



State of the School: 2013-2014

The School of Undergraduate Studies serves students by sustaining a dynamic common curriculum and enriching the undergraduate experience through innovative advising, academic support, learning communities, interdisciplinary programs, and undergraduate research.

Undergraduate Studies is charged with managing the common curriculum in a way that incorporates broadly representative faculty input and that encourages innovation, rewards excellence, and addresses the educational needs of students. Along with the First-year Signature Course, common curriculum refers to the core curriculum and flag requirements in writing, ethics, quantitative reasoning, independent inquiry, global cultures, and ethnic diversity.

In order to assure alignment of all courses in the core curriculum with new requirements established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), faculty committees for each component area of the core reviewed course materials. In 2013-14, 490 of the 495 courses submitted to the THECB were approved for inclusion as fulfilling core requirements in the 2014-16 Undergraduate Catalog.

Undergraduate Studies offers a powerful combination of career counseling with major exploration advising to put undecided entering students on the road to degrees and careers they are excited about. Evidence that this unique method of advising is working: 82% of the students who start in UGS keep the major they first declare, compared to 33% of the general university population.

In fall 2009, the school admitted its first cohort of 708 students. In fall 2013, 1,008 new students enrolled in Undergraduate Studies, bringing the total enrollment to 2,123. All were students in exploration mode, seeking majors in which they could successfully graduate. Students from the 2009 cohort successfully transferred into all of the university's colleges with undergraduate programs. No student remains in the school after the fourth semester.



Undergraduate Studies exists to help each student create an individualized path toward a degree. As an integral part of the university's infrastructure, we provide tools to harness the vast array of opportunities available at the University of Texas at Austin.

School staff and advisors promote interdisciplinary study, internships, student leadership, tutoring and mentoring, honors programs, volunteerism, undergraduate research, and more. These transformative learning opportunities are described in the summary of programs below.



Governance

Faculty, staff, and students from across campus are involved in School of Undergraduate Studies programs. During the 2013-14 school year, advisory committees and councils worked with school leadership to set policy and provide input.

- UGS Advisory Committee was comprised of seven members of the general faculty, six associate and assistant deans, and two students
- Signature Course Advisory Committee had four faculty members and one student
- Five Flag Committees had 57 faculty members
- Texas Success Initiative Advisory Committee had six faculty members
- 12 Bridging Disciplines Programs Committees had 130 faculty members
- UGS Advisory Council had 28 volunteer community stakeholders
- UGS Student Council had 45 students

Fundraising Priorities

During 2013-2014, the School of Undergraduate Studies completed participation in the eight-year UT Capital Campaign, raising \$8.7 million dollars. The Director for Development worked with our School of Undergraduate Studies Advisory Council and with the school's leadership to determine funding priorities. The continued focus was on building endowments to meet ongoing needs.

Assessment

Data from the assessment plans maintained for the school's programs, services, and courses formed the basis of continuous improvement. In 2013, staff coordinated the collection of data on learning outcomes of the Signature Course, the assessment of which served as the Quality Enhancement Plan. The QEP was called "particularly strong in its broad significance and impact on student learning," in the university's most recent accreditation report. The president of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges also said "Faculty and administration are to be commended for sharing this model nationally and internationally with other institutions of higher learning." During the 2013-14 academic year, staff analyzed student survey results for 221 Signature Courses.

Development of Interdisciplinary Degrees

Building on the experience with interdisciplinary certificate programs, Undergraduate Studies continued to assist groups of faculty developing college-bridging degrees that will provide exciting new options for study and also ease demand on oversubscribed traditional degrees. These robust and contemporary majors help prepare students for an array of new career fields while aligning university resources in ways that improve graduation rates. Students have access to courses from multiple disciplines while pursuing a degree and can more easily graduate on time with the credentials they desire and need.



Summary of Programs

First-Year Experience

The First-Year Experience Office continued to serve all first-year students at the university and help them transition to college.

Signature Courses are taught by distinguished faculty members who focus on developing students' skills in research, writing, speaking, and discussion. Designed to be interdisciplinary, use an experiential approach, and integrate contemporary content, Signature Courses are a required part of the core curriculum for every entering undergraduate student at the university, including transfer students. During the 2013-14 academic year, 10,400 students enrolled in 218 different Signature Courses. The fall 2013 University Lecture Series showcased six leading faculty members discussing creativity in the arts and sciences. Over three nights in October 2013, Signature Course students were required to attend one of the events, each designed to create a campus-wide conversation.

First-year Interest Groups (FIGs) are groups of 18-25 first-year students who take two to four classes together during their first fall semester. FIG students develop a sense of community as they attend classes, study, and participate in various activities with fellow first-year students. In fall 2013, 3,750 students participated in 270 cohorts.

360 Connections is a campus-wide initiative that ensures all incoming first-time-in-college students can spend their first UT semester in a small community like a FIG. Each connection has about 20 students, meets regularly outside class, and is connected with a peer mentor and a faculty or staff member. Students explore topics like academic integrity, leadership, and university traditions. In fall 2013, 6,752 students were enrolled in at least one connection, so 95% of all first-year students were in a connection.

Center for the Skills and Experience Flags

In order to better reflect its function, the Center for the Core Curriculum changed its name to the Center for the Skills and Experience Flags in 2014. Center staff continued to coordinate the implementation, assessment, and ongoing improvement of flag requirements in Cultural Diversity in the US, Global Cultures, Ethics and Leadership, Independent Inquiry, Quantitative Reasoning, and Writing.

