Summary of the Charge. The goal of the President’s Retention (and Graduation) Task Force is to make recommendations to increase the number of UHD’s First Time in College (FTIC) students that persist and graduate. The President’s charge is summarized in the four bullets below. The focus of the fall semester has been on the first charge. We have also started working on the second and third charge based on the expertise of the group and some of the information we have uncovered during the inventory. Our goal will be to continue to work on the second and third charge, along with the last charge, during the spring semester. Working on the inventory led to some early conclusions about the importance of the cohort model. In addition, we have a great number of initiatives at UHD that are important for retention and it is important that we keep moving forward on those as planned while we simultaneously evaluate what others have found successful both with respect to program content and integration.

The President’s Charge (abbreviated):

• Take an immediate inventory of current retention programs, practices, efforts and strategies.
• What do the experts say can improve retention (which initiatives and how do we implement)?
• What are the best practices at other institutions like UHD?
• Examine how communication flows and suggest best practices to improve it.

Inventory. An inventory has been done of all the initiatives and practices currently utilized at UHD or that have been tried in the last few years. In order to complete this inventory in a timely manner we divided the retention task force into 4 subgroups depending on expertise. These subgroups included Before the First Day, Academic Support, Academic/Co-curricular and Student Support Services. At this point we have collected information on most, but not all of the initiatives at UHD and we will continue to add to the inventory over the next couple of months. The subgroup discussions and the exercise of creating the inventories lead to some early recommendations by this Task Force. These include recommendations about assessment, organization and leadership and the development of a comprehensive cohort model. Previous retention efforts and the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence have also made excellent progress in a series of recommendations within the area of Academic Support and those are also included here.

General Recommendations about Retention Efforts at UHD.

Assessment. We need to improve assessment of our retention efforts and we need to have a shared minimum assessment tool that can be used to monitor the impact of numerous UHD initiatives. Assuring retention assessment will need to assigned to a particular person or position (perhaps within the Provosts’ Office) and that person will need to reach out to faculty and staff engaged in retention
initiatives including new projects and grants to make sure that retention data is collected uniformly. Data needs to include either survey or focus group information about which initiatives or interventions students found most useful during their semester/year/time with the initiative. In addition to assessment of programs, we need to know exactly why every student leaves. If we don’t have this information we will not be able to build effective intervention strategies based on data. It has been mentioned that UHD is about to purchase a survey to address the question of why students leave. If so, this is excellent and should be implemented immediately. This information should be collected routinely and shared with all those working to improve retention.

Consistency of Retention Efforts. There have been retention groups at UHD for many years and they have been various sizes and been organized by different entities. The current UHD Retention Task Force has over 20 members with a wide representation from faculty, staff and leadership. It is recommended that some kind of Retention Committee become a permanent addition to UHD until the retention numbers are where UHD would like them to be. There is tremendous value in having a large diverse group work together to determine a plan and also to serve as ambassadors of the new plan across campus. There is some concern that this Task Force will work for a year to come up with a great plan, get buy-in from faculty and staff and then the ideas will lose momentum when the ideas are disseminated. A continuous Retention Committee would allow us to set multi-year goals and keep the conversation going among the stake holders. Such a committee would also help us stay focused on meeting our goals and give us an opportunity to discuss issues that arise.

Leadership and Retention Efforts. According to the Gardner Institute (presentation at the SACS Conference, December 2015) institutions that have been most successful at moving the retention needle have committed to retention plans and stayed with those plans for many years, perhaps with modification, but not changing the plan dramatically. Switching plans and/or switching leadership (and thus ideas about how to fix retention) appears to create only modest improvements. Leadership that brings retention as a central focus of the campus and stays with the plan for many years will change the culture of the campus and thus raise retention. This is not a fast process but a very effective way to make change. It is recommended that any new leadership (ie. a new UHD Provost) be willing to join the current retention efforts and conversation at UHD. New leadership may have new ideas about fixing problems, but there is concern that initiatives with great potential will need time and sustained efforts behind them to show progress and should not be automatically thrown out or restarted with new leadership. It is also clear that there needs to be a strong organizational structure for UHD Retention Efforts. Some preliminary ideas about this are found in the cohort model section (at the end of this summary).

