UNCG picked for national effort to improve college graduation rates

By John Newsom | john.newsom@greensboro.com | Feb 16, 2017

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO

GREENSBORO — UNC-Greensboro has been picked to be part of a national effort to improve graduation rates, especially for low-income, minority and first-generation college students.

UNCG said Thursday that it will be part of the Frontier Set, a project financed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Thirty-one universities, community colleges and college systems are involved in the effort. UNCG said it was selected because of its ongoing — and nationally recognized — efforts to graduate more low-income students and close the graduation gap between black and white students.

"We want to be about (college) access and success," UNCG Provost Dana Dunn said. "We see that as one of the many differentiators of this university. We're good at it.

"We attract the students but we don't stop there. We support them and we graduate them so they can be successful in their lives and their careers."

For this project, UNCG will get a grant of $640,000 over four years.

Dunn said the university will use a portion of that money to create a summer bridge program, starting in 2018, that will give incoming UNCG students a chance to take courses and prepare themselves for the rigors of college.

UNCG also plans to use the grant money to expand and improve its online academic support services, its academic advising and its career coaching.

UNCG and other Frontier Set members are to work on improving student academic performance and share insights and lessons learned.

UNCG is one of six members of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities invited to join the Frontier Set effort. The other five are the College of Staten Island in New York, New Jersey City University, Northern Arizona University, Sam Houston State University in Texas and the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

Five other North Carolina schools are involved in the Frontier Set effort: Guilford Technical Community College, Davidson County Community College, Fayetteville State University, Johnson C. Smith University and Wake Technical Community College in Raleigh.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in Seattle was started by the co-founder of Microsoft. It's heavily involved in K-12 and higher education efforts in the U.S. and in health and development projects abroad.

In other news from Thursday’s board of trustees meeting:

- UNCG will name the 140-seat performing arts space in the Brown Building the Pam and David Sprinkle Theatre. The naming follows a $500,000 gift from the Greensboro couple.

David Sprinkle is the retired chief executive officer of the Todd Organization, an executive benefits planning company, and a member of UNCG's board of trustees. Pam Sprinkle has served on numerous UNCG and community boards.

The theater, in UNCG's former music building on Tate Street, is used for student plays and performances by the N.C. Theatre for Young People. It's also an acting and directing classroom.

- UNCG said spring semester enrollment is up nearly 4 percent from a year ago. For the current semester, UNCG has 17,633 degree-seeking students — an increase of 650 from spring 2016.

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