

SAMPLE INTRODUCTORY EMAILS TO INSTRUCTORS OR FACULTY

Sample Faculty Letter courtesy of Dr. Kelly Kelley University Participant Program, Western Carolina University)

Hi Professor's Name,

During the Fall 2021 semester, **student name**, a student is accessing courses through the University program name is enrolled in the **course name/number**. XX program students have participated in xxx courses with over xxx instructors at University name satisfying their goals for career and personal development.

For scheduling purposes, please feel free to copy me on class meeting emails to students if that works for you or sending me the course syllabus with details for the format of the classes if you wish when you have it ready for students. Otherwise, we will do our best to work with the students directly as best we can on their class times vs meeting online in any of the remaining hybrid formats.

If you'd like general resources explaining what to expect when teaching this student, please explore the two sources attached 1) Faculty FAQs and 2) the Introductory PPT "I have a student from the xx program in my class. Now what?" You are also welcome to explore and connect with other instructors who have taught our students in past semesters (insert resources)

If for the purposes of familiarity or planning you'd like to know more about the student **I am more than happy to also send you a short learning profile of the student once the audit form or approval email is returned or arrange a meeting with the student before the semester ends**. You're also more than welcome to contact me for more information or as you have questions. Additionally, if at any time in the semester you have a question about how to assess, grade, accommodate, etc the student, I'd be happy to discuss multiple options and strategies with you.

Most students utilize the assistance of other college students to help them with homework, notes, and active participation in class. Ideally, one or more students will provide support for this student this semester. An outside class support (upperclassman) may be accompanying the student for the first few weeks of class until we can recruit and hopefully train an in-class support.

We welcome your suggestions as you look at your class roster with this course to share potential names and emails of the students that we can recruit ahead of time for this leadership role in the class. If you wish, please feel free to have the students email me directly if they are interested. There is a small educational stipend for their time and leadership to assisting students in their shared academic experiences.

Attached is an audit form for the SM 260-02 course with the student you have. If you'd like to include them in your class, I have received permission from the Registrar to have electronic approvals from **instructors and department heads next semester in one of two ways: email approvals sent directly to me from this email request with your approval similar to the statement below or by adding electronic signatures on the attached audit form and sending it back to me after your department head also adds their signature or sends email approvals. I will need this email approval or signed audit forms back if at all possible before the end of finals week**

Sample introductory letter courtesy of Dr. Danie Roberts-Dahm UMATTER Program, University of Southern Florida St. Pete

Subject: [Course Name/Number] - Student: [Student Name]

Greetings Professor [Name],

My name is Dr. Danie Roberts-Dahm and I am the Director of an exciting new program on campus, called U Matter. [UMatter](#) is an innovative inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) program designed to provide young people with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to participate in higher education and campus life. The U Matter program supports students' academic access and enrichment, career development and employment, campus and community engagement, self-determination, and independent living. Students will complete their program of study by earning a certificate of completion and accomplishment from the U Matter program based upon their individualized career goals and program of study.

Students in this program are non-degree seeking students and will audit two (2) USF courses per semester. Students will be strongly supported by a network professional staff and mentors to ensure student success in the classroom and throughout the campus community. Students enrolled through U Matter, pay tuition and student fees, and have access to all university services. Students in U Matter will also live on campus and be supported to engage in campus and community life.

One of the students in U Matter, [Student Name], has identified your course, [Course name/#, section], as one of their courses for the [semester/year]. [Add personal note about why the student is interested in the particular course – re: career goals, personal background, previous experience with content, etc.] The student's participation in your class will not require any additional effort from you as a professor other than the attention that you would give to any other student in your class.

Students are supported in taking the course by academic mentors (degree seeking students). This may include the academic mentor attending class meetings with the student or they may work with the student outside of class to help them prepare for classes and assignments. The academic mentor may be a student currently enrolled in the class or one that has previously taken the course. The student is expected to participate in all readings, discussions, and assignments to the best of his/her ability. However, since the student will be auditing the course, the U Matter team will establish an individualized learning contract to monitor satisfactory academic progress. We welcome your input and collaboration regarding how to support the student's success, though it is not required.

In addition, students in this program will have academic mentors who will work with them outside of class as needed to ensure they are prepared for course meetings and assignments. Students are also registered with the office of Student Accessibility Services (SAS) on campus to receive accommodations. The SAS Director will be in contact regarding accommodations soon.