Early Recommendations by Subgroups
Before the First Day of Class (Recruitment, Admissions, Testing and Orientation)
Preliminary recommendations from this subgroup recommend the following:

1. Thoroughly Review Orientation Programs
   • Compare effectiveness of 2 day, 4 day, 3 week
   • Establish learning outcomes and evaluate effectiveness of meeting those outcomes
2. Establish Communities of Learners
   • Build relationships with the colleges and create communities of learners within them
   • Consider a college-based orientation days early in summer or have a general orientation with 2nd day devoted to college-based components

3. Expand Recruitment Strategies
   • Incorporate more financial aid information
   • Review effectiveness of merit-based institutional scholarships with a focus on marketing, timing of award, retention and funding allocations
   • Refine the recruiting model to align with new UHD Strategic Plan

Figure 1. Important areas for retention identified by the subgroup Before the First Day.

Academic Support (Tutoring, Mentoring, Supplemental Instruction, Freshman Seminars, Faculty Orientation and Professional Development, Curriculum Innovation, Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence)

Preliminary recommendations and strategies have been organized with a central goal and 5 objectives.

Goal: Contribute to improved student retention through a teaching and learning ecology that enhances student acquisition of important knowledge, skills and critical thinking abilities. (Retention = Persistence + Progression)

Objective 1: Motivate students to engage and persist in learning activities. (Motivation = Subjective value of activity × Expectation of success)

Objective 2: Motivate faculty to share and adopt evidence-based teaching practices.

Objective 3: Increase the relative amount of time students are engaged in learning activities. (Relative time = Time engaged/Time available)

Objective 4: Increase the efficiency of the learning activities in which students are engaging. (Efficiency = Amount learned/Time engaged)

Objective 5: Increase the quality of the learning activities in which students are engaging. (Quality of learning = Knowledge outcomes + Forms of thinking + Skill level)
Figure 2. The important objectives identified by the Academic Support Subgroup which are critical for student retention.

The Academic Support subgroup recommendations are organized into five broad areas: Faculty Development, Curriculum & Program Development, Student Development, Tutoring and Data Analytics. Each recommendation is mapped to an objective. Recommendations are roughly listed according to priority. In some cases, possible strategies to achieve a recommendation are suggested (several of which are currently being implemented, marked with *).

1. Faculty Development
   - Encourage use of evidence-based instructional delivery methods or strategies where UHD has existing expertise (e.g. team-based learning, peer instruction, motivational messaging, transparent teaching, social-psychological interventions, high-yield retention strategies, AVID strategies) O1
     - CTLE Course Innovation Initiative based on Learning Ecologies model* ([http://tilt.colostate.edu/courseDD/pdfs/ecologies.pdf](http://tilt.colostate.edu/courseDD/pdfs/ecologies.pdf))
     - CTLE Faculty Fellows*
     - CTLE Teaching Circles*
     - Participation stipends for adjuncts*
   - Encourage use of effective teaching and learning techniques as confirmed by cognitive and educational psychology (e.g. improved lecturing styles, low-stakes quizzing, distributed practice) O4
   - Mandatory faculty development program for new faculty O5
     - New Faculty Orientation Workshop Series*
   - Align annual evaluation and R&T policies and practices with faculty development recommendations O2
   - Provide faculty development services and programs that align with annual evaluation and R&T policies and practices O2
   - Provide registration fee and stipends for completion of Online Learning Consortium workshops and discipline-specific discussion groups centered on their content * O5
   - Provide faculty training regarding culturally relevant pedagogy O1
     - CTLE Minority Male Initiative Teaching Circle*
   - Faculty development badging or certificate program O2
• Institute additional awards to recognize faculty or department excellence in increasing student persistence and completion O2
  o Implement Thank You Recognition Program such as East Carolina University’s “It Just Takes One” Program
  o CTLE Showcase*
• Develop or adapt teaching self-evaluation inventories, i.e. check-box questionnaires and accompanying scoring rubrics that can aid instructors in reflecting on their teaching and developing mastery O2

