensure timely graduation, particularly for transfer students; a UAlbany signature requirement, "Challenges for the 21st Century;" and an innovative approach to general education competencies (advanced writing, oral discourse, information literacy, and critical thinking) taught within every major to help students, regardless of major, graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary for life, work, and citizenship.

Student Engagement: Linda Krzykowski, Ph.D., Assistant Vice Provost and Clinical Professor, Business (lkrzykowski@albany.edu)

The creation of a Student Engagement Office, which then developed Living-Learning Communities, freshman seminars, and other high-impact educational practices, and a coordinated strategy to support transfer students through their successful transition to a research university, which included collaboration by all areas of Undergraduate Education leadership.

Advising Services Center: JoAnne Malatesta, Ph.D., Assistant Vice Provost (jmalatesta@albany.edu)

A move toward a comprehensive four-year advising model connecting students with a consistent advisor throughout their undergraduate career, in addition to departmental advisement and mentorship once they declare a major, and a strategic realignment of our university-wide advising center to include an early warning analytics system and significant enhancements to campus-wide information sharing systems.

Writing and Critical Inquiry: Robert Yagelski, Ph.D., Associate Vice Provost and Professor, Educational Theory and Practice (ryagelski@albany.edu)

A new initiative to introduce first-year undergraduates to college-level intellectual inquiry with an emphasis on academic writing that is intended to promote the development of essential analytical thinking skills as well as student self-efficacy and well-being.