The U Matter team is well equipped to support our students in all aspects of campus life. We welcome the opportunity to work with faculty to support the inclusion of students with diverse abilities. Our team includes: Dr. Lyman Dukes, U Matter Co-Principal Investigator and Faculty Liaison contact information
Dr. Jayme Joslyn, U Matter Assistant Director, contact information

Please feel free to reach out any of us and we'll provide additional information about the program and answer any questions. Additionally, throughout the semester we'll coordinate and communicate with the students and their mentors. In the future, we will be collaborating with the [Center for Innovative Teaching Learning \(CITL\)](#) at USF to provide professional development to faculty focused on serving students with diverse abilities. We hope you will engage with us for this opportunity.

We look forward to hearing from you and appreciate your willingness to make our University an inclusive, community-oriented campus.

Thank you,

Resource from: Supporting Faculty Through Planning and Communication Strategies For Success -Meg Grigal And Clare Papay 2021 State Of The Art Conference.

Sample introductory letter courtesy of Amy D'Agati, Terps EXCEED Program, University of Maryland

Hello Dr. XYZ –

My name is Amy D'Agati and I am faculty in the College of Education, Center for Transition and Career Innovation. We are launching a brand new program this fall that has had huge support campus wide. It is called TerpsEXCEED and it is a 2-year certificate program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities/autism who could not attend college through the typical channels.

We support these students to come to UMD and experience college like typical freshmen - audit undergraduate courses, get IDs, join student organizations, live on campus in dorms if they choose, work on campus, etc. We provide additional support through peer mentors and staff. There are similar programs in Universities across the country - such as Ohio State, Vanderbilt, UCLA, University of Delaware and many many more. But this is the only option in Maryland for this population of students who want to go to college after they leave high school.

We run the program through the College of Education and the Center for Transition and Career Innovation. Our new Provost, Dr. Jennifer Rice (when she was our dean), was instrumental in getting us launched and is a huge supporter.

I am presenting all this because we have two students who are in our inaugural cohort Class of 2023 who are ready to begin classes on August 30th and one of our students - John Doe - has chosen to audit your course: COMM107 sect 9001.

Part of what our TerpsEXCEED staff does is meet with the professors to clarify the program, describe the student, get a better understanding of expectations for auditing students, and offer any support. Our students are matched with peer mentors who are being trained through a 3-credit course in the Disability Studies Minor program, taught by Dr. Yewon Lee. These students will be trained as academic tutors and can attend the courses with our students to assist with in-classroom support.

[I wanted to reach out to you to see if we could meet at your convenience - either in-person or virtually - to answer any of your questions.](#)

We are very excited to be launching this program at UMD. Everyone across campus has been incredibly supportive, and our goal is to offer whatever is needed to make TerpsEXCEED successful. I am attaching here links to our website, several articles about TerpsEXCEED, a link to ThinkCollege.net at UMASS-Boston (a national center that supports these programs and offers endless resources), and I am attaching an overview of TerpsEXCEED.

[Please let me know when might be a good time to meet, at your convenience.](#) I look forward to working with you!

Here are links to articles and our website:

<https://www.ihehub-umd.org/terps-exceed>

[NBC TerpsEXCEED News Clip](#)

SAMPLE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS RESOURCE

Western Carolina University University Participant (UP) Program

Faculty Frequently Asked Questions (HOPEFULLY coming out of COVID)

Will the UP student in my class receive a letter grade for their performance?

No. UP students are non-degree seeking. In two years at WCU they will only audit courses. They will receive a university validated, meaningful certificate, but successful completion of this certificate is not dependent on grades or a GPA.

Though receiving no grades, the UP students, like all students, depend on your timely feedback to continuously improve. They have individual academic goals and class projects to complete as part of their UP certificate of completion.

Will the UP student in my class take exams, including final exams?

Because UP students audit courses sitting exams is often not required. However, test protocol is usually established between instructor and auditing student. You may request that UP students do or do not sit in your exams.

Final exams are less common. UP students often leave campus on or around the final day of class. Again, if you wish for a UP student to sit in-person at a final exam, please communicate that desire and we will try our best to meet your request.

Will the UP student in my class get upset/discouraged if they receive a low grade on an assessment?

Though UP students may participate in modified or accommodated assessments, they are dependent on your feedback for improvement. UP students often will get no more upset than their peers who receive grades below their expectations. Generally, UP students set goals to steadily improve throughout the semester, and grades are emphasized as relative, instead of absolute, measures.

Ultimately, don't hold back. Give earned feedback, but as for all students, concrete suggestions on how to improve are very constructive.

