

### New Course Proposal

New course proposals at the undergraduate level must be approved by the Department Curriculum Committee, Department Chair, College Curriculum Committee, and College Dean before being presented to the Undergraduate Curriculum and Catalog Review Committee. Proposals for new courses intended for inclusion in the Core Curriculum must also be approved by the General Education Curriculum Advisory Committee before being presented to the Undergraduate Curriculum and Catalog Review Committee. Courses recommended by the Undergraduate Curriculum and Catalog Review Committee to the Vice President for Academic Affairs must be approved before they can be scheduled.

#### I. Catalog Entry

a. Department Prefix (three or four capital letters)    UNIV

b. Course Number (three numbers)    150

c. Course Title    Achieving Academic Success

d. Prerequisites    Fewer than 24 RU hours attempted and cumulative GPA below 2.00

e. Credit Hours    One

f. Brief Description    This course is designed to support academically-deficient students in their quest to return to good academic standing. Using structured exercises, reading assignments, self-reflection, and presentations, students will establish realistic academic goals, learn strategies through which those goals can be achieved, and become familiar with campus resources available to support their ambitions. Course credit earned in UNIV 150 will be counted in the determination of full-time status, and in consideration of eligibility for financial aid and other credit-determined privileges and obligations, and . However, credit in this course *cannot* be applied toward graduation requirements.

#### II. Detailed Description of Course

a. Content    In keeping with similar courses that are offered successfully at other institutions (e.g., the University of Arizona; see Shelley M. McGrath and Gail D. Burd, "A Success Course for Freshmen on Academic Probation: Persistence and Graduation Outcomes," NACADA Journal Volume 32(1), Spring 2012, pages 43-52), UNIV 150 will include five dimensions:

1. Student Development
2. Academic Success Strategies
3. Radford University Academic Policies and Procedures
4. Major and Career Exploration
5. Engagement with Supporting Resources

b. Detailed Description of Conduct of Course    UNIV 150 will be taught by a faculty/staff instructor and a peer instructor; in time, we hope that the latter will include successful "graduates" of the course. The course will be highly interactive. While the instructors will be responsible for imparting critical information about the meaning and importance of academic success and strategies through which students might achieve it, a significant amount of the course will involve students' written and oral self-reflections about why they are not in good academic standing and what they plan to do to attain that status. Standardized assessment instruments will also be used and students' results shared with them so that they might have a better idea about the characteristics they possess and behaviors they practice that place them at academic risk. Guests from

across the University with specialized expertise will be invited to share that expertise with the class whenever possible. Students will be expected to complete out-of-class assignments; e.g., they will be expected to submit regular reports on meetings with their faculty. Students will be required to have at least two one-on-one meetings with their UNIV 150 instructors, near the beginning and the end of the course, to discuss goals and progress toward their achievement. Finally, students will be expected to be present for a minimum of four hours in a structured study environment each week, with peer instructors monitoring their attendance and behavior.

UNIV 150 will meet for 50 minutes twice each week for the first ten weeks of the semester.

c. Student Goals and Objectives of the Course Having successfully completed this course, the student will be able to:

1. Recognize and explain personal and universal risk factors that stand in the way of academic success, and implement strategies to surmount those obstacles;
2. Clearly state personal and professional goals, both in the short- and the long-term;
3. Explain effective techniques and strategies students can utilize to achieve academic success;
4. Calculate his/her GPA, project the grades required to return to good standing, and demonstrate awareness of ways to use the University's academic policies (e.g., course repeats) to achieve good standing; and
5. Provide evidence of having accessed resources RU makes available to support student success, including faculty, the LARC, and if/as appropriate, the DRO and Counseling Center.

d. Assessment Measures Overall, the course will be judged successful if:

- A minimum of 50 percent of the students enrolled complete the semester in good academic standing; and
- 100 percent of the students enrolled increase their cumulative GPAs during the semester in which they are enrolled in UNIV 150.

The learning outcomes in II.c. above will be measured in the following ways:

1. One of the first assignments in the course will be an essay in which students will be required to reflect upon why they are not in good academic standing. An assignment during the course will require them to demonstrate knowledge of behaviors and characteristics that place students nationally (and them personally) at risk. The target will be for all students to earn at least a C on this assignment, with 90 percent earning a B or better. A final paper will require students to describe the actions they have taken during the semester and will take in the future to surmount their risk factors. It will be expected that 90 percent of the students will complete the course having both demonstrated an understanding of why they were not initially academically successful and having developed a reasonable and attainable plan to return to good standing as soon as possible.
2. Students will receive an assignment to set goals for the semester, their career at RU, and their lives after graduation. The target will be for at least 80 percent of them to establish goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.
3. Students will be tested on their ability to describe multiple effective note-taking techniques, study skills, and test-taking strategies. They will also be expected to complete a time-management exercise in which they first describe how they are spending their time and then reflect upon ways they might better use their time to achieve academic success. The target will be for at least 90 percent of the students to identify areas in which they are wasting their time and indicate ways they will reorganize their time to utilize it more effectively. In addition, students who are not present and actively studying during a minimum of 75 percent of the 40 possible study hall hours during the course will be unable to earn a course grade higher than C; those who do not meet at least 60 percent of the study hall requirement will fail the course.
4. Students will be tested on their ability to calculate their current GPA and to determine the grades required in current courses to avoid suspension and to return to good standing. They will also be tested on pertinent academic policies, including probation and suspension thresholds; the use of repeats to improve grades; the use of course withdrawals if there is no chance of success, etc. Ninety percent of enrolled students will be expected to pass this test with a grade of at least B.
5. All students in the course will be expected to demonstrate having met at least once with each of his/her

professors; to have kept an appointment at which more than course scheduling was discussed with someone in the appropriate advising center; to have used the services of the LARC, tutoring provided through academic departments, or online tutors in at least two courses; and to have accessed other academic support services if/as instructed by the faculty or peer instructor.

