

Student Success Strategy End of Year Report 2025-2026

Submitted by Amanda Figueroa and Bonnie Becker in July 2026

Overview

The 2025–26 academic year marked a pivotal shift in how UW Tacoma advances student success, from time-limited initiatives to a coordinated, institutionally grounded approach. More information about the ongoing strategic work can be found here:

<https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/chancellor/student-success-strategy>.

The launch of the **Student Success Council (SSC)** created a permanent, cross-campus structure to bring coherence, shared purpose, and sustained action to this work. Charged by executive leadership and grounded in principles of equity, belonging, social mobility, and continuous improvement, the Council serves as a space for coordination, sensemaking, and action.

The Council's purpose is to:

- Coordinate student success work across units
- Maintain focus on retention, equity, and post-graduation success
- Translate recommendations into sustained action and measurable outcomes
- Build a culture of shared ownership and continuous improvement

The SSC convened 15 members from across 5 units (Appendix A) in monthly working sessions, bringing together cross-campus leaders to align efforts, examine data, and design coordinated responses to student needs.

Rather than treating data as an endpoint, the Student Success Council uses data as a starting point for inquiry, bringing together multiple perspectives to understand student experiences, design and promote coordinated, equity-minded responses.

How We Work

At its core, the SSC established a new way of working across campus. Through regular convenings, working sessions, and structured dialogue, members:

- Built shared understanding of roles, constraints, and opportunities across units
- Practiced norms of curiosity, trust, and transparency
- Shifted from parallel efforts to coordinated, institution-wide action

Equally important, the Council created space for candid dialogue and collaborative problem-solving. Members discussed constraints, including capacity, authority, and alignment with unit responsibilities, and provided candid feedback on how to improve focus, clarify expectations, and strengthen impact.

Data in Action: Advancing Student Success

The most important contribution of the Student Success Council this year was not a single initiative, but a new model for improving student success: using data to identify barriers, partnering across units to design coordinated responses, and testing scalable, equity-minded changes that improve outcomes.

The following examples illustrate this approach in action.

1. Improving Timely Registration Through Coordinated Action

The challenge

Institutional data shows that students who register early show significantly better retention than those who register later, who are more likely to leave the institution. For example, half of students who register after the start of the quarter will not pass at least one course. Time to registration emerged as a critical and actionable lever for change.

What we learned

The Council conducted student empathy interviews and invited subject matter experts from across campus to share experiences and recommendations. We uncovered barriers beyond awareness, including competing life demands, unclear processes, and difficulty navigating support systems. Time to registration metrics were developed and explored with a range of campus stakeholders through a data party. The Council recommended two concrete actions that could be implemented and tested right away: a cross-unit registration outreach and “just in time” messaging to help broader campus stakeholders support student registration.

What we did

A “Four things to know” campaign was launched to provide themed monthly actions that a range of stakeholders could use to support students for registration, as well as career exploration and preparing for graduation.

The Registrar, Academic Advising, and Student Advocacy and Support partnered to:

- Coordinate and expand existing targeted outreach to students who had not yet registered
- Streamline referral pathways across offices
- Collect perspectives from students who were registering late or not returning to inform our future actions
- Regularly report progress to the SSC

What changed

In Winter 2026, these efforts engaged 165 students and contributed to improved registration outcomes relative to the same quarter in 2024, increasing average time to registration by seven days and decreasing post-start registrations from 92 to 42 students. In one case, outreach connected a student experiencing homelessness to emergency housing, mental health services, and academic support, allowing them to remain enrolled and continue their progress.

Why it matters

Outreach to this population of students allows us to proactively support students who are less likely to persist, help connect them to resources, and demonstrate care. This work illustrates how UW Tacoma is shifting from identifying disparities to designing coordinated, data-informed responses that support student persistence and well-being.

What comes next

This group has continued to conduct coordinated registration outreach. Since the timing and opportunities are different quarter by quarter, we continue to adapt our approach in the spirit of continuous improvement. Outreach activities are transitioning to Slate for Student Success, which will allow the results to inform individual student support across campus and will help to institutionalize and sustain this work in the future.

2. Strengthening Classroom Experiences Through Faculty Development

The challenge

Our student voice interviews (<https://www.jossr.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2025-Becker-et-al.pdf>) showed that driving factors for student persistence include having a sense of belonging and purpose at our institution. Since its inception, our overall strategy has been to create conditions that foster belonging and purpose throughout our student success work. In addition, our empathy interviews with students back national research indicating that the classroom experience is the most accessible and impactful lever for supporting student social-emotional wellness. Therefore, we prioritized faculty development to provide light-lift tools for instructors to bring into their classrooms.

