

**Supporting Student Retention and Success:
LRC 101A/105 Academic Success for Lifelong Learning
UMBC Learning Resources Center**

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LRC 101A is a critical course for UMBC students in academic distress (probation, suspension, dismissal), allowing hundreds to return to good academic standing and graduate from UMBC. LRC 105 delivers the same curriculum to students who may encounter difficulty transitioning to UMBC during their first semester. The curriculum focuses on helping students understand how humans learn and how to enhance human functioning through behaviors that help motivate and achieve success.

By giving students at-risk of not persisting at UMBC a peer group who understand each other's struggles and are motivated to improve, led by a caring instructor who connects the student with crucial resources, LRC 101a/105 creates a circle of care that helps these students develop knowledge, skills and attitudes for success. The distinctive guided journal curriculum coupled with outcomes-based skill development and intrusive advising creates a compelling and consistent retention tool for UMBC.

Delivered as three-institutional-credit courses through the Learning Resources Center, LRC 101a has enrolled a total of 2,553 individuals over 23 semesters from its inception in fall 2005 through fall 2017 and LRC 105 has enrolled 63 students since fall 2014 (6 semesters).

We propose changing LRC 101a to Education 213 and LRC 105 to Education 214. The courses would remain worth three credits, but would bear academic credit and count toward a student's cumulative and semester grade point average. This change would encourage more students to enroll in this voluntary retention support, to engage deeply in learning the course content and skills, and help students boost their grades at a time when they are working hard to maintain their college success at UMBC. The course would be permission only, for students who are on academic probation or suspension, or whose placement test scores or previous grades indicate that they may be at-risk of not succeeding at UMBC. The course would not be repeatable.

Academic Intervention

LRC 101A provides instruction (including content about human development, learning science, cross-cultural skills, in addition to study techniques and time management skills), support, and resources for students facing barriers to their academic career at UMBC. Through journaling, reflective essays and in-class active learning, the course facilitates critical self-analysis where students identify their strengths and interests and reawaken their reasons for being in college. A semester-long emphasis on locus of control helps students to view themselves as active agents able to achieve their own success. Intensive, personalized and intrusive advising through the Office of Academic and Pre-Professional Advising focuses on getting LRC 101A/105 students enrolled in an appropriate combination of courses to maximize their progress to degree. The Office of Financial Aid and the Student Business Services works individually with LRC 101A/105 students who have outstanding balances (as many of 40% of enrollees in some semesters) to develop appropriate payment plans.

Population and Enrollment

LRC 101A began as a last chance for students being suspended for poor academic performance. Based on dramatic early success (54% of the first cohort of 61 students eventually graduated), the course quickly became available to students on academic probation (semester and overall GPA lower than 2.0), so they could receive help before reaching the state of suspension. Nine sections of LRC 101A, serving 100-200 students, and two sections of LRC 105, serving 25 students, are typically offered each year. Each semester, 10 to 15 LRC 101A students enroll in the course as a condition of reinstatement after academic suspension; the rest are on academic probation due to a semester and overall GPA of less than 2.0. LRC 105 students are recommended to enroll based on reading test placement scores or previous grades indicating that they may be at-risk.

UMBC's "minimum standards for enrollment" policy changed in 2010, altering the criteria for placing students on probation or suspending/dismissing them for academic failure. The new policy keeps students in a probation status for three consecutive 'below-2.0-GPA' semesters before moving to suspension. It also provides more focus on intervention during those three semesters, including LRC 101A. The prior policy moved students to suspension if their performance did not improve in one semester. Because of this change in policy, we do not compare historical LRC enrollment of probation or suspension students before and after 2010.