What is a modified assessment?

Modification makes assessments accessible to learners with cognitive limitations. The goal is to maintain the learning objective, but alter the means by which knowledge is expressed. Most commonly modification might involve rewording directions and questions for increased simplicity. Shortening assessments, reducing response options, or allowing alternate mediums of expression also would fall into the category of modification.

Am I required to modify my curriculum or assignments for the UP student in my class?

No. Modification is your decision. If you choose to modify the UP team (Dr. Kelly Kelley, Susan Buchanan, Alex Raxter, undergraduate natural supports) with your permission, will help modify assignments. By helping with modification, the UP Program hopes to be respectful of the instructor's time while making content more accessible to UP students.

Am I required to provide accommodations for students with disabilities?

Yes. The students will email and keep Dr. Kelley informed when they request their accommodations. She is there to help along with the Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR). For more information about faculty resources and responsibilities for supporting students with disabilities, please visit WCU's Office of Accessibility Resources website at <https://www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-services/disability-services/>

Will the UP student in my class distract other students?

*UP students follow the WCU Code of Conduct just as their peers do. Similarly, UP students are responsible for following all rules and guidelines in your class. Where needed UP students will have a WCU student providing supplementary support. These 'Supports' should mitigate problematic behavior or redirect students to their academic responsibilities. **UP students have also been asked and are getting more accustomed to wearing masks in face to face courses. Feel free to give them reminders and let us know after reminding them if you are having further difficulty with them not consistently wearing their masks.***

Will the UP student get anything out of my class?

Absolutely! UP Students are eager to learn and they often select classes that contribute to career interests. You might, however, observe that UP student learning styles and processes do not exactly match their peers. Students selected by the UP Program are motivated to live and work as independently as possible and they understand their classes play a role in their success.

Also playing a role in the student's success are instructor and classmate attitudes and support. In supportive environments, all students are able to achieve more.

If you have more questions about how the UP Program can support you and the UP student in your class, please contact us at kkelley@email.wcu.edu or call 828-227-3297, 828-227-3298, or 828-550-1990. **We look forward to working with you this semester and hopefully seeing you on Zoom in their monthly person-centered planning (PCP) meetings as we all review their Individual Plans for College Participation.** (PCP meeting invites with Zoom links to follow by email to you as audit forms are returned).

PROGRAM OVERVIEW EXAMPLE

THE REAL CERTIFICATE

What is the REAL Certificate?

The Raising Expectations for Academic Learning or REAL Certificate offers students with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to participate in the same learning environments available to same-age peers in an academic-, vocational- and social inclusion-focused program. This two-year program includes auditing a minimum of one undergraduate course per semester and completion of vocational and social experiences. An individual plan for college participation is developed for each student.

Opportunity for First Year Seminar Instructors

- We have 4 students entering the program in Fall 2015.
- Our goal for incoming students is to introduce them to Arcadia and college-level learning, and to begin to build inclusion in the campus community.
- Students will be auditing undergraduate classes. Our intention is that they explore an area of interest while learning from the social participation in class.
- Welcoming a REAL Certificate student in your class has many benefits:
 - Building community with a greater diversity of learners in your class.
 - Increasing your understanding of learning types and differences (and the abilities of students who have traditionally been underestimated).
 - Learning strategies to engage with diverse learners that can be applied in your teaching beyond this experience.
 - Sharing your knowledge and course content with a motivated learner.

Structures and Supports Available through the REAL Certificate

- The REAL Certificate is operated through the School of Education by: Dr. Clare Papay, Co-Director; Tiffany Bonnell, Coordinator; and a new Co-Director to be hired this summer.
- The program includes an academic and social support structure to ensure that our students are successful.
- Supports that are available to instructors include regular communication with the coordinator, opportunities to learn strategies to include students in your class, and in-class support for the student, if needed.
- Students are provided with peer mentors outside of class to assist for academic tutoring.
- It is important to remember that students will be auditing class. We want them to learn the content of the class, but instructors do not need to ensure that they meet all the objectives of the class. Individual goals for participation in each class are developed for each student.

Process for Getting Involved

- Selection of courses is based on student interest. Over the summer, we will meet with our incoming students to determine their academic interests and to identify courses that may be of interest to them.
- If a student is interested in your class, we will send you an email to ask if you would be willing to accept that student. If you are not comfortable or do not think the course would be a good fit, you can decline this opportunity.

Have questions?

Contact Clare Papay papayc@arcadia.edu or Tiffany Bonnell bonnellt@arcadia.edu

