

THE
UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS
AT
CHICAGO



FLAMES CONNECT



EXCEL CENTER
Magazine 2018

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Dr. Rudy M. Molina, Jr.

WELCOME

FROM THE ASSOCIATE VICE CHANCELLOR

GREETINGS FROM CHICAGO!

On behalf of the UIC Success Team, I welcome you to our inaugural student success magazine! Flames Connect is designed to inspire new ways to stay connected and to be part of the UIC family, while bringing awareness about the innovative and effective student success initiatives at UIC.

In this edition, you will learn more about:

1. Career success research and the recent findings that illustrate the most important factors that are associated with career outcomes,
2. The newly created Excel Center, Success Coaching, and other services to help students get to the 'finish line' while achieving their goals,
3. Our promise to work from a place of hope and to infuse care into each program, service, and interaction that we have with students.

You'll also notice that there are tips and suggestions from members of our success team in the form of motivational statements throughout the magazine. We hope you take the time to get to know us!

Lastly, staying connected is an important aspect of the UIC experience. We know that the students, parents, and families who are engaged with their university have significantly greater academic, career, and life outcomes. For that reason, please take a moment to find the Stay Connected card, fill it out, and send it back. I'd be honored to learn about your journey to success.

I hope you enjoy the student and alumni success stories featured and I look forward to seeing your story published in future editions!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Molina, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

CAREER

MAKING THE CONNECTION

Planning ~~START DREAMING NOW!~~

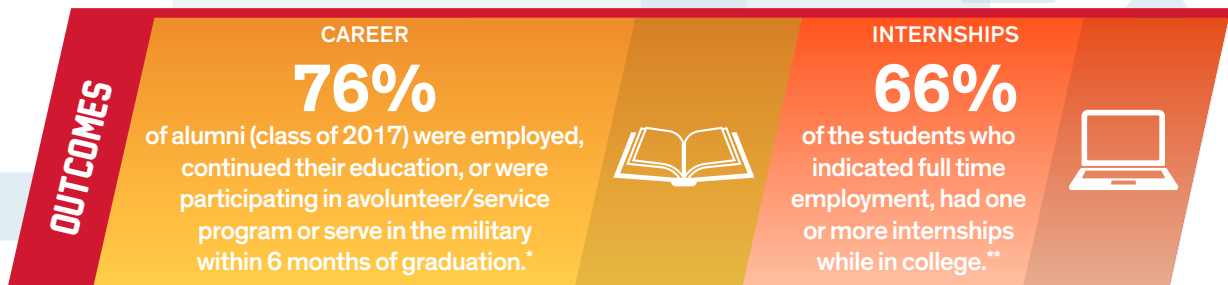
How do I maximize Career Success?

The best way to maximize career success is to do two things:

1. Start planning early as a UIC Student!
2. Get connected with career opportunities!



Based on the results from the First Destination Initiative (2016, 2017), led by the Career Center, there is a positive relationship between students who participated in internships and those who reported full-time employment.



*First Destination Initiative, 2017

**First Destination Initiative, 2017

We encourage you to work on campus, volunteer, attend career fairs, and participate in internships early and throughout your academic career at UIC. This will make you much more competitive in the job market upon graduation. Seek us out, explore your interests, and let us help you create your personalized success plan!

JOURNEY TO SUCCESS

On the impact of UIC's internships: "While I was at UIC, I participated in two internships which the university helped me get. I learned a lot about what engineering is outside of the classroom and really got introduced to the field."

Mary Cunningham | Civil Engineering



On the impact of experiential activities: "I was able to do some research at the University of Illinois College of Medicine that eventually led me to my summer position as a grant scholar at Harvard Medical School!"

Rafid Rahman | Biological Sciences and Anthropology

On advice for current students: "The advice I have for graduating UIC students is to start early in terms of figuring out what you want to do. If you want to go to grad school, sit down with your academic advisor and set out a plan in order to achieve that goal."