Retention post-academic probation

Seven- to eight-hundred UMBC students are placed on academic probation at the end of each fall and spring semester. These students each receive a letter from the Office of Academic and Pre-Professional Advising strongly encouraging them to enroll in LRC 101A or another appropriate support experience. Only about 100 of these students actually enroll in the course each semester. **By granting academic credit for this course that contributes to students GPA, more students will likely take advantage of this important success intervention and persist to graduation at UMBC.**

Evidence of Success

Retention and Graduation of students

LRC 101a overall

Of the 1575 students enrolled since fall 2010, 435 have graduated and 374 remained enrolled as of fall 2017, an overall persistence rate of **51.4%** for students who had a semester and cumulative GPA under 2.0 at the time they enrolled in the course.

LRC 105 overall

Of the 63 students enrolled since fall 2014 (the first semester the course was delivered), 3 students have graduated and 47 students remain enrolled as of spring 2017, an overall persistence rate of **79.37%** for students whose reading scores and academic background suggested a need for more academic support in college.

Rising GPA's of students who complete LRC 101a/105 from fall 2010 to fall 2017

Average GPA of students:	LRC 101a	LRC 105
The semester before enrolling in course	1.58	1.96
During the semester enrolled in course	2.02	2.24
One semester after enrolling in course	2.29	2.75
Two semesters after enrolling in course	2.45	2.91

When comparing the most recent cohorts of students for whom UMBC has six-year graduation data (source **UMBC Institutional Research, 4/10/18**):

Freshmen

Fall 2011-Spring 2017 (Freshmen)	1 year retention rate	2 year retention rate	4 year persistence rate	6 year graduation rate
All UMBC first-time students, beginning Fall 2011 (n=1413)	85.1%	73.7%	68.2%	63.3%
UMBC first-time students GPA below 2.0 first semester, no LRC 101a (n=167)	47.9%	34.7%	29.3%	22.8%
UMBC first-time students GPA below 2.0 first semester, with LRC 101a (n=118)	87.6%	48.8%	45.7%	31.0%
UMBC first-time students GPA below 2.0 first semester, no LRC 101a (n=102) STEM majors	49.0%	36.3%	31.4%	20.6%
UMBC first-time students GPA below 2.0 first semester, with LRC 101a (n=85) STEM majors	90.1%	48.4%	44.0%	29.7%

Transfers

Fall 2011-Spring 2017 (Transfers)	1 year retention rate	2 year retention rate	4 year persistence rate	6 year graduation rate
All UMBC transfer students, beginning Fall 2011 (n=1066)	84%	57.8%	68.3%	67.4%
UMBC transfer students GPA below 2.0 first semester, no LRC 101a (n=179)	57.5%	41.9%	38.0%	35.8%
UMBC transfer students GPA below 2.0 first semester, with LRC 101a (n=74)	90.2%	58.5%	39%	36.6%
UMBC transfer students GPA below 2.0 first semester, no LRC 101a (n=97) STEM majors	67.0%	47.4%	42.3%	40.2%
UMBC transfer students GPA below 2.0 first semester, with LRC 101a (n=34) STEM majors	89.5%	57.9%	47.4%	42.1%

Student Learning Outcomes for LRC 101a/105

Throughout the course, students provide direct evidence of their ability to:

1. **Apply knowledge on how the human brain learns** to develop a personalized and more effective learning system (growth mindset, learning styles, memory, and visualization).
2. **Utilize critical thinking skills** to analyze and solve problems in their academic, professional and personal lives.
3. **Utilize reasoning skills** to construct persuasive arguments with supporting evidence and deconstruct illogical arguments.
4. **Develop effective strategies for managing their emotional lives**, decreasing stress and developing emotional intelligence.
5. **Understand how culture has influences behaviors**, how the institutional culture of higher education works, and practice respectfully working with others across diverse backgrounds and experiences.
6. **Develop interdependence** through mutually supporting relationships and utilizing campus resources to assist students in achieving their goals.
7. **Communicating effectively in written and oral presentation**, applying rhetorical strategies and conventions such as purpose, structure, and format.

8. **Understand writing as a process** that involves multiple drafts, incorporating feedback, revising, editing, and proofreading.
9. Articulate and provide examples of the **personal strategies for success** they will use in the future.
10. Implement strategies to increase **self-awareness, personal responsibility, self-motivation and self-management**.
11. **Practices effective study skills** including active reading, note taking, rehearsing and preparing for tests.