What we did

The SSC has supported two ongoing faculty development communities of practice, originally recommended by the First Year Experience and High Impact Practices working groups in previous years:

- **Student Experience Project (SEP)** focused on belonging and growth mindset (second year, led by Menaka Abraham with co-facilitators Jutta Heller, SJ Lee, and Darcy Janzen)
- **Cultivating Connection and Purpose (CCAP)** focused on career-connected learning (first year, led by Maeve O'Donnell and Dawn Williams)

Together, these programs engaged 40 faculty and impacted over 1300 undergraduate students (1147 for SEP and 201 lower-division students in CCAP).

Faculty redesigned elements of their courses and implemented changes during the academic year, which they shared with campus at the ELEVATE Teaching Development Showcase in April. In addition, we hosted an ELEVATE webinar that highlighted national, local, and student experts in the scholarship of purpose and belonging and hosted a data party on measuring these important socio-emotional factors.

What changed

Assessment data showed:

- A comparison of the 28 courses participating in SEP with similar non-SEP courses in the same programs showed a notable reduction in DFW rates, from 14% in non-SEP courses to 6% in SEP courses. Applying the non-SEP DFW rate to SEP enrollments suggests that approximately 28 additional students would have received a D, F, or W had those courses not achieved the lower SEP-associated rate.
- Increased student sense of belonging by 2% in a longitudinal assessment measured across three quarters in a year within 28 courses (predominantly STEM). This percentage was even higher among first-generation students (4%) (via Ascend)
- Increased student sense of identity by 2% and improved student social connectedness by 1% (via Ascend)
- A 6% increase in overall career readiness (Career Readiness+ Inventory)
- Growth in key NACE competencies (Career Readiness+ Inventory)
- An increase in students reporting they received helpful career advice from faculty from 61% → 75% (Career Readiness+ Inventory)

Why it matters

This work demonstrates how small, intentional changes in teaching practices can significantly improve student experiences, especially for first-generation, STEM, and early-career students.

What comes next

We will host another cohort of twelve faculty to participate in the Student Experience Project in 2026-2027, led by Jutta Heller and funded by Academic Affairs one-time funds. The CCAP program will be expanded to more faculty and staff through the Pathways to Purpose initiative to be launched in Autumn 2026.

3. Building Infrastructure for Coordinated Student Support (Slate)

The challenge

Campus student support systems were distributed across offices and platforms, limiting coordination and timely intervention and creating excessive manual and inefficient workflows.

What we did

Beginning in 2022-24, the Student Success Strategy supported the rollout of Slate for Student Success as a shared platform for a range of critical student processes. This year, the Slate implementation team, composed of staff and leadership from Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, transitioned several processes into the centralized system, including:

- Advising notes, scheduling, and case management
- Course registration troubleshooting and major application processes (completed for SET, in process for others)
- Student engagement tracking and communications for selected offices including Admissions, Financial Aid, Registrar, New Student Programs, Office of Global Affairs, University Academic Advising, Career Development and Education, Office of Undergraduate Education and more.

- Math and writing placement surveys and communication
- Appointment scheduling and tracking for Tutoring Centers

During the first year, faculty and staff recorded over 1700 interactions across eleven offices, 2474 advising appointments scheduled in Slate, and over 5600 advising notes.

What changed

Slate is now used across multiple units to:

- Improve visibility into student needs and engagement patterns
- Enable earlier and more coordinated interventions
- Communicate in customized but coordinated ways
- Strengthen connections and improve operational efficiency among multiple units in Student and Academic Affairs

Why it matters

This work establishes critical infrastructure needed to scale coordinated, data-informed support for students in all parts of the institution. An institution-wide system promotes equity and provides cohesion to the student experience by standardizing appointment forms and processes for all academic advisors and tutoring centers, creating one form for all courses which need special attention for registration, rather than separated by school, move major applications to the same platform as college application, and more

What comes next

The Slate for Student Success leadership team continues to expand the usage of the system to functions and offices across campus. A framework for shared governance of the system, which spans multiple units and functions across campus, has been developed for implementation next year.

4. Scaling and Sharing Effective Practices (ELEVATE & 4 Things to Know)

The SSC also focused on scaling promising practices and strengthening shared understanding across campus.

What we did

- Hosted four ELEVATE events across the academic year
 - Student Success TED Talks (expanded from one event to two due to demand, approximately 60 participants across both events)
 - Scholarship of Purpose and Belonging (approximately 40 participants)
 - Teaching Development Showcase (at least 75 participants)
- Created “4 Things to Know” communications to share timely, actionable insights with faculty and staff every month
- Provided campus updates in collaboration with Enrollment Services through regular Chancellor’s Campus and a regular email newsletter

What changed

- Expanded visibility of innovative, student-centered practices
- Increased cross-campus learning and engagement
- Provided practical tools to support students through everyday interactions

Why it matters

These efforts signal that student success is shared institutional work, while also creating pathways to scale ideas that are already working across classrooms, programs, and services.

