

McNeill Academic Program October, 2005

Organized in 1999 from elements of older programs, the current McNeill Academic Program incorporates these elements:

- direct instruction in first-year core curriculum classes in mathematics and writing, featuring small classes taught in the McNeill “neighborhood” in Willard hall
- 1-credit co-seminars taught in conjunction with key “gateway” classes in economics, chemistry, physics, mathematics, and biology; co-seminars provide in-depth enrichment of the material and teach effective learning strategies
- McNeill students majoring in the sciences or mathematics receive extensive support and preparation through their first three semesters of university calculus
- each McNeill student is assigned a professional staff member as her/his Academic Coordinator; this professional acts as a guide and resource person throughout the student’s academic career
- upon admission to UCB each McNeill student receives early contact and a special session at summer orientation from the program; the SASC Student Advisory Board organizes a Saturday visitation day in the summer for new McNeill students and their families
- the McNeill program closely monitors students’ academic progress, receiving midterm reports from professors throughout their university careers and sharing these with the students
- through the Student Academic Services Center, the McNeill program’s home department, students have access to tutoring
- each semester McNeill offers workshops in study strategies, career selection, interest and strength identification, attaining entrance to professional schools, finding internships, and numerous other personal and academic development topics; McNeill participants are required to participate in at least one workshop per semester; workshops utilize expert presenters from the university and external communities; other UCB students may also participate
- partnerships with UCB Career Services and Counseling Services provide McNeill students special access to career and personal development experts and a part-time counselor-in-residence; through a partnership with UCB International Education McNeill students are eligible for scholarships in the Study Abroad program
- the McNeill program promotes a sense of community: community events such as picnics and contests; accessible study areas and a computer lab; an open door policy for access to staff members; a deliberate emphasis on inclusion and appreciation of students

from diverse backgrounds, communicated through signage, staff training and pedagogical approaches; leadership opportunities for students to serve as peer instructors, counselors, and on the department's advisory board, as well as to connect to other campus activities (see Outcomes below)

- support for students who speak English as a second language
- participation scholarships: 34% of McNeill students receive the university's LEAD scholarships (\$1000 per year), which require program participation and community service
- in collaboration with the Business Diversity Scholars program in the Leeds School of Business, the McNeill program provides academic support to 15-25 Business students from underrepresented backgrounds each academic year
- careful tracking of students and regular assessment of program components are used for continuous quality improvement

Criteria for participation: The McNeill program is fed by five main streams of students:

- (1) Graduates of the systemwide CU Pre-Collegiate Development Programs (PCDP) are required to participate in one of UCB's LEAD Alliance programs; a majority of PCDP graduates choose McNeill.
- (2) The Admissions office, in collaboration with McNeill staff, identifies first generation college students, students from rural or low-income schools, students from populations underrepresented at UCB, and/or students with academic needs who would benefit from the McNeill program. Identified students receive an Admissions letter assigning them to the McNeill Academic Program.
- (3) Students who receive the Governor's Opportunity Scholarships are required to participate in McNeill.
- (4) Students receiving Daniels fund or Admissions LEAD scholarships are required to choose a LEAD program and many choose McNeill.
- (5) In addition, any CU student may self-elect to participate in McNeill, and staff or faculty members, sometimes even parents, often refer students.

In the fall semester of 2005 the McNeill program is serving 479 students, including 121 freshmen.

The 137 McNeill students who entered in the Fall of 1999 had six years to graduate and provide a representative group to illustrate important characteristics of the McNeill population:

Ethnicity

Asian	25	18%
African American	27	20%

Latino	52	38%
Native American	3	2%
White	25	18%
Unidentified	5	4%

Need English as a Second Language support: 15 (11%)

First-generation college students: 61 (45%)

Residency: 88% Colorado residents

High school background: 22% of the 1999 group graduated from Denver, Aurora, or Adams County public schools. 9% graduated from rural Colorado schools.

Financial need: 55% had an estimated family contribution (by the Office of Financial Aid, using federal formulas) of less than \$5000 per year; 32% less than \$1000. **20% had an estimated family contribution of zero.**

Average predicted 1st year GPA: 2.3 (compare to 2.8 for all UCB; 2.7 for all students of color). Range of 1.76 to 3.27. Median 2.34.

Retention rates:

To 2 nd fall	80%	(compare to 84% for all UCB)
To 3 rd fall	74%	
To 4 th fall	69%	

Graduation Rates:

By 4 th yr	23%
By 5 th yr	50%
By 6 th yr	58%

Compare this 6-year rate with 66% for all UCB Arts & Sciences and 60% for all UCB students of color. The McNeill rate is remarkable given the, on average, lower predicted GPAs and less advantaged backgrounds of McNeill students.

