Bowie State University
Closing the Achievement Gap Plan
March 