What comes next

We will continue to host campus-wide events and trainings to bring best practices in student success to campus practitioners.

5. Building a Shared, Actionable Data Framework

The challenge

The KPIs for the Student Success Strategy derive directly from the UW Tacoma Strategic plan, and include high-level synthetic goals for retention, graduation, post-graduation success, and equity. To reach these institutional goals, staff and faculty need accessible and actionable ways to connect their daily work to broader student outcomes.

What we did

- Advanced the Student Success Outcomes Framework (SSOF) as a shared set of leading indicators for Academic Momentum, Social-Emotional Mindsets, and Student Engagement
- Used Time to Registration metrics to shape a cross-campus intervention
- Hosted two campus-wide data parties, engaging over 50 participants in:
 - Time to registration
 - Purpose and belonging
- Used these sessions to collaboratively interpret data and identify implications for practice
- Secured funding (\$5K) from FirstGen Forward to support dashboard development, including hiring a graduate student to build and rollout tools for campus use next year

What changed

- Shifted conversations from reporting metrics to understanding root causes
- Increased shared ownership of student success data
- Strengthened capacity across campus to use data in real time
- UW Tacoma's work was recognized in the [FirstGen Forward Network Key Practices Supporting Postsecondary Data Partnership \(PDP\) Success](#)

Why it matters

This work ensures that data is not siloed or abstract—but accessible, collaborative, and actionable in ways that improve student outcomes. The national highlight of data parties as

a practice to turn data into coordinated, equity-focused action enhances UW Tacoma's reputation as a thought leader advancing first generation student success.

What comes next

A SET graduate student (Dhruva Bhat) is building and testing an SSOF dashboard in collaboration with Academic Success Programs and Institutional Research. The first version of this dashboard will be ready to share with campus in fall 2026.

Emerging Work

1. Curricular Access and Transfer

For many UW Tacoma students, the path through their degree is shaped by barriers that aren't always visible: courses where a quarter or more of students don't earn the grade needed to progress, high-demand classes where seats run out before students can register, and a transfer system that is complicated by having to use an equivalency guide based on UW Seattle curriculum. The 2023-25 Removing Curricular Barriers working group spent two years mapping these patterns, identifying specific high-barrier courses, and producing ten concrete recommendations spanning placement practices, pedagogy, scheduling, early alert systems, and curriculum review. This year's work has been about building the structures to act on those recommendations, and while the broader monitoring work is still getting established, meaningful progress on transfer equivalency has advanced our efforts to redesign critical institutional barriers that disproportionately constrain students' academic progression.

The Curricular Access Monitoring Group, the new standing group charged with carrying forward recommendations from the 2023-25 Removing Curricular Barriers working group, convened this year and began building shared processes for reviewing course-level data. While the group focused on establishing its processes and scope, the schools advanced several curricular barriers recommendations through the Provost's concurrent curricular refresh efforts across the UW system. In the coming year, the group will shift its primary focus to course scheduling and will use the AASCU Student-Centered Course Scheduling Playbook to guide its work.

Academic Success Programs, in close partnership with Enrollment Services and the School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, made significant progress on another major recommendation of the Removing Curricular Barriers group, streamlining transfer equivalency. The long-term solution, separate transfer equivalency guides for each UW campus, depends on a new student information system that is currently in discovery phase, with implementation anticipated around 2031. In the meantime, the team has focused on moving from temporary fixes toward more durable interim solutions. A key step this year was establishing a Memorandum of Understanding between Academic Advising, Enrollment Services, and SIAS's Department of Science and Mathematics to pilot a process which enables direct access to the student database for proactively updating

common transfer course equivalencies for UW Tacoma students. This means fewer delays, fewer advising workarounds, and fewer students accidentally taking courses they don't need. In Academic Year 2026-27, the team will support the development of a unified transfer guide between UW Tacoma and Tacoma Community College, a resource that would benefit both prospective and current students navigating the transition.

2. Graduate Student Experience

Graduate students at UW Tacoma have unique support needs that are shaped by a distributed organizational structure. Graduate programs are housed within schools, advising relationships are typically managed at the program or school level, and the UW Graduate School in Seattle provides important coordination across all three campuses. While this model offers many strengths, it can make it more challenging to connect graduate students to campus-wide student success initiatives and to develop a comprehensive understanding of their experiences. As graduate enrollment continues to grow, there is an opportunity to strengthen coordination, communication, and community-building efforts to ensure graduate students are fully supported and engaged in the life of the campus.

