I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

The Strategic Plan Goal 5 Subcommittee considered ways to provide high quality, seamless services to students in various departments within the University. The committee’s intent is to help remove the “silo” structures found on campus and to help create less fragmented and, therefore, a more successful and satisfactory student experience. The Goal 5 Subcommittee contends that improving services to students will not only increase student retention and timely degree completion but also have a positive effect on alumni philanthropy. The committee conducted research of best practices among peer institutions and those post-secondary institutions that are leading the way in the integrated delivery of high quality, student support services (see Appendix B). To help in developing a sustainable economic model and in order to achieve and then maintain a budget that is in equilibrium, the committee considered both virtual and physical enhancements throughout its discussions. Finally, at a time when the University is exploring multiple avenues for High Impact Practices and Collaborative Learning at all levels of undergraduate scholarship, the Goal 5 Subcommittee contends that it is incumbent upon the University community at large to illustrate collaborative efforts and high impact delivery of academic resources and support services to its students.

Thus, the Goal 5 White Paper includes recommendations in three essential areas that will serve all University of Hartford students as well as their parents and numerous campus stakeholders.

A.) Three, one-stop, web-based resources that would have significant impact on student success and satisfaction as well as efficiency and productivity of all other stakeholders on campus (see page 2);

B.) A centralized guide to University processes, available in online, video, and hard-copy forms, to assist all registered students, their parents, and all University faculty and staff in understanding and in navigating such processes (see page 4); and,

C.) The creation of a One-Stop-Shopping model for the delivery of high quality, academic support services that are seamless, highly collaborative, and pay keen attention to Goal 1 and Goal 4 visions for High Impact Practices, student persistence, timely degree completion, and, finally, career readiness post Commencement (see page 4).

The last page of this White Paper (page 7), the general conclusion summarizes all the included recommendations in light of the University’s mission at large, its overarching strategic goals and core values, and other integral objectives tied to University branding, national reputation, and alumni annual giving.
II. **PROPOSALS**

A. **ONE-STOP SHOPPING WEB-BASED PROPOSALS**

In this 3-part White Paper, the Strategic Plan Goal 5 Subcommittee identifies inventive, practical, and financially responsible methods to replace or enhance some dated and siloed practices with more modern and user-friendly systems that would increase efficiency, productivity, and satisfaction among all campus constituents. The committee asserts that technology is of paramount importance to help improve student satisfaction. Other beneficiaries of these technologies include the full University community as well as parents who bear much of the financial responsibility for undergraduates who might be floundering in the middle years. Thus, the Committee recommends that the University consider implementation of the three following, web-based systems.

1.) One of the items currently being discussed is a **One-Stop Student Services Web Page** (See Appendix B) to provide an accurate, comprehensive, and timely online information resource to the University community. Currently, students and parents become frustrated as they surf through the hartford.edu website to find a specific student service. They will often call or email departments and use valuable resources on transactions of a repetitive nature. This web page will become a landing page to and from several functional areas such as Registrar, Bursar, Financial Aid, Residential Life, Career Services, Veterans Services, etc. It will include many University policies to help minimize a student from being bounced around among departments. The landing page will provide links as well as highlight important upcoming dates and important information relevant to that specific time of the year.

As we begin to improve the Web culture on campus by creating more user-friendly means of communication, the committee feels that our students and their parents will engage more in online services and rely less on University faculty and staff. By offering better communication through online services, faculty and staff can focus their resources on helping students who require more in-depth assistance, thereby giving that highly valued one-on-one attention that students and families expect from a private university. Adding this type of valuable resource will have no impact on the existing operating budget.

2.) **Degree Works** is the second web-based system; it is a comprehensive academic advising, transfer articulation and degree audit solution. It offers an avenue for both students and advisors to define their academic expectations, and students to plan ahead and remain on a direct path to degree completion and graduation. This product complements our brand and the strong faculty-student advising relationship while moving to a timely “career ready” status.

Many academic programs at the University rely on substitutions and waivers. The Curriculum Advising and Program Planning (CAPP) evaluation system does not allow for substitutions and waivers. The best CAPP offers is the use of text comments at the top of each evaluation. Furthermore, CAPP allows for substituted courses to be used in areas where they should not be used. This can lead to confusion for both advisors and students and inaccurate evaluations. CAPP tells advisors and students what has been met and completed, but it does not make clear what the student must take to complete their particular program. From an advising standpoint,
this is not at all helpful. Lastly, CAPP is not connected to a student’s registration. Such a connection is extremely helpful to both advisors and students who may want to develop schedules together.

**Degree Works** can guide students through complex degree requirements and both advisors and evaluators can easily define the general education, major, minor and concentration requirements. With direct access to web-based worksheets and related hyperlinked information such as catalog information, class schedules and transcripts, students can obtain information without having to go to multiple areas online.