Proposed Data Measures (Data Analytics):
• Better exploit IDEA Student Rating of Instruction O2
  o Promote strategies to improve response rates (e.g. class capture, paper option)
  o Provide faculty development services and programs that align with IDEA
• Add recording of major course assessment grade as an option to final grade form in e-Services O2

2. Student Development:
• Teach selected learning strategies, study skills or foundational topics (e.g. time management, critical reading, college writing, note-taking and note-using, self-testing, use of campus resources) as part of freshman seminar and reinforce through advising, tutoring, mentoring or other 1000 and 2000-level courses O4
  o AVID Mentor/Tutor Training days*
• Develop an Academic Recovery Program for probationary students O1
• Incentivize “inputs” of success (e.g. attending tutoring, enrolling full-time) O1
  o Social norming campaigns (e.g. STAR Program 30n3)*
  o Badges, certificates or other milestone recognition awards that promote awareness of incremental achievement and satisfaction with progress*
  o “GatorChange” points-exchange program such as Montana State (http://champchange.msu.montana.edu)
  o Micro-inducements such as preferred parking

3. E-Intelligence/Data Measures
   Current projects
• Existing e-intelligence/dashboard modules include: executive dashboard, applicant information, enrollment information, course information, applicant cohort, daily course information, academic performance, financial aid, success markers, new student progression and graduation, and barrier courses.
• Retention and graduation snapshot dashboard
• Evaluation of programs and educational interventions as well as predictive analytics on student retention and success.

Future Projects
• Improve Success Markers e-Intelligence dashboard (and Cohort Management module) to allow tracking of a wide variety of selected cohorts through key comparison metrics O2
• Develop and provide faculty easy access to a personal “data inventory” including measures that can give individual faculty members a better comprehension of their own teaching effectiveness (on a course by course basis) relative to others O2
• Improve Barrier Course dashboard in e-Intelligence that tracks student outcomes in selected courses, disaggregated by performance in pre-requisite courses and other demographic variables  O2
• “Gateway Course Index” and “Longitudinal Success Index” for gateway courses reported to departments as a means of motivating and assessing work on milestone or gateway courses  O2
• Collaboration between advising, IT, and institutional effectiveness to integrate a data-driven approach to student success.

4. Curriculum & Program Development
• Launch new degree programs (face-to-face and online) and certificates (including interdisciplinary programs) based on student demand or job market needs  O5
• Encourage uniformity or consistency of syllabi for gateway courses, to permit increased faculty collaboration and efficient application of tutoring resources (with mechanisms to allow flexibility and experimentation)  O4
  o Common textbooks
  o Develop “master” courses of assignments, especially for non-TT faculty
  o All sections utilize BbL gradebook allowing students continuous/dynamic access to current average/grade
  o All sections institute a fair and flexible attendance policy (as determined by the dept.)
  o Instructors submit midterm grades for all 1000 and 2000-level courses at approximately 5th week
  o Leverage technology where appropriate to promote engagement, monitor time on task, and automate feedback
• Encourage gateway courses to pilot the use of 0-credit-hour labs to accommodate tutoring, advising or active learning methods, perhaps reserved or required for at-risk students (e.g. conditional admits or probationary students)  O3
• Add additional extended class meeting times to schedule inventory:
  8:00 am – 10 am; 9:30 am – 11:30 am; 11:30 am – 1:30 pm, MWF & TR
• Encourage gateway courses to pilot offering classes in 8-week partial terms (meeting MTWR)  O3
• Encourage pilots of flipped classroom models  O3
• Encourage development and implementation of HIPS  O5
  o HIPS Awards and course designations*
  o QEP*
• In general, promote curriculum development for 21st century knowledge, skills and attributes; in particular, critical thinking and communication  O5
  o Critical thinking and writing are emphasized in the Learning Ecologies model*
• Implement co-requisite remediation options in all developmental areas  O1
  o Complete implementation of developmental math plan*
• Advise or require students to reserve time during schedule blocks for tutoring, advising or other college-related activities  O3
  o Institute free UHD 1000 TBA course for which all FTIC students must register in first year (exception for students taking gateway course with 0-credit-hour lab)
• Schedule courses in consolidated time blocks, consistent from term to term (e.g. morning, afternoon, evening, weekend). Increases predictability and eases school/work scheduling challenges. Thus services must be available for all time blocks. **O3**
• Expand use of “modularization” methods for gateway courses that may allow “near-miss” students to earn credit without repeating entire course **O4**
  o Mini-mester NCBO’s*
• Expand use of “grade redemption” strategies for gateway courses **O4**
  o Multi-take exam options*
  o Portfolio grading*
  o Re-examine grade forgiveness policies