Brian Williams | Art History



The First Destination Survey results and career success stories are provided by the Career Center at UIC. Visit careerservices.uic.edu for online success stories and to inquire about internships searches, job shadow opportunities, and site visits to local and national organizations, agencies, and businesses.



"My family will help me reach my dreams. They laid down the foundation for me to pave my own road to success. I will bring the tools they passed on to me and learn new methods/techniques to advance my journey."

Christine Mendoza | Office Support Associate – Student Affairs

EXCELLENCE

OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The newly created Excel Center assists students in learning more effectively, building academic skills, and preparing for professional success. The Excel Center is made up of four departments, each of which have a unique mission, yet each of them sharing a common goal -- to support UIC students in their pursuit of life-long learning by offering premiere programs and services.



Ace (formally known as *Academic Center for Excellence*)

provides learning support services for UIC students to accomplish their academic goals by developing critical thinking skills and learning strategies that will enhance their academic success.

(312) 413-0032

ace.uic.edu



African American Academic Network (AAAN)

promotes success and high impact engagement for students of African descent through comprehensive advising, developmental programming, student advocacy, and structured learning experiences within an inclusive community.

(312) 996-5040

aan.uic.edu



Native American Support Program (NASP)

provides opportunities to enhance the growth and development, academic achievement, and leadership skills of Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islanders and Indigenous students.

(312) 996-4515

nasp.uic.edu



TRIO Upward Bound (UB) and Student Support Services (SSS)

seek to increase the rate of students who complete secondary school and enroll in and graduate from a postsecondary institution.

(312) 996-5046

trio.uic.edu

SUCCESS COACHES



Not every university offers their students a coach, so here are a few frequently asked questions:

What is a Success Coach?

Your Coach will:

- Offer free academic support, information, skill development, and advocacy.
- Help you adjust to college life, realize your true potential, and assist you in accomplishing your dreams.

- Empower you to thrive both inside and outside of the classroom.
- Know firsthand the challenges and obstacles first-year students are facing.
- Work closely with you to help form good study habits, solve problems, adjust to the demands of college life, and more.

Who are Success Coaches?

Your Coach is:

- A peer (third and fourth-year students and graduate students) who knows firsthand what it takes to be successful at UIC.
- Someone who has set their own goals and is now ready to help you through this process.
- Experienced in overcoming struggles, transitioning to college, financing their education, learning and studying, family and life obligations, plus so much more.
- A student who has actively participated in a comprehensive training program where they learned to turn their experiences into tools and resources to help you.

Where do the coaching sessions take place?

The short answer is wherever it's most convenient for you!

- In-person, online, or over the phone.
- We prefer to meet with you in-person for a few sessions before we get too fancy with technology.
- Our office is centrally located at the UIC Daley Library. We also have offices in the Student Services Building (SSB) on Harrison and Racine and in Student Center East (SCE).
- If you need us to pop-up somewhere else, let us know and we'll do our best.

When can I meet with a Success Coach?

Perhaps today! Don't hesitate to book your initial session. They are anxiously awaiting your first move.

Find availability by using the online appointment scheduler: excellence.uic.edu/appt

CONTACT YOUR SUCCESS COACH, TODAY!



"Always first look within yourself and then your surroundings to find something positive in a challenging situation."

– Cynthia Teschner | Office Support Specialist – TRIO

SUCCESS

AGAINST ALL ODDS

Realized Potential

By Jose De Leon



Brisel Jimenez

Brisel Jimenez self-identifies as a Latina and is studying economics and entrepreneurship. In her first meeting, Brisel told her coach that she was struggling academically and trying to get off of academic probation. As the semester progressed, she began to implement the tools and skills she was learning, and as a result, she managed to get off academic probation and make it on the Dean's List.

My UIC experience has been hectic, but definitely worth it. During my first year, I found myself lost. I didn't think I needed help, however, I realized that this was completely false.

I moved to the city my freshman year and it was a hard transition for me. I went from living in a small northern suburb to living life in the city. Immediately schoolwork started to pile up, and half-way through the semester, I thought it was too late to ask questions or get help. I was struggling to find a balance between my academic responsibilities and my personal life, as well as paying for my own tuition.

