STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION 2010-2020
A design for the future of Kansas City’s University

GOAL 1. PLACE STUDENT SUCCESS AT THE CENTER

To provide the optimal learning environment for all students: outstanding academic programs and experiences, seamless student support, and a vibrant campus community.

- Offer superior services to students through a model that allows a holistic approach (real and virtual) to meet student needs.

STRATEGY: CREATE A STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER [COMPLETE]

An objective under Goal 1 of UMKC’s Strategic Plan is to offer superior services to students through a model that allows a holistic approach (real and virtual) to meet students’ needs. The opening of the new student union in Fall 2010 offers a unique opportunity to re-imagine the vacated space in the University Center as an integrated Student Success Center with immediate access to the wide array of academic and support services currently in place to ensure student success. Co-locating these services offers the opportunity to better serve students and eliminate the run around that students may experience when trying to access services. In conjunction with a physical student success center, an integrated Web site can simultaneously create opportunities for increased self-service. As we grow our undergraduate enrollment and increase student success and retention, this Center will be a key strategy in supporting student success at UMKC.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

As part of the Strategic Planning process, Dr. Gail Hackett, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and Mr. Mel Tyler, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, commissioned a planning committee was charged with developing the concept for a UMKC Student Success Center, what services should be offered, and how it will deliver those services. Mr. Tyler and Dr. Cindy Pemberton, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, co-chaired the planning committee.

The members of the planning committee are:

- Dr. Larry Bunce, Director of Institutional Research
- Dr. Bonita Butner, Associate Professor, School of Education
- Dr. Angie Cottrell, Director of Student Involvement
- Ms. Jennifer DeHaemers, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
ASSESSING STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES AND SATISFACTION WITH SUPPORT SERVICES

Dr. Larry Bunce led a small group to assess our students’ current interactions with and satisfaction of campus support services. From these assessments, which included focus groups and survey analyses, the small group was able to gather feedback in how students envision an ideal Success Center for UMKC.

Feedback from the focus groups indicates several consistent themes. These themes center on access to the services that support students’ academic success and well-being, including the need for a central location for students to go to get answers from staff who are knowledgeable about these services.

- Most importantly, students believe that academic and support services are spread out too far across campus which discourages students from using them. Connected with this theme is the general feeling that students may not know what services are available because of the decentralized locations, which also highlights the need for a central information hub.
- Students prefer face-to-face interaction when seeking out assistance. Students feel it is easier and more efficient to speak to a person directly and explain their situation rather than spend time surfing online. Additionally, the website needs to streamline access to business functions.
- Students desire a personal experience with their academic advisor; they wanted to work with a single advisor who would “partner” with them to help them be successful in reaching their academic and career goals. There were also several comments made about utilizing Career Services earlier in the advising process.
- Overall, however, students were clear that an academic and support services Success Center is not just a nice thing to have on campus—it was something that UMKC absolutely must have.
Surveys that UMKC administers provide additional feedback on student expectations and satisfaction regarding campus services. Two surveys were analyzed: the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), which measures how important specific attributes of the University are for students and how satisfied students are with them, and recent research conducted by Maguire and Associates, a leading higher education research firm, on students who were admitted to the university.

The SSI was last administered at UMKC in 2008. UMKC students rated a series of statements regarding services on campus on a seven-point importance scale and then rated their satisfaction with these services on the same scale. The survey instrument calculates the performance gap between importance and satisfaction to determine the areas that UMKC should further review for improvement. Based on the ratings provided by the respondents, top performance gaps were noted in the following areas:

- Getting the “run-around” when seeking information
- Knowledgeable and responsive Admissions staff members
- Knowledgeable and responsive academic advisors
- Adequate services to help students decide on a career
- Adequate academic support services
- Adequate and accessible computer labs
- Caring counseling staff
- Knowledge of where to go for personal, social, or academic assistance
- Readily available tutoring services

Most recently, UMKC contracted with Maguire and Associates to survey two groups of admitted students: those who chose to enroll at UMKC and those who chose to enroll elsewhere. While the results of these surveys are specifically being used to drive a communications plan for the university, the information about students’ perceptions of UMKC may also be helpful in planning for a student success center. The survey seems to indicate that students who chose to enroll elsewhere have a lower perception of the quality of UMKC’s academic support services and the quality of their interactions with the Admissions and Financial Aid Offices. It is our assumption that a centralized location for academic support services in a Student Success Center as well as a centralized Welcome Center would help address and improve these perceptions.

### RESEARCH OF STUDENT SUCCESS CENTERS AT PEER INSTITUTIONS

Dr. Kami Thomas and Dr. Lynda Plamann directed this sub-committee to review the success centers other peer universities provided for their students. The group noticed there are two main types of success center—those focusing on business tasks (such as admissions, financial aid, cashiers, registration, and sometimes advising) and those focusing on support services (tutoring, counseling, career services).

The sub-committee identified four universities that provided some best practices for UMKC to model:

- **University of Cincinnati** has a “one-stop” website and building to help students address admissions, financial aid, and registration questions either in person, by phone, or e-mail. During peak times in the academic year, extra registration stations are open for students.
The center includes areas for admissions and financial aid processing, a student computer lab, and a self-service cashering computer. This is clearly a business center and does not include many spaces for students to just hang-out, but the staff are highly trained and serve as resources for the entire campus on a variety of issues and needs.