Proposed Data Measures (Data Analytics):
• Implement Data Analytics Advisory Board (similar to CTLE Advisory Board) to provide guidance to I.E. on necessary data for departments and faculty **O2**

5. Tutoring
• Some form of tutoring provided for all gateway courses **O4**
• Pilot commercial online tutoring resources with 24/7 access for routine help* **O4**
• Promote the development or use of short videos, lecture capture or other forms of digital media to allow asynchronous online access to an expanding collection of customized support resources **O4**
• In general, reserve on-campus tutoring resources for more structured or in-depth tutoring experiences (visit Pamm Ambrose at Illinois State University - pmambro@ilstu.edu - http://universitycollege.illinoisstate.edu/tutoring/ ) **O4**
  o Expand SI to sections of other potential high-demand gateway courses (e.g. Economics or Accounting).
  o Expand Writing Associates Program (WA) to cover more sections
  o Reconfigure Math Center:
    ▪ Open access area with computers for students doing HW with tutors circulating to answer quick questions
    ▪ Institute appointment system for more sustained tutoring with rationed access
  o Institute scheduled weekly peer-led student groups for select courses using the Illinois State model. Students must sign-up and commit to coming weekly at the same time to get additional practice in the course. Availability is on a first-come, first-served basis.
  o SI, WA sections marked in class schedule. Study group schedule published with class schedule.
  o Strive for approximately 70/30 split between structured/walk-in tutoring visits
• Create a Learning Commons (day, evening, & weekend student gathering area for tutoring/academic activities and collaboration) **O4**
  o Assist formation of independent study groups
  o UHV is currently creating a Learning Commons
• Expand availability of online, weekend and evening tutoring services **O4**
• Provide consistent training events for tutors to maintain or improve academic support skills **O4**
• Promote use of academic support resources among both students and faculty at multiple times/venues.
  o Give students a clear visual roadmap showing them where to go to receive our entire suite of support services
  o Improve Student Resources links on UHD web page*
  o This recommendation emphasized in the Learning Ecologies model*
• All tutoring and mentoring facilities implement TutorTrac to monitor usage
• Implement Tutoring Advisory Board (similar to CTLE Advisory Board)

Academic/Co-curricular (Honors, Scholars Academy, STAR, Sports and Fitness, Student Activities, Research, Internships, High Impact Practices, Service Learning, Engagement with the College or Career)

Preliminary recommendations from this subgroup recommend the following:

1. Create Student Cohorts which are Models of success at UHD.
   • There are numerous models of student cohorts at UHD. Data available shows much higher retention numbers for students in Cohorts.
   • Cohorts could be discipline-based or interdisciplinary.

2. Continue and expand on High Impact Practices (HIPs) at UHD
   • Undergraduate Research
   • Study Abroad
   • Internships
   • Student Employment
   • The data available at UHD shows these are effect and experts overwhelming recommend these.

3. Engagement with the Department/Career
   • There are initiatives at the Department or College level that engage students in the discipline or careers (some of these are quite new) and these should be continued and/or expanded.
   • Student engagement in these activities will be low if just advertised. Extra credit in seminar courses or expected attendance as part of a cohort obligation (and faculty invite) are more likely to be effective.