I was placed on academic probation during my second semester at UIC. I was embarrassed to tell my family. They were proud that I was the first in the family to go off to college. I didn't know what I was going to do, but I felt that I needed to own up to my responsibilities and start working on habits that were detrimental to my academic work. I realized that I needed to ask for help.

After working with my success coach, I learned how to recognize my potential. It could have been easy to withdraw and give up, but I persisted. I met with professors and TA's during office hours, and I asked so many questions. I did everything I didn't do my first semester.

Ace helped me tremendously. The concepts and skills that I learned in 2016 have since become the tools that I implement every semester. Jose De Leon has been my academic advising coach for the last four semesters and has become a mentor to me. I am thankful to have met him at a time when I had lost all motivation. He taught me how to better track and manage my time, how to develop and maintain goals, and how to keep track of my progress.

I now commute to and from UIC which has worked out for me. I think I have finally found my niche on campus and I am planning to graduate in the spring semester of 2019 with a degree in economics, as well as minor in political science and entrepreneurship.

Learning with a Purpose

By Dr. Rudy M. Molina, Jr.



Tyler Portis

As a high achieving student from the Chicago Public School system, Tyler Portis, a fourth-year business management student scheduled to graduate May 2019, is not afraid to get involved or ask for help.

Since attending UIC, there have been key programs and support services that I've utilized, such as the African American Academic Network (AAAN) Retreat and Project LEAD through the Residence Life Project, a three-day program to develop leadership skills. Both were great!

Once the semester started, I began meeting with my AAAN advisor every other week. I didn't feel like I needed it to survive, but I wanted to make sure I would do well. My advisor was great because he would suggest resources that I never

thought of.

As far as learning strategies, I hang up my syllabi on my bedroom wall so I can visually see what my assignments are and when they are due. I've also realized that I learn best if I work with others and talk it out. Lastly, I learned that my professors expect real research, quotes, and evidence, so once I started reading more and annotating, I was able to learn a lot.

Besides my jobs as a resident assistant, campus tour guide, and orientation leader, I'm also involved with the Student Activities Board (SAB). As a business management major, I see how these leadership and management techniques actually play out in real life. It's cool to see how my course work overlaps with my involvement on campus.

Fiery Passion

By Cynthia Soto



David Bibbs

David Bibb's story is similar to many of the Native American students who come to the NASP office. As a first-generation college student from Chicago, David identifies as an African American but is also a citizen of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin. He frequently visits his family on the Oneida reservation to keep updated on tribal happenings.

Over the years, David has worked with staff and faculty from the African American Academic Network, the Asian Cultural Center, the Sociology Department, the Native American Support Program, and with off-site resources in the Native American community. He is grateful that he can always find a place on campus to receive assistance from staff. Due to his experiences as an African American and Native American male in Chicago, David is able to contribute a lot to his classroom

discussions, and it is encouraged. When he falls behind in classwork, UIC staff helps him to succeed, and because of those essential moments of support, he strives to do better and not let them down.

David has a passion for sociology and it stems from growing up in Chicago. He has witnessed and lived in challenging situations, which has led him to pursue a sociology degree. He hopes to bring his insights and experiences to the field so he can improve the societal issues facing his Native and Black communities. David hopes to pursue a master's degree in social work and believes that UIC wants "to get the best out of you!"

TECHNOLOGY

THE DR. DOUGLAS COLLABORATION ROOM

By Bahar Baniasad



Dr. W. Clark Douglas

In the spring of 2018, Ace proudly opened the Dr. Douglas Collaboration Room to the UIC community. The meeting space was named after Dr. W. Clarke Douglas, an individual who dedicated 33 outstanding years to the University of Illinois at Chicago, by assisting countless colleagues and UIC students in exploring their potential and possibilities along their path to achievement.