e. Other Course Information

### III. Background and Justification

a. Need for the Course In the spring of 2013, Radford University discontinued the SORTS program, a structured, contracted program for students who otherwise would have been suspended following their first semester. While SORTS achieved some measure of success, the decision was made to shift SORTS resources to students on academic probation, who in theory should have a better chance to return to good standing, and for whom there has recently been no academic support.

Rather than merely recreating SORTS for an only slightly better-positioned group of students, we are recommending the creation of a more structured credit-bearing course designed to provide students with the tools they will need to return to good standing. Such classes exist in multiple institutions across the country, including, to name a few, Albion ("Academic Success"); Arizona ("Success in Science"), Christopher Newport ("The Intentional Learner"); Clarkson ("Strategies for Student Success"); the College of Charleston ("Learning Strategies"); Georgia ("Strategies for Academic Success"); Purdue, Calumet ("Learning Strategies"); UNC Greensboro ("Strategies for Academic Success"); VCU ("MINDSET for Academic Success"); Virginia Tech ("College Success Strategies") and Wisconsin, Oshkosh ("Academic Skills").

Not counting UNIV 150 credit toward graduation requirements ensures that the student will not be able to use credit for the course as a substitute for a credit hour in an academic discipline. However, offering the course for an A-F grade that will be included in the calculation of the student's semester and cumulative GPAs provides incentive for students to both enroll and to take the course seriously.

b. Students for Whom Course is Offered The course will be offered for second semester students who are on academic probation following their first semester; i.e., those whose GPA is between 1.00 and 1.99, and for students who are being readmitted to RU after having been suspended following their first semester of enrollment.

- Students who earned between 1.00 and 1.49 in their first semester will be contacted before the beginning of their second semester and informed that a section of UNIV 150 has been added to their schedules. We chose 1.50 as the threshold because virtually all of these students will need a cumulative 1.50 following their second semester to avoid suspension. While we may want to require UNIV 150 for these students in the future if resources allow and if the course has the desired effect upon student success and retention, for now, students will have the capacity to drop or withdraw from the course at their own risk.
- Students who earned between 1.50 and 1.99 in their first semester will be contacted before the beginning of their second semester and strongly encouraged to enroll in the course.
- Readmitted students who were suspended following a single semester (who are registered for classes through their advising centers), will be enrolled in a section of UNIV 150 along with their other courses. In the future, enrollment and performance in UNIV 150 will be considered in readmission decisions for students who were suspended after two or more semesters at RU.

c. Anticipated Enrollment Because of the nature of the course, we hope to enroll no more than 20 students per section; we will exceed this number slightly to fit a section into a student's schedule.

d. Frequency of Course Offerings The course will be offered each semester. Given the number of students who have recently been on probation, we anticipate offering 8-10 sections each spring and 2-3 each fall.

e. Level and Prerequisites This is a course designed for second semester students. While some will be sophomores, juniors, and seniors who were unsuccessful in their first semester after transferring to RU, the vast majority of them will be freshmen.

**IV. Rationale for Resources Required**

a. Faculty Resources Faculty instructors will be drawn from the professional staff in the Office of New Student Programs and through the recruitment of additional instructors as needed, following the model utilized for the staffing of UNIV 100. All instructors will have at least master’s degrees. Instructors will be compensated for teaching the course. Peer instructors will be recruited from among student leaders who previously assisted with the delivery of UNIV 100, and they will also be compensated. As noted above, we hope that eventually, students who have attained success through the course can be recruited to return to it as peer instructors/role models.

b. Effect on Existing Curricula There should be no effect upon existing curricula. The staff in the Office of New Student Programs has the capacity to offer multiple sections of UNIV 150 each spring, since almost all sections of UNIV 100 are offered in the fall. Faculty from academic departments who teach UNIV 150 will be compensated for teaching the course as an overload, so no currently offered courses in the disciplines will be jeopardized.

c. Facilities, Equipment and Supplies We will work with the Registrar’s Office to locate appropriately-sized classrooms, but no equipment or supplies will be required beyond those already available in the Office of New Student Programs.

d. Library Resources

1. Describe the adequacy of materials available to support this course.
2. List in priority order the additional materials to be purchased.

Since—like UNIV 100—UNIV 150 is not a traditional course housed in a discipline, and since there is not likely to be a research paper assigned in the course, we do not anticipate needing any library books or online resources. However, as part of the course, we likely will make arrangements with the reference librarians to bring UNIV 150 students to the library so they might appropriately access the materials there in their other classes.

Attach additional sheets as needed.

Prepared by:

Signature of Faculty Member:

Signature of Librarian assigned  
to requesting department:

Stephen H. Lerch [Submitted Electronically]

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e. Computer Resources None

f. Other Anticipated Resources None

\* Approval of new courses only. Resources required for new courses must be approved through the college resource allocation process.