Assessment

Students complete a pre and post course-learning assessment, focusing on their areas for growth and reflecting on development throughout the course. Throughout the semester, students receive formative feedback on weekly journal assignments, where students apply course learning objectives. Two formal essays and a presentation are evaluated utilizing a standardized course rubric. For the summative essay, students apply course learning outcomes to their academic lives by developing a personal plan for success. Assessment results from past semesters are analyzed in an instructors' summer retreat, with decisions made on how to improve instruction for the next semester.

	Ability to define success strategies	Writing Ability	Changes implemented
Fall 15	78.75% outstanding 18% effective, 3% need improvement.	49% outstanding, 41.5% acceptable, 9.5% needed improvement	Instructors implemented a rubric for standardized assessment.
Fall 16	55% outstanding, 39% effective, 6% need improvement	55% outstanding, 29% acceptable, 16% needed improvement	Instructors implemented a rough draft which students peer review using the rubric.
Spring 17	64% outstanding, 30% effective, 6% need improvement	62% outstanding, 32% acceptable, 6% needed improvement	Instructors reinforced the use of the rubric in class.
Fall 17	83% outstanding, 17% effective, 0% need improvement	60% outstanding, 33% acceptable, 7% needed improvement	Instructors plan to continue using the rubric in class as a peer review tool on a draft.

Instructional Development

LRC 101A/105 sections are taught by UMBC staff and faculty members from offices across the campus. Dr. Samir el Omari is a faculty member in Modern Languages, Linguistics, & Intercultural Communication. Other instructors include staff from the Learning Resources Center, the Meyerhoff Scholars Program, the Department of Political Science and the Office of Residential Life. Instructors receive both peer-led and expert training annually. Improvement to course content and instruction is ongoing through instructor team efforts each semester. Learning outcomes are developed and actively assessed, and based on this assessment data; changes in delivery method are constantly being improved. Student feedback on the course is reviewed each

semester, and student persistence is analyzed at the individual instructor level for quality control. Summer faculty development can include presenters from the On Course curriculum ambassador program as expert trainers in curriculum delivery in addition to pedagogical studies. Training in 2017 included a workshop implementing online engagement tools via Cengage, the publisher of the course's textbook *On Course: Strategies for Creating Success in College and in Life* and study skills techniques presented by Dr. Sandra McGuire, LSU Emerita Professor of Chemical Education and author of *Teach Students How to Learn: Strategies You Can Incorporate into Any Course to Improve Student Metacognition, Study Skills, and Motivation*.

Academic credit for LRC 101a/105.

500 schools across the country are taking advantage of the *On Course* curriculum to retain students to graduation. Several made this student success course a regular credit-bearing course. <http://oncourseworkshop.com/evidence/institutional-studies/>

Several nearby campuses and UMBC peer/aspirational peer campuses offer academic credit for similar student success courses.

Montgomery College

Principles of Academic Success STSU 122 (2 credits)

Harford County Community College

Success in College and Beyond SDEV 110 (1 credit)

University of Maryland, College Park

College and Career Advancement: Concepts and Skills; Academic Success Strategies
EDCP108B (1 credit)

Miami University-Oxford

Study Strategies for College Success EDT 110 (2 credits)

George Mason University

Academic Success UNIV 110 (1 credit)

University of Pittsburgh

The Right Start to College Courses ARTSC 0111, 0112, 0113 (1 credit)

Conclusion

“Our UMBC: A Strategic Plan for Advancing Excellence” supports increasing degree completion for undergraduate students as a first focus priority for the campus. LRC 101a/105 is one of the premier retention tools at UMBC, focusing teaching, advising, and financial support on students most at-risk of not persisting to graduation. By giving academic credit to students for their work in this course, UMBC can increase student motivation and learning, helping more students take full advantage of this intervention. For more information about this proposal, please contact Delana Gregg, Learning Resources Center, delana1@umbc.edu.