We recognize students' needs for diverse learning environments to fit their different needs at different times; moreover, no two students learn the same way. We all use a variety of learning sensories when processing information, such as

visual, auditory, or kinesthetic modalities. Considering this, Ace has used a unique approach to academic support strategies that integrates multiple learning modalities. The Dr. Douglas Collaboration Room has been strategically designed to empower UIC students to engage with their studies through motion, touch, sight, sound, and collaboration. The room features individual productivity stations in the shape of small central tables that act as white-boards and allow students to sit and connect their laptops to large screen monitors. With tables, chairs, and flat screen monitors on the wall, the room provides instructional space with shared screen technology via group collaboration stations and a giant projector display.

College Teachers and Success Coaches use the room to facilitate workshops, teach courses, and conduct trainings. While sitting at the individual collaboration stations, students work in teams and huddle around the technology while collaborating and learning from one another. The space can be used during class time, or for brainstorming meetings for faculty and students. The physical proximity plays an important role in promoting learning. It helps students focus on each other, the content, and promotes teamwork.

“New and innovative technologies when used wisely can be of immense value in enhancing student learning.”

– Dr. W. Clarke Douglas

THE DR. DOUGLAS COLLABORATION ROOM

This room provides instructional space with shared screen technology via group collaboration stations, a large projector display, and dry erase glass boards.



Dr. Geoff Thames, director of Ace, facilitates the weekly training for the peer success coaches, sharing techniques and strategies on how to support UIC students maximize their academic and life success.



After small group discussion, a student captures the ideas and comments in a large group discussion.

ENGAGEMENT

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Peer Success Coach Interviews

By Ariel Montgomery

We believe the right person, at the right time, can change a life. Peer Success Coaching is a new position on campus and students in this role will work with students on transitioning to the university, answering questions about college life, providing success tips on academics, student involvement, cultivating belonging on campus, and more. We've asked three of our Success Peer Coaches to share responses to the following two questions:

- **Why were you interested in becoming a Peer Success Coach?**
- **What do you hope to get out of this leadership experience?**



Oluwayomi Omosebi

Wil Rose said, and I quote - "Success is not counted by how high you have climbed as an individual, but how many people you have brought with you." I have always wanted to be a mentor, teacher, researcher, a leader, and an individual with traits that people can look up to in order to discover their purpose, achieve their dreams, and impact the world. In order to be the person I want to become, I need to grow more and develop myself. I see the Peer Success Coach position as one of the best opportunities by helping fellow students and developing my own leadership skills. We are all responsible for our own learning and growth, and in a place where ideas are being shared, advancement will surely occur.



Alleia James

My hope is to help my students feel comfortable and welcomed at UIC. I am here to serve my cohort of students and act as their personal cheerleader! I also hope to practice my interpersonal and conflict-solving skills. This leadership opportunity will allow me to drive change on this campus and learn how to become flexible with people and situations. I hope to understand when to coach, support, and direct my mentees as a Peer Success Coach. This leadership experience will hold me accountable for my actions and help me improve my time-management skills. My goal is to be an inspiration for my students and project positivity in their life. I believe that AAAN and Ace picked a great team to deliver their vision and increase retention at UIC.



Magdalena Garcia

I recognized the strength of the struggles I faced my freshmen year, but I also witnessed the resilience of the community around me and my access to resources. I realized how much more difficult my transition at UIC would have been if professors, staff, and other students hadn't taken an interest in me and had faith in who I could become at UIC. I believe the Peer Success Coach program at UIC has taken on an initiative to offer that same feeling to every student on campus, and I want to be a part of that.

ALUMNI

CAREER READINESS AND LIFE AFTER GRADUATION

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), “...career readiness is the attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace.”

The following eight competencies have been identified and associated with career readiness:

1. Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
2. Oral/Written Communication
3. Teamwork/Collaboration
4. Digital Technology
5. Leadership
6. Professionalism/Work Ethic
7. Career Management
8. Global/Intercultural Fluency

UIC has many resources to support students as they transition into their professional career. The Excel Center team has teamed up with the Career Center, UIC colleges, and community partners to enhance existing opportunities and to create new career readiness programs.