Graduation rates by ethnicity for this McNeill cohort:

Asian American 6-yr rate:	48%	(compare to 63% for all Asian Am.)
African American:	63%	(compare to 54% for all African. Am.)
American Indian	NA	(only 3 students in cohort)
Latino	62%	(compare to 58% for all Latino)

White

64% (compare to 68% for all White)

Important note: Since 1999 the trend for the McNeill program to be a pathway into UCB for first generation college students from lower income Denver metro and rural high schools has intensified. Students entering the McNeill program in Fall 2005 are **67% first generation college students**. 27% are from Denver, Aurora, or Adams County high schools, 9% from rural schools, and 5% graduated from Pueblo high schools.

Staffing: Each of the ten members of the McNeill team works extensively with McNeill Academic Program students, but also performs other duties and serves other university students in her/his area of expertise. This creates efficiency and cost effectiveness. Here is a list of staff members by title and duties within the Student Academic Services Center (SASC):

- McNeill Program Director, SASC Academic Skills and Resources Coordinator, and SASC Associate Director
- Post-First Year Retention Coordinator
- Mathematics Program Director and instructor
- Assistant Math Coordinator and instructor
- Math Instructor
- Writing Program Director
- English as a Second Language Coordinator
- Tutoring Coordinator
- SASC Associate Director (pre-college and grant operations)
- SASC Director

Each staff member serves a caseload of McNeill students, as well as performing other university functions. A few examples: the SASC math director provides training for the UCB Math Department staff who teach college algebra; the SASC writing director serves on the curriculum committee of the UCB Program in Writing and Rhetoric; several staff members collaborate with UCB Disability Services to offer campus workshops on test anxiety.

In addition, the program is staffed by part-time lecturers, peer counselors, and undergraduate instructors' assistants.

LEAD Financial Aid: During Fall semester 2005, 172 McNeill students receive LEAD scholarships, totaling \$172,000.

Outcomes of McNeill Academic Program: A diverse staff of professionals serves approx. 500 McNeill students per year, producing the retention and graduation results listed above, while generating significant additional credit hours of instruction, tutoring, academic skills workshops, academic guidance, testing, and assessment for the campus. Locating the McNeill Academic Program within the Student Academic Services Center not only captures the expertise of the staff of professional educators listed above for the McNeill students, but also creates synergy among the four other programs serving low income, first generation and

underrepresented students in SASC: Academic Excellence Student Support Services, McNair Post-Baccalaureate, Pre-Collegiate Development, and Upward Bound. Three of these are federal grants, permitting federal and university dollars to complement and leverage each other.

In Spring 2004 SASC surveyed McNeill Academic Program students, achieving a 53% response rate. Students reported high levels of satisfaction with the program: 81% rated “support from the McNeill Academic Coordinators” as high or very high; 68% rated McNeill’s sense of community as high or very high; 66% rated McNeill’s opportunities for intellectual development as high or very high; 66% rated the program’s contribution to their academic success as high or very high. Students rated the quality of McNeill program classes and advising higher than their other university classes and advising.

The survey also revealed that McNeill students make important contributions to the larger university community. 45% of respondents described themselves as bilingual or multilingual; this linguistic diversity brings much value to UCB. 222 respondents stated that they are involved in volunteer, community, academic, religious, sports, student, or other groups outside of the McNeill program. They listed a wide range of involvement: Black Student Alliance, Asian Interest Sorority, Latino Fraternity, Boulder County Safehouse, Vietnamese Student Association, UCSU student government, club hockey, Christian Challenge, Buddhist Temple, President’s Leadership Class, Ecopledge, Alliance of Latin American Students, MEMO club at Journalism School, CU Women’s Center, Conversation Partner Program, Federalist Society, College Republicans, Citizens Police Academy, Gay-Straight Alliance, Chiapas Coalition, ... This is but a partial list. This year some McNeill students are working as mentors at University Hill Elementary School in a collaborative arrangement between UCB’s Biological Sciences Initiative and the Boulder Valley Schools. Members of the SASC Student Advisory Board are organizing a campus visit for a group of Latina high school students from Boulder County. When UCB admits and supports diverse students and retains them through programs like McNeill, the campus gains civic contributors and leaders, as well as diversity.

Critique and recommendations: The McNeill Academic Program needs to improve its communication and collaboration with academic departments and the campus advising system. There needs to be a more streamlined, mapped out, communicative transition between the McNeill neighborhood and the larger campus. The McNeill program needs to ensure that students are self-reliant and self-initiating enough to work effectively at the upper division level in their majors.

McNeill needs to do a better job of working with Admissions, Financial Aid and Housing on more timely early contact with students.

The McNeill Program and SASC, its home department, need to solve the problem of a severe lack of space to carry out its instructional, community building, and advising activities.