**Degree Works** offers a web – based exception processing feature for waivers and substitutions streamlining internal processes, this helps students and advisors better understand a student’s current status faster and advisors can use the note capabilities which follow the students from advisor to advisor. Lastly, user-friendly GPA calculators help to keep students on track to see what grade is needed in a course to obtain or maintain their GPA goal.

3.) The third web-based system for consideration is **Student Success Collaborative Program** (SSCP). This program combines an early alert system with the ability to target and/or identify students at risk and allow advisors to review data such as transcripts, academic warnings, etc., that will assist with triaging students effectively and providing support for the appropriate academic programs thus improving persistence, retention, and timely graduation.

The SSCP would help academic advisors assess student risk and deliver tailored advice during meetings and via correspondence. Each student’s unique summary page reveals details into his or her performance and highlights data and information that are predictive to success.

The SSCP provides detailed student data and analytics that enhance mentoring and help advisors meet the expectations of an increasingly diverse student population. The SSCP’s risk analytics were designed with millennial expectations in mind. Modules like the SSCP Major Explorer give advisors the objective data they need to provide recommendations that are personalized to student interests and demonstrated abilities. Customized SSCP Success Markers and one-click alerts (generated by faculty, tutors, and other support staff) allow advisors to monitor student progress and provide a safety net to keep students on track.

To improve advisor efficiency, the SSCP provides a number of case management tools. With SSCP communication features, advisors can have a two-way conversation with students via email, text, or phone. The program captures all conversations automatically. The SSCP appointment management program allows advisors and students to easily schedule mutually-convenient appointments and set reminders.

Reporting and referral tools help advisors close the loop for more effective intervention. Advisors can open cases for at-risk students and see a complete history of each case. Finally, reports targeting student engagement allows advisors to track whether and how students follow through with recommended support resources.
B. GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY PROCESSES

Currently, University of Hartford students have no standardized resource that provides information about whom to speak with regarding registration, advisors, tuition payments, student loans, etc.

The Goal 5 Sub-committee suggests that the University should have both a manual outlining the steps that need to be taken, as well as a website (see http://www.mmm.edu/admissions/after-you’re-admitted.php in Appendix B) that leads students and parents through the process of coming to college. This should also include a one-page checklist on the important things for parents to know – phone numbers for Financial Aid, SASC, Bursar, various colleges – that parents can print and post on a bulletin board.

This manual or web-based videos could also be slightly modified for current students (both in website and hard copy form) to provide them with a guide for how to complete current processes. This will improve efficiency throughout the University, as the compilation of this manual would provide an opportunity to review how each college completes these tasks and to try to standardize and modernize the processes. Additionally, such a manual or web-based video would mediate the possible lack of knowledge and confusion on the part of staff, faculty, and advisors as well as curtail or eliminate students’ run-around and frustration.

Following are examples of some processes that should be reviewed, standardized, and included within the resource:

- Changing a major/adding a minor
- Filing for graduation
- Substitution/waivers
- Finding financial aid opportunities
- Viewing/taking care of holds
- Applying for a semester off (active status)
- Finding and selecting classes
- Registering for classes
- Calculating a GPA
- Grade changes

C. Considerations of a “One-Stop-Shopping” Model for Related, Academic Support Services: Career Services, the Center for Reading and Writing, and the Student Success Center:

The recommendations in Part C of this Goal 5 Subcommittee White Paper address a “One-Stop-Shopping” model for delivery of student-centered academic support services that should be more integrated, thereby improving student access to such necessary services. These recommendations are consistent with core values embedded in the University’s mission for all its students, with the University’s renewed Baccalaureate Writing Assessment Initiative, and with writing intensive and career readiness objectives of Strategic Plan Goal 1. Also, much attention and forethought have been given to the University’s enrollment management and retention objectives. University faculty and staff would also be well served by this proposal: the work of faculty and staff would likely be streamlined, and efficiency and productivity would be maximized with such a “One-Stop-Shopping” Model. Implementation of the proposed “One-Stop-Shopping” model among the three departments would
result in synergy of effort that would likely be reflected in students’ academic success, timely degree completion, and career preparation.

Career Services, the Center for Reading and Writing, and the Student Success Center currently enjoy a collegial partnership characterized by regular, if not frequent, cross-departmental consultations and referrals among the three departments. The missions of the three departments, though not literally identical, are nearly fully academic in nature. All three departments strive to forge successful and interactions with students, faculty, academic advisors, and other campus constituents who can assist in the essential endeavors of supporting the scholastic achievement and career development of our students. Currently, all the peer tutors employed by the Student Success Center (who provide content tutoring) and all the peer tutors employed by the Center for Reading and Writing (who provide generalist writing tutoring across disciplines) are the first beneficiaries of a recently instituted mandatory, campus-wide peer Tutor Training Program. This new training template, which links the two departments’ student tutors, is a consequence of suggestions included in the Administrative section of the University’s Foundation of the Future report (release date was late summer 2012).

