

Academic and Student Affairs Collaboration in First Year Programs

Kristin Michael Woods, Ph.D.

Director, Student Success and Retention

Deirdre Bucher Heistad, Ph.D.

Director, Undergraduate Studies

First Year Programs

Implementation Timeline

Fall 2008	Gardner Institute self-study
Fall 2009	First Year Council
Fall 2011	First-Year Cornerstone First-Year Peer Mentoring Program Mapworks early intervention system
Fall 2012	First-Year Only (FYO) general education courses
Fall 2015	UNI NOW extended orientation program Transfer-Only Course Embedded Peer Mentoring Program
Spring 2016	Success Coaching Program Humanities Supportive Seminars
Summer 2016	Summer Bridge

First Year Initiatives

Curriculum

First-Year Cornerstone a year-long general education course designed to satisfy both the writing and oral communication requirements within UNI's LAC.

First-Year Only (FYO) Liberal Arts Core courses ranging from Math in Decision Making to Religions of the World.

Mapworks

UNI utilizes the Mapworks system to assess student perceptions of their transition to college. The survey helps identify the specific issues facing out students, ranging from homesickness and study habits to financial worries and academic preparedness.

Course Embedded Peer Mentoring Program

The peer mentors help build community within the required general education classroom and mentor first-year students, the goal being that first-year students feel that they have ready access to a helpful peer role model, develop a connection to the UNI community, and identify appropriate campus resources and opportunities that contribute to their educational experience.

First Year Initiatives

More recently...

Transfer-Only Peer Mentoring Program

UNI NOW

Success Coaching

Supportive Seminars in Humanities

First Year Program Growth

Preliminary results:

Since the program's inception in fall 2011, the retention rate of students enrolled in one of these courses has been 6 - 8% higher as compared to those students who did not enroll in a first-year only (FYO) section.

