

# CU Succeed: Retention Through Community

## Executive Summary

Cumberland University (CU) has experienced a large growth in its student body in the past four years mainly due to its decision to accept students under the recently created Tennessee Promise Scholarship program. This program allows graduating Tennessee high school students the ability to earn a two-year associate degree with tuition covered by the State of Tennessee and represents a major effort to improve Tennesseans' access to higher education. However, a large number of the students who take advantage of the program are from traditionally high-risk populations, including first-generation college students.

To ensure the success of all of its students, Cumberland University is focusing its Quality Enhancement Plan, **CU Succeed**, on advising and relationship building. In particular, while the University has a strong history of close connections between faculty, staff, and students, members of the University can do more to foster better relationships throughout a student's time at Cumberland University. In addition, students, especially first-generation and Tennessee Promise students, must realize the value of a college education and understand the importance of continuing their education. In this way, not only will the University retain more Tennessee Promise students who transition into bachelor's programs, but it will also improve overall student retention.

Therefore, in keeping with the University's Board of Trust approved mission, the mission of CU Succeed is to help ensure that each student's experience is cultivated through attention to students as whole persons within an intimate learning community of peer, staff, and faculty mentors. This mission consists of three main goals:

- Students will develop a relationship with the campus community.
- Students will establish a connection to their selected major and career path.
- Students will demonstrate persistence and resilience in their academic pursuits.

To achieve these goals, CU Succeed is broken down into four interconnected initiatives.

**CU Connected** will work on improving the already established advising structure at Cumberland University, transforming it into an appreciative advising and mentoring program to connect students, particularly freshmen, to the university environment quickly and positively.

**CU Thrive** will aim to help students, especially sophomores, build connections with faculty members as well as other students in their chosen major to ensure that they have the support to overcome and thrive through the many challenges they may experience during college.

**CU Empowered** will have an upperclassman focus, mainly on juniors, and will begin to transition students towards a post-graduation mindset. In particular, this initiative will focus on internship placement, resumé writing, interview training, and other career-related resources that the University's faculty and staff provide to empower students to take control of their lives.

**CU Impactful** will focus on seniors and moving them into their post-college careers. This initiative will include providing opportunities to work on soft skills such as business dress or etiquette, as well as assisting with job or graduate school placement through the outside connections faculty and staff have. In this way, Cumberland University graduates can successfully transition into their careers and have a positive impact on their communities.

With these initiatives, **CU Succeed** will help students see the benefit of their time, relationships, and education at Cumberland University, as well as foster valuable relationships for a lifetime.