Student Support (Advising, Career Services, Disability Services, Financial Aid, Student Conduct, Title IX, Veterans Services)

Figure 3. Important retention efforts identified by the Academic/Co-curricular Subgroup.
Preliminary recommendations from this subgroup recommend the following:

1. Establish Clear Assessment Practices
   - Most areas of Student Support have collected or are collecting data, but a uniform, established assessment plan is needed.

2. Focus on What Works
   - 1:1 Mandatory professional advising
   - On-track graduation advising
   - Create roadmaps of course for all degrees

3. Communication and Software
   - Improve communication between Advising, Career Services and Financial Aid
   - Acquire an integrated retention and student success planning software

Cohort Model at UHD

Although there are many activities that improve retention, what appears to work really well at UHD is the cohort model. This model works for the Scholars Academy and it has been successful for the new Honors Program. It has also had success with Minority Male Initiatives based on work at other universities (UHD will have a pilot Minority Male program this spring). There is also evidence that creating cohorts in summer orientation programs for as little as a couple of weeks significantly improves retention and academic success of UHD FTIC students. This approach is also the idea behind learning communities which have been successful at many other universities in giving students a sense of belonging and engagement that dramatically improved retention.
The exercise of completing the inventory led to the realization that we need to figure out a way to bring the cohort model to every FTIC student at UHD. The focus of the winter break and early spring will be to research what others schools like UHD do with a particular focus on implementation. This will be all areas, but we will pay particular attention to those with successive cohort models. The spring will also focus on how UHD can improve the effectiveness of the communication between student support areas. Additionally, we will be communicating with two new pilot models which will be implemented at UHD in spring - Katrina Borders (STAR cohorts) and Vida Robertson (Male Minority Initiative cohorts). This information will be critical because these cohorts will serve a different population of students than is typical in the Honors Program or even the Scholars Academy. Our specific cohort recommendations so far include the following:

1. **Every FTIC student should be assigned to one cohort.** Students going to Scholars Academy, Honors Program or the Male Minority Initiative would not be assigned to another cohort.
2. **Cohorts should include a faculty mentor** (and perhaps the addition of a staff mentor) and an upper-class student mentor.
3. Cohorts should be organized in colleges/departments based on student interest. There should also be some cross-disciplinary cohorts organized for those students who are still unsure about major. Departments could organize their cohorts by subject (Biology, Chemistry, Accounting, Marketing) or by a career theme within the department (Premedical, Sustainability, Social Justice).
4. **There should be clear guidelines/obligations for the faculty/staff mentors, student mentors, and students** and some guidelines for the type of activities the cohort participates in. A rough draft of these will be created in collaboration with those running cohort models this spring.

5. The goal of the cohort model will be to **connect the student cohort to every resource at UHD** (Figure 5). The mentors (faculty/staff and student) would help connect the student in their cohort to the other services (outside circles). To facilitate this, we envision Cohort Liaisons at each place that circles overlap and that these liaisons would not only give information to mentors but also be a person of contact for mentors trying to help students in the most efficient manner possible.

6. **We need to establish a clear leadership model for retention that gives oversight and direction to the Cohort model.**

7. **Funds should be added for the 2016 budget to support cohorts in departments.** If it is assumed the incoming class of FTIC students is 800 and 150 students collectively go into other programs (the Scholars Academy, Honors Program and Male Minority) that leaves 650 students. If that is divided by 10 departments (65 students per department) that is about 4 cohorts per department. If we pay the faulty/staff mentors 2K per year for mentoring a cohort that is 80K in faculty mentors. Someone will need to organize the faculty mentors so that will be either reassign time for a faculty or current staff person (10-20K). There is an idea to tie student cohort obligations to Be On Time scholarship funds. For programs like Male Minority Initiative where there are not necessarily student funds we will need minimally book vouchers as a financial incentive to engage (at least initially) in the program. With 50-100 students needing $500/year in book vouchers this is another 25-50K. This comes to 150K (initial estimate).