The Student Success Team (SST) at The University of Iowa (UI) was created in September 2006 by Tom Rocklin, Senior Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education, for the purposes of bringing attention and action to issues of undergraduate student success. The SST is one of several initiatives stemming from the first goal of The Iowa Promise, the University’s Strategic Plan for 2005-2010. The Iowa Promise states “excellent undergraduate education” is the core of the University’s mission and the plan’s first goal is to “create a University experience that enriches the lives of undergraduates and helps them to become well-informed individuals, lifelong learners, engaged citizens, and productive employees and employers.” Related initiatives include assessment of learning outcomes and the special-emphasis self-study, focused on undergraduate education, for re-accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission.

During the 2006-2007 academic year, the SST met to study and discuss topics relevant to supporting student success, including UI admissions and retention data, research on institutional conditions for student success, and research about UI students’ experiences and outcomes. In July 2007, the SST held a retreat to develop a plan for action for 2007-2009; that plan is being implemented in Fall 2007.

The overarching goal of the SST is to foster, and improve, undergraduate student success. To accomplish this goal, the SST will — through its committees and members — implement programs, research, and other activities to help students attain their educational goals and help the University achieve its goals for undergraduate education.

Membership in the SST is open to any member of the UI community who is committed to fostering undergraduate student success at Iowa. The SST — about 90 faculty, students, and staff in Fall 2007 — meets as a group four times a year to engage in conversations about issues related to student success. The September 2007 meeting, for example, focused on physical spaces for student engagement and featured a presentation by Rod Lehnertz, Director of Campus and Facilities Planning.

The SST is led by an Executive Committee, composed of 12 faculty, staff, and students. The SST Executive Committee is responsible for deciding what projects the SST will implement, and monitors progress toward the goals of the SST.
Definition
At its first meeting in Fall 2007, the SST Executive Committee approved the following definition of student success at Iowa that will guide the work of the SST:

*University of Iowa students succeed when they achieve personal and institutional educational goals. Successful students develop skills and knowledge, become more mature in their thinking, assume greater responsibility for their own lives and learning, develop understanding of diversity and multiculturalism, and become effective leaders.*

*Student success at The University of Iowa is a shared enterprise. Students succeed by active engagement in educationally-purposeful activities. Faculty, staff, and students create formal and informal learning opportunities on campus and off, and policies, programs, and practices that foster student engagement.*

*The University measures student and institutional success in undergraduate education by examining a variety of indicators, including measures of learning, persistence, graduation, engagement, health and well-being, and opportunities after graduation.*

Projects
Projects of the SST in progress in Fall 2007 include the Task Force on Learning Communities, created to study and propose expansion of undergraduate learning communities at UI; a Research Coordinating Council to facilitate and coordinate institutional research for student success; an initiative to increase the number of undergraduate classes offered on Fridays; “The Message Project,” an effort to identify clear, shared expectations for undergraduate students at Iowa; and the following SST Action Committees:

- Committee to Implement the Message Project
- Committee on Opportunities for Student Engagement
- “Pick One” Committee to Encourage Student Engagement
- Committee to Communicate the Importance of Student Success
- The “One Community, One Book” Project
- Committee on Barriers to Student Success
- Task Force on Early Intervention for Students in Difficulty
- Committee on the Use of Peer Educators

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