There are countless success stories of alumni who have transitioned into their professional career and each of them are noteworthy. We recently had the opportunity to hear from Dr. Rachel Harsley, a proud alumna of UIC, a trailblazer and visionary, who believes in the power of leading by example.

naceweb.org - Career Readiness Defined



“The key to this balancing act is organization.”

– Audrey Zenner | College Teacher - Ace



STORY OF RACHEL HARSLEY

Rachel Harsley is a dreamer, an innovator, and a problem solver.

Her father purchased the family's first computer when she was six years old and her love of technology has grown ever since. She is the first African American female to receive a PhD in Computer Science from UIC.

Since her introductory programming class during junior high up until present day, Rachel has been the only African-American female in each of her computer science classes. She is determined to help end this disparity in academia and in the tech industry at large. One way she seeks to do this is with her research and development of Collab-Chi Qat Tutor, a computer based tutoring system that allows students to collaborate as they learn. She explained, "Collaborative learning leads to improved recruitment and retention of underrepresented students in STEM".



Rachel Harsley, PhD
Software Engineer at Google

Rachel is passionate about helping others. She founded Maychild Technologies to connect small businesses and non-profits to technology solutions. Soon after, she launched Maychild Technologies' entry into the app development industry with the release of Clean Slate Messenger. An Apple computer is typically needed for iOS development. However, as a student strapped for cash, Rachel hacked a method to code the app on a Windows machine. Clean Slate Messenger changes messaging by empowering people to share and delete messages with no message history on either device. Messages are sent instantly just like an in-person conversation. In the first two months since release, the user base expanded to ten countries via word of mouth alone.

Rachel dedicates time to speak at local Chicago schools and organizations to promote STEM studies and careers. She loves to inspire younger coders and entrepreneurs, and contributes to several online resources for underrepresented people in technology including, Blacks in Technology and People of Color in Tech. She has received recognition for her academic achievements and community involvement with a Chicago Urban League Women in Tech Award, Illinois Technology Foundation's 50 for the Future Award, UIC Abraham Lincoln Fellowship, Microsoft NSBE Scholarship, and the Vanderbilt University Chancellor's Scholar Award.

Rachel has made her mark through significant contributions in software development internships at several major technology corporations - Google, Intel, AT&T, and GE. Her favorite projects include developing the machine learning technology to predict Google users' searches and building an iOS application to connect GE field service engineers. Since completing her PhD program, Rachel is presently employed as a Software Engineer at Google.



"I use lists to stay organized. Separating my tasks by topic or type (i.e. personal, work, school) helps me to stay balanced and feel ready to tackle them one-by-one."

– Kristina Garcia | Associate Director – Commuter Student Advocacy and Student Engagement

PROMISE

A PLACE OF HOPE AND CARE

Our promise is to work from a place of hope and to infuse care into each program, service, and interaction that we have with you. The following core principles is what guides our approach.

LEARNING: Students seeking learning strategies and opportunities are encouraged to learn in their own unique way based on their individual strengths.

Our Promise: We will provide you with the tools to find success, in and outside the classroom, and self-regulate learning devised for career success.

QUALITY: Each learner's unique life-story has value and is important.

Our Promise: We will take the time to listen to you and place value in your story.

TRANSFORMATION: Reflecting on the past and planning for the future leads to individual growth.

Our Promise: We will partner with you during your journey of success.

EQUITY: Equity is achieved when diversity is valued and environments are inclusive.

Our Promise: We will meet you where you are at, so that you experience a sense of belonging.

SUCCESS: Access to a holistic experience in higher education creates opportunities to excel and succeed beyond the classroom.

Our Promise: We will be advocate as you seek educational opportunities to enhance your overall college experience.



“When in doubt, ask! Raise your hand, get to know your professors, and take advantage of all that UIC has in place for your success.”

– Dr. Geoff Thames | Director – Ace

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