The UGS Advisory Committee voted in May 2012 to recommend that all undergraduate degree programs require all of the flags beginning in the 2014-16 catalog, and although the university has not quite achieved that goal, we are closer. In the 2014-16 catalog, six colleges and schools have fully implemented all of the flag requirements (three Writing flags, and one each of the other five flags), and another four colleges and schools have implemented all except for the third Writing flag. Only two colleges—Liberal Arts and Natural Sciences—have not yet required all of the flags, and in both cases, these colleges made progress toward that goal in the 2014-16 catalog.



Importantly, the systems and relationships developed with faculty committees and departments to incorporate flags have provided the mechanisms required for a responsive core curriculum in perpetuity. In 2013-14, UGS approved 588 course flags and undergraduates took 17,738 seats in Cultural Diversity courses, 21,164 seats in Global Cultures courses, 16,473 seats in Ethics and Leadership courses, 10,634 seats in Independent Inquiry courses, 47,189 seats in Quantitative Reasoning courses, and 31,356 seats in Writing courses.

James W. Vick Center for Strategic Advising & Career Counseling

Advisors in the center continued to work closely with advisors across campus to provide academic advising, including major exploration assistance, to undecided and transitional students at the university. 1,008 new students enrolled in UGS in 2013-14, of which over 550 have now transferred to the colleges from which they will graduate. Academic advisors conducted over 9000 student appointments during the academic year.

Career counselors met with 1,227 students to explore careers, graduate school options, or academic paths at the university. The center offered additional career content through classes and workshops, which over 650 students attended.

Events called Magellan's Circles connected prominent professionals with UGS students for round table discussions about choosing a major, life after college, and pursuing careers. Held twice a semester, they were limited to small sessions of students enrolled in the school.

Bridging Disciplines Programs

These academic concentrations allow undergraduates to earn interdisciplinary certificates, recognized on their official transcripts, through study integrating classroom, research, and internship experiences. The 12 BDPs had 535 students actively enrolled in 2013-14. Since the program's inception in 2002, 732 students have graduated with certificates.

Sanger Learning Center

During the 2013-14 academic year, the center delivered 101,670 instructional hours enhancing the academic success of 14,684 UT students. The primary vehicle for this support are the 498 student educators the Sanger Center's 11 professional learning specialists prepared for their roles through 243 hours of training.

Specifically, the Sanger Learning Center provided tutoring to 4,132 UT students. They counseled 1,042 students on essential learning skills. They enhanced the learning experience of 7,512 students by offering course-based academic assistance. In addition, they provided large-scale workshops and reviews to 12,900 UT students.

In addition to their core services, Sanger Center professional staff continued coordinating graduate student teacher training for the Signature Course program and supporting the training efforts of the academic support in the athletics department.



Discovery Scholars Program

The Discovery Scholars Program replaced the original campus-wide academic learning community known as the Longhorn Scholars Program. In this program, select incoming first-year students in UGS are matched with an appropriate 360 Connection, which provides academic and social support to assist in the transition from high school to college. In its first year, 2013-14, 200 students joined the program.

Texas Success Initiative & College Readiness

This program identifies students who have not met the statewide standard for college readiness in reading, writing, and mathematics and provides them advising, academic courses, and enrichment services. In 2013-2014, staff worked with more than 1600 students. Of those, 140 students needed intensive advising services and/or testing to determine readiness.

Non-Course-Based Options were implemented on a small scale in 2013-2014. These interventions pair an entry-level credit-bearing course with support from a TSI instructor in an effort to reduce the time necessary for students to begin earning college credit in the subject(s) in which they are not college-ready.

Freshman Reading Round-Up

Many of UT's best professors sponsor books for summer reading and lead small discussions with incoming students the day before fall classes begin. New students connect with fellow freshmen and often form a lasting relationship with a faculty member who teaches only upper division courses. In fall 2013 over 900 freshmen participated in 62 unique book sessions.

Wayfinder

Over 96,000 unique visitors accessed this interactive website in 2013-14. With specifics on all majors offered at UT, along with career and certificate information, this resource was used by advisors working with undeclared students across campus and by prospective students. In 2013-2014 over 12,000 prospective students completed activities involving choosing a major in a special portal for UT applicants.

Path to Admission through Co-Enrollment (PACE)

Participants take a UGS Signature Course and receive academic advising at the university, while taking other classes at Austin Community College. Students who complete the program requirements during their first year transition to full-time enrollment at UT. As fall 2013 began, 92 students had accepted this offer, with an expected class of over 200 in the following year.



University Honors Center

The center serves as a focal point for campus participation in national honors activities. In 2013-14, staff also managed Undergraduate Studies grants and scholarships and coordinated school outreach and recruitment efforts reaching more than 10,000 prospective students and their families through 62 school and university-wide programs.

The summer Honors Colloquium, an annual recruitment effort, brought 600 high-achieving rising high school seniors to campus to experience classes and life at UT. Over 86% of all 2013 attendees were admitted into the university, many of them into a first-year honors program.

The center also supported the school's student governance structure via the UGS Student Council and coordinated activities for the Academy of Distinguished Teachers.

Archer Fellowship Program

Program staff continued to support highly competitive student internships in Washington, D.C. Of the 81 students selected as Archer Fellows from the entire UT system each semester, 26 were from UT Austin in fall 2013, and 19 in spring 2014.

Office of Undergraduate Research

Program staff gather information about ongoing research from all over campus and serve as a university-wide resource for involving undergraduate students in faculty-led research opportunities. The office continued to co-host the annual Research Week with the Senate of College Councils. 737 students attended information sessions in 2013-14.



2013-2014 Staff



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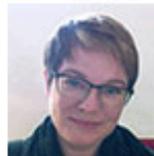


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