2011-2012  **2015-2016**

9

65

First-Year Only sections

11

67

FYO peer mentors

13%

85%

Freshmen enrolled in at least one FYO course

New initiatives

2

Transfer-only sections with peer mentors

4

Success Coaches

12

Supportive Seminars for Humanities

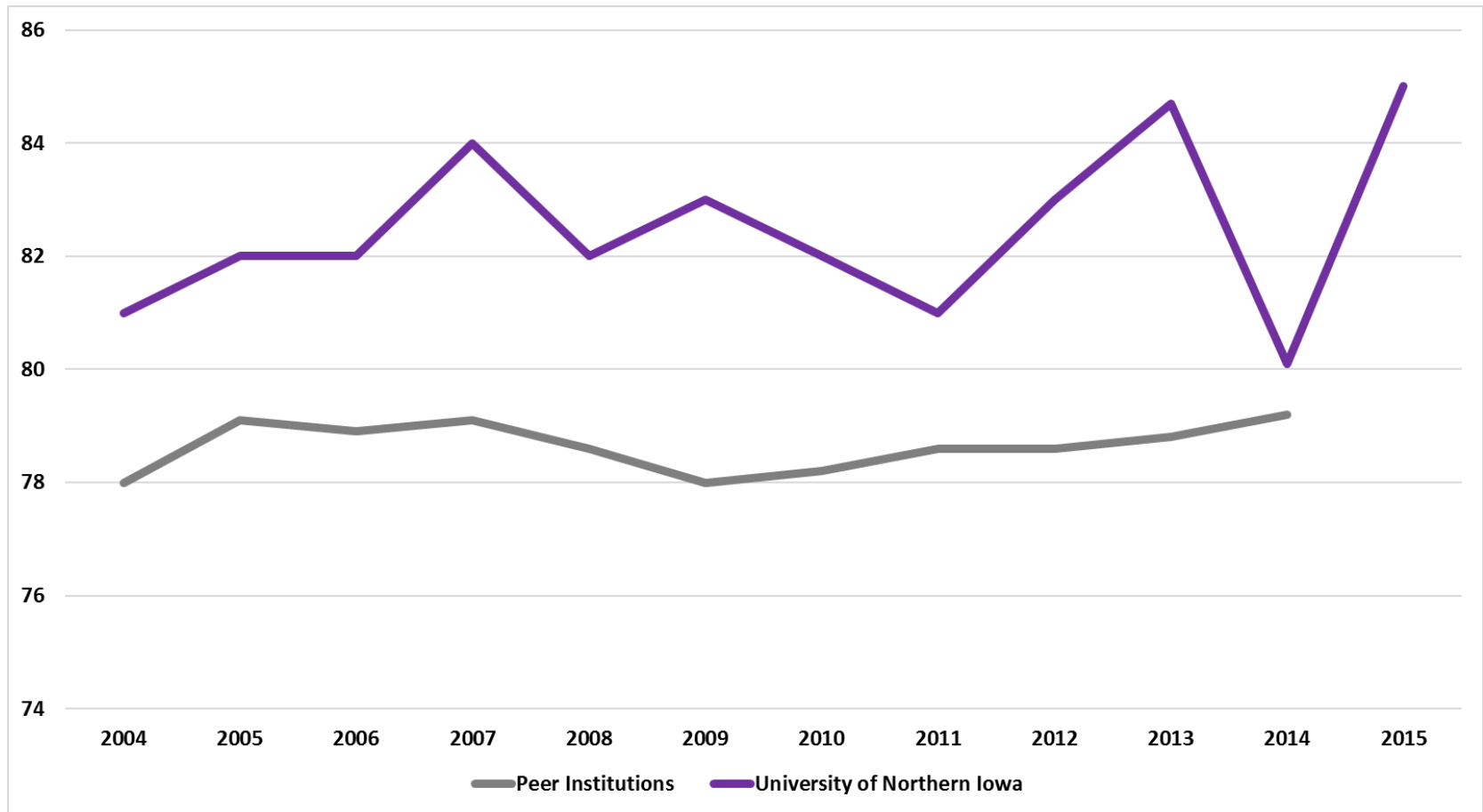
Measuring Success

- **First-Year Student Impact**
 - Peer mentors helped them with accessing campus resources (70.1%) and campus opportunities (65.4%), and helped them “often” or “a lot” with study skills (59.6%), and making connections with professors (60.2%).
- **Faculty Feedback**
 - “Meeting with them [the peer mentors], hearing their opinions, having them be the “voice” of the students, that all helps me learn to do my job more effectively.”
 - “The first-year experience program and the peer mentors are the best things to have happened to my teaching in the past 10 years.”
- **Peer Mentor Feedback**
 - “I loved getting to know so many students, helping them adjust to the college experience, lead class activities, and work with such a great and knowledgeable professor!”

Measuring Success

- **Graduation outcomes**
 - Cornerstone 4-year graduation rate over 5% higher than a comparison group
- **Retention outcomes**
 - FYO students retained at a rate 6 – 8% higher than other first-year students
- **Student learning**
 - FYO students had significantly higher perceived communication skills as compared to other first-year students ($p < .05$)
 - Perceived communication skills significantly predicted first-year retention ($p < .01$)
- **National recognition**
 - Outreach from other universities
 - Publications and conference presentations

Retention Outcomes



Select publications related to First-Year Initiatives at UNI

Heistad, D., Chatham-Carpenter, A., Moser, K., & Woods, K. "Educating with purpose: An integrated communication model for first-year student success." In T. Vakos (Ed.), *Educationally Effective Practices within the First-Year Seminar*. Columbia, SC: National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition. (FORTHCOMING)

Heistad, D., Moser, K., & Woods, K. "Meeting Students Where They Are: A Practical Guide to Embedding Retention Initiatives in the General Education Classroom." In J. McLaughlin (Ed.) *Building Bridges for Student Success: A Sourcebook for Colleges and Universities*. Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE). Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma. Can be retrieved from <https://csrde.ou.edu/sourcebook/>. 2016

Chatham-Carpenter, A. & Heistad, D. "Cornerstone: An experiment in interdisciplinarity and community." *UNIVERSITAS*, 10. Retrieved from <https://www.uni.edu/universitas/article/cornerstone-narrative-followed-contributions>. 2015

Chatham-Carpenter, A., Heistad, D., Licari, M., Moser K. & Woods K. (in alphabetical order). "Creating classroom communities: Faculty & peer mentor collaboration in first-year only classes." In S. Whalen (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 10th National Symposium on Student Retention, Louisville, Kentucky* (pp. 73-84). Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma. 2014

Questions?

Deirdre Bucher Heistad, Ph.D.

Director, Undergraduate Studies

d.heistad@uni.edu

Kristin Woods, Ph.D.

Director, Student Success and Retention

kristin.woods@uni.edu