- **University of Minnesota** has a website and building to help students address mainly business services such as financial aid, registration and records, and links to advising and career “degree planning” services. We were unable to visit the campus since they are in the process of moving buildings.

- **Arizona State University, University Center, Downtown Campus.** New success center renovated specifically for the downtown campus that has student services offices, classrooms, and open spaces for students. The student success center focuses on tutoring, summer bridge program, Supplemental Instruction, and success classes for credit.

- **Iowa State** has two distinct locations: a **Student Answer Center** located in an administration building to assist students with business processes and also has an instant messaging feature to chat live with a student assistant; and the **Student Success Center**, which is in its own donor-funded building. The SSC mainly contains academic support services (including SI, tutoring, and disability services) and classroom / testing spaces. They would like to merge the writing center, but they are running out of space. The building also has a floor dedicated to the academic support of its student-athletes.

Based on this research, it would be ideal to have a combination of the two types of centers at UMKC, yet we also want to make sure that what we design now won’t be outgrown too soon. There is also a strong desire to have a central information hub staffed with expert generalists who can assist students one-on-one, either by answering questions directly or researching the answer for the student to eliminate the feeling of runaround students may get when being transferred from one office to the next.

**OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the assessment of students’ experiences on campus and the research conducted on other success centers, the Planning Committee believes that the concept for the UMKC Student Success Center should focus on academic support offices as well as developmental services. These offices include:

- Information hub to address student questions [UMKC Central]
- UMKC Welcome Center
- Center for Academic Development [now called Academic Support and Mentoring]
- UMKC Writing Studio
- MindBody Connection
- Career Services
- Services for undecided students [University College]
- International Student Affairs
- International Academic Programs
- SEARCH Undergraduate Research
- Advising for students in the School of Medicine, years 1 and 2
IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

Based on these recommendations, an Implementation Team was commissioned to conduct a space analysis of the University Center, finalize and determine space needs for each service or office, and develop a budget with fundraising goals.

Members of the Implementation Team are:

- Mr. Jerry Blanton, Assistant Director, Student Union
- Ms. Jennifer DeHaemers, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
- Mr. Thomas Ferrel, Writing Center
- Dr. Susan Hathaway, Student Services Manager, School of Medicine
- Mr. Scott Laurent, Coordinator, Student Disability Services
- Ms. Laura Rupp, Director, Special Events
- Mr. Bill Smith, Health Educator, MindBody Connection
- Ms. Kristen Abell, Director of Residential Life
- Ms. Marcie Barajas-Munoz, Assistant Director of International Student Affairs
- Dr. Brenda Bethman, Director of the UMKC Women’s Center
- Dr. Stephen Dilks, Professor, College of Arts & Sciences
- Ms. Ursula Gurney, Associate Athletics Director for Student Athlete Support Services
- Mr. Greg Hayes, Director of Career Services
- Ms. Karen Lavendusky, Facilities Space Planner, Administrative Affairs
- Mr. Bob Simmons, Associate Vice Chancellor of Facilities, Administrative Affairs
- Dr. Marion Stone, Director, Academic Support and Mentoring
- Ms. Julie Silkman, Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
- Mr. Mel Tyler, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management

The implementation team developed the mission statement for the Student Success Center, worked closely with the architects and University offices moving into the Center, and monitored the progress of the design, renovation, budget, moving logistics, and opening.

With the implementation team’s careful planning, the building was ready to be opened on time with the start of the Fall 2012 semester.

MISSION STATEMENT

One of the first steps the team completed was to develop a mission statement for the Student Success Center:

To provide high-quality, integrated, and responsive services that promote students’ academic and personal success in support of our retention and graduation goals. The Center
will provide for a more collaborative and effective delivery of academic advising, tutoring, career counseling, transfer support, and other services to meet the diverse needs of our students now and in the future.

This mission helped drive the planning of the building and its space—and the mission is especially apparent with its open floor plan, integration of student lounge spaces, and the way each office interacts with the others to provide a seamless support system. The overall goal is for students to feel that when they walk in, the entire building is there to support them.

UMKC CENTRAL

The goal of UMKC Central is to promote student success by providing student focused services in a single point of contact. At UMKC Central students may get help with problems, gain additional information to manage the enrollment process or perform regular transactions to meet their academic and financial objectives. The Customer Service Coordinators have all been cross trained in key areas of Admissions, Cashiers, Financial Aid, and Registration and Records, providing a convenient focal point for answering questions and getting assistance.

Planning for UMKC Central began early in the implementation stages of the Student Success Center and focused on collaboration between the offices, technology support for a remedy system, and high levels of customer service and engagement.

Since opening, students have consistently ranked UMKC Central very high in terms of their satisfaction with the services provided. Write-in comments on the surveys include:

- I was very pleased with this service, and think the “one-stop” service center is a great idea
- They should have done this years ago
- Great system. Great people. Great service.
- Everyone at UMKC Central was great and really helpful. Can’t wait to come back with another issue! I was very pleased.
- It was great and quick!

NAMING AND DEDICATION

With the generosity of Alan and Mary Atterbury, the facility was formally dedicated the Atterbury Student Success Center on October 5, 2012 as part of the UMKC Homecoming Week celebrations.