

QU takes lead in helping students with Success by Design

Brian McGee is president of Quincy University.

By BRIAN McGEE

Posted: Sep. 22, 2019 1:50 am Updated: Sep. 22, 2019 2:07 am

As Quincy University's new president, I am honored to become part of the Quincy community, which so clearly loves QU.

However, I join QU while also realizing these aren't easy times for universities, when so many people are critical of higher education.

Because I have worked in higher education for my entire life, I can be frustrated by such criticisms. After all, when compared with people who don't finish college, people with four-year degrees earn more money and live longer and healthier lives. For the great majority of people, a college degree is a great investment.

But critics of higher education have a legitimate point. Simply put, too many people fail to graduate on time or do not graduate at all. Everyone I meet can tell a story about the friend or family member who dropped out of college or finished their degree more than 10 years after graduating from high school.

The response to these disappointing results could be to blame the students for their setbacks. From this perspective, some people don't deserve a college degree.

At Quincy University, we have a different approach, consistent with our Franciscan and Catholic heritage. Because we believe every student we admit to QU can and should earn an undergraduate degree in four years, we at QU have committed to a new approach, which we are calling Success by Design.

For decades, too many students in higher education have been allowed to fall through the cracks. Too many have not received the help they need.

We do not believe a student's luck, whether good or bad, should be the major factor in determining whether a student succeeds. Instead, we have been designing an experience at QU that supports our students and allows them to succeed, despite their real-world challenges and setbacks.

We will ask every student to prepare and regularly update an individualized success plan, which ends with a student graduating in four years and moving on to work or additional education.

We will continue our 159-year commitment to exceptional academic quality at QU. There is no possibility of lifelong success for our graduates unless we maintain QU's high expectations for academic excellence. Students will not earn any degree that has not been achieved as a result of very hard work.

We will build on QU's five-year-old J. Kenneth Nesbit Student Success Center and the wonderful tutoring and testing services it provides. We will help even more students learn from our full-time student success coaches.

We will make sure that more students than ever before take advantage of our new and affordable QUEST Center programs supporting student research, travel abroad, internships, service and other experiences known to help students learn more and excel after they earn their degree.

We will intervene more aggressively to help students cope with stress and financial problems. We will create programs in the residence halls and on nights and weekends to assure that every student feels welcome at QU.

We can and will do all these things. If students do not graduate or do not graduate on time, it will not be because we failed to support them.

Our students will have the opportunity to succeed by design because QU is willing to change and to do what is right for them. At Quincy University, we will be leaders in higher education's student-success movement.

So, please be patient with QU when you hear us talk about success by design, over and over again. Student success is why we are here. This is our passion, our calling, our vocation, and our ministry.