Part C Recommendations:

1. The current partnership among the three departments is poised for a broader and more **formalized programmatic organization**. The Goal 5 Committee recommends a more deliberate and student-friendly alignment of services while maintaining the departments’ respective unique identities and autonomy in matters that are not over-lapping. For example, current tutor training has proven effective, and future cross-training of peer tutors is a next logical step. Other cost-saving initiatives to combine resources and training can also be explored with ease without dismantling the current internal structures of the respective departments and without compromising the integrity or autonomy of the three departments.

2. **Administrative oversight** is critical to having a more seamless delivery of student-centered academic support services provided by the three departments. Placement of such an alliance under academic administrative oversight would optimize students’ access to services that are integral to scholarly success, degree completion, and career readiness while simultaneously increasing staff members’ effectiveness in maximizing students’ overall achievement and perseverance to Commencement. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the Goal 5 Strategic Planning Committee that the administrative reporting loop for all three directors fall under the supervision of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

3. To the extent that spatial proximity is an advantage to students, faculty, staff, and other constituents on campus, the Goal 5 Committee further proposes an earnest exploration of the adjacent or nearby tri-location of these three units. The committee underscores that occupation of contiguous physical space would be advantageous in the consistent delivery of high quality support services that address students’ scholarship, career readiness, and holistic connectedness to campus life at large.
Planning, Implementation, and Future Considerations:

1. Recommendation number 1 is already informally in place by virtue of the collegial relationship maintained by the directors of Career Services, the Center for Reading and Writing, and the Student Success Center. A strategic and formal recognition of their existing partnership would make it easier for them and their staffs to navigate the University’s other systems to promote high(er) levels of academic achievement and student satisfaction, to address the University’s campus-wide attention to enrollment management and retention, and, finally, to enhance students’ preparation for the workplace post-graduation.

2. Recommendation number 2 represents an opportunity to utilize an existing, two-part University system (the direct-report loop and Dialogue for Direction) and to streamline delivery of various, integral student services. By combining the three departments under one academic administrative center, academic services could be enhanced, and a more united front could be presented to all enrolled students and campus constituents as well as prospective students and their parents.

3. Recommendation number 3 requires further brainstorming, discussion with other constituents on campus, and thoughtful deliberation regarding monetary outlays and distribution / re-allocation of current space on campus. Any success with this specific proposal only improves the comprehensiveness of the trio’s missions, shared vision, and aligned delivery of student-centered services.
III. **GENERAL CONCLUSION:**

Strategic Planning Team Goal 5 Subcommittee recommends the creation of a **One Stop Student Services model** to provide integrated services for all University of Hartford students. This new model would provide services to 21st Century students within a 21st Century framework, rather than the disjointed and outdated manner that is currently in place. Our students have a modern set of expectations that we are currently not meeting as a university. It is important to note that these proposed changes are all part of larger issues that the University is currently facing. These issues include:

- **Branding:** As the university expends resources of time, talent, and funding to improve our brand, having students graduate who will talk about that brand positively can only assist that effort.

- **Student Retention:** By providing student services in the most efficient and positive manner possible, we will improve student retention. Increased student retention will have a cascading effect on university finances, as we will increase revenues, continually fill more beds, and ultimately reduce costs associated with recruiting new students to replace those having transferred. It is far less expensive to retain students than recruit new ones.

- **Enhanced Reputation:** This is the flip side of branding, in that retaining qualified and satisfied students through degree completion and timely graduation will lead to more graduates finding success, which will therefore serve to improve our reputation through national surveys and word of mouth.

There are costs associated with these changes, but research indicates that some institutions that have implemented similar changes realize an annual retention increase of 4 to 6 percent. The Goal 5 Subcommittee anticipates that the proposed changes outlined in its White Paper could contribute to an annual retention increase of approximately 2 to 3 percent, which is both realistic and attainable. These costs include the development of an integrated student services website (and perhaps a companion website for staff services), student support software programs, and perhaps the least expensive financially, but most difficult culturally, would be the integration of the Career, Reading and Writing, and Student Success Centers. It is worth noting that the integration of these three vital centers would finally optimize the services of all three centers administratively.
APPENDIX A: NAMES OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND CONSULTANTS

Catherine Certo- Subcommittee Chairman
Katie Cox
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APPENDIX B: REFERENCES AND RESOURCES CONSULTED

Documents

Simplification of Process
University of Minnesota: Orientation Quick Start Guide
www.mmm.edu/admissions/after-you’readmitted.php

Degree Works: Features and Functions

Student Success Collaborative: Executive Briefing

Virtual Co-location Services
University of Massachusetts Student Support Services Website

Physical Co-location of Services
The Case of Wheaton College
The Case of Clark University
Northern Illinois University: One-Stop Shopping Under One Roof