

Career Readiness, Academic Efficacy, Resilience, and Engagement (CARE)
Xavier University of Louisiana

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Xavier University of Louisiana's QEP, CARE, is a formalized, personalized, and customized First Year Experience (FYE) designed for first-generation students. The CARE model works to develop and implement a holistic, encompassing engagement for first-year, first-generation students that strategizes and synergizes their involvement with Xavier University of Louisiana in an intentional and meaningful way. The primary objective of the program is to assist students in developing and demonstrating key competencies in four distinct areas: (a) Career Readiness, (b) Academic Efficacy, (c) Resilience, and (d) Engagement. These areas, independently and interdependently, have consistently proven critical to student success, particularly related to first-generation students. Providing students with coherent and connected opportunities to prepare, perform and progress in these four important aspects is the mission of CARE, a mission that is congruent with the University's mission of humanity, justice, and leadership in all spheres of life. Each of the four pillars in CARE assists in this preparation by addressing critical competencies necessary for both effective academic and professional performance. They individually and collectively will help Xavier's first-year, first-generation students better equip themselves to succeed while at Xavier and importantly in the world that awaits them once they leave the institution.

The cornerstone of CARE are the connections between and among the students and their CARE network. Within this network are three important entities: CARE Coach, CARE Colleague, and CARE Circle. The CARE Coach's chief responsibility is to facilitate student success in all four CARE areas. The Coaches play the role of advisors, advocates, and accountability agents. The CARE Colleague is a peer mentor who works alongside CARE Coaches to help familiarize students with the university. Their recent and relevant experiences are expected to inform the CARE Colleague to act as allies to the institution's first-generation students as they embrace the challenges of university life. Finally, the CARE Circle, a smaller cohort of CARE students, is intended to foster a sense of community and belonging. This cohort grants students, from the very onset of their college tenure, *associates* to learn from and grow with who will, through committed connections, build sustainable support.

Four student learning outcomes have been identified:

- 1) Students will improve their *career readiness* through strengths-based assessment and advising, professional learning/development, and career exploration;
- 2) Students will enhance their *academic efficacy* through college competency preparation, degree planning/mapping, practice of core foundational skills and performance in foundational academic courses;
- 3) Students will build their *resilience* through intentional mentorship, motivation, and lifestyle management; and
- 4) Students will foster *engagement* through purposeful interactions with their cohorts, campus, and community

A central element of the CARE program is a student's individualized CARE plan. It resides at the intersection of the programmatic and operational aspects of the QEP since its preparation, implementation, evaluation, and adaption essentially 'puts into practice' the institutional and student learning outcomes that are the primary objectives of Xavier's QEP. In its simplest interpretation, it establishes, specifies, and prescribes the activities for each student as well as the deliverables associated with these activities. A critical guiding influence to the CARE plan is the Student Strengths Inventory (SSI). This assessment evaluates students on six main factors: Academic Engagement, Academic Self-Efficacy, Campus Engagement, Educational Commitment, Resiliency and Social Comfort. Through education, events and experiences, CARE intends to cultivate within Xavier's first-generation freshmen a sense of welcome, worth and well-being.