As recommended by the 2023-24 Graduate Student Experience working group, the Student Success Strategy has sought dedicated staffing to address this gap. Current resource constraints have led the campus to pursue a phased approach to expanding graduate student support. This year we launched a Graduate Student Experience Pilot, engaging two experienced staff members from the Teaching and Learning Center — Ashley Burchett (Associate Director, Writing Center) and Su-Miao Lai (Manager, Quantitative Center) — as Graduate Student Experience Liaisons, supervised by BethAnn Hoover. Working in hours above their regular responsibilities, they have made meaningful early progress: conducting a successful campus-wide graduate student needs survey, consolidating dispersed program handbooks into a single accessible location, integrating graduate students into campus communication systems, and beginning to connect graduate students with Career Development programming. A small number of community events were held, with modest attendance, a reminder that building engagement in a decentralized environment takes time and repeated effort.

A highlight of the year was a visit from the UW Graduate School Dean and her full staff to UW Tacoma in the fall. Through focus groups with graduate students and conversations with campus leaders, the visit deepened mutual understanding and strengthened connections between the Graduate School and UW Tacoma. The engagement has already led to new opportunities for collaboration and greater alignment in support of graduate student success. BethAnn Hoover serves as UW Tacoma's designated liaison to the Graduate School, ensuring responsiveness on policy and communication. Centralized support has also come from Academic Success Programs to update UW Tacoma's content in the UW Graduate Student Handbook, and in UW Tacoma's Academic Catalog. This fall, the liaisons will host UW Tacoma's first coordinated graduate student orientation, a visible, campus-wide event that has been a goal of this work since its inception.

The pilot concludes in October 2026 with a formal needs report and recommendations for 2026-27. The assessment from the pilot is that demand for graduate student support continues to outpace the current level of coordinated infrastructure available on campus.

Impact

Together, these efforts contributed to meaningful institutional progress:

- **Improved undergraduate retention**
 - Autumn 2025 to Winter 2026 retention increased by 2%.
 - First-time-in-college one-year retention for the Autumn 2024 cohort reached its highest level (81.9%) since we began admitting students directly from high school in 2006.
 - On the other hand, transfer student one-year retention declined for the 2024 cohort (-3.4%) and the racial (+2.2%) and first generation (+4%) equity gaps increased, indicating areas of future attention in our student success work.
- **Expanded external investment**
 - \$3M gift awarded to scale career-connected learning
- **Stronger culture of data-informed decision-making**
 - Data is increasingly used as a tool for inquiry, not just reporting
- **Improved collaboration across campus**
 - Greater alignment across academic and student affairs
 - Increased shared ownership of student success
- **Increased student engagement**
 - Record NSSE response rate of 25.2%, exceeding UW accreditation goals

Looking Ahead

In its first year, the Student Success Council established the foundation for sustained, coordinated work to improve student success at UW Tacoma.

In 2026–27, the Council will build on this momentum by focusing on the following priorities, as approved by UW Tacoma executive leadership:

- Strengthening and expanding opportunities for faculty and staff to engage in equity-focused student success practices
- Enhancing campus-wide adoption and use of the Student Success Outcomes Framework
- Using an equity-driven approach to examine student social connectedness
- Fostering equitable post-graduation success and purpose development

The SSC represents a shift toward a greater shared, institution-wide commitment to student success—one that is collaborative, data-informed, and grounded in the lived experiences of our students.

Appendix A: List of Participants

Executive Co-sponsors:

Andy Harris, Executive Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs

Mentha Hynes-Wilson, Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs

Co-conveners:

Bonnie Becker, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Success, Academic Affairs

Amanda Figueroa, Associate Vice Chancellor for Social Mobility, Student Affairs

2025-2026 Student Success Council

1. Menaka Abraham, Interim Executive Director for Office of Undergraduate Education
2. Bernard Anderson, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Life
3. Kaijsa Calkins, Associate Dean for UW Tacoma Library
4. Andrew Chamberlain, Institutional Research
5. Andrea Coker-Anderson, Registrar
6. Natalie Eschenbaum, Dean for School of Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences
7. BethAnn Hoover, Director of Academic Advising
8. Darcy Janzen, Director of Teaching Excellence
9. Nicole Jordan, Director of Center for Equity and Inclusion
10. Jillian Leahy, Director of Operations and Administration (through Winter 2026)
11. Raghavi Sakpal, Associate Dean for Success and Engagement of Faculty, Staff and Students, School of Engineering and Technology
12. Anne Taufen, Representative for Faculty Assembly
13. Dawn Williams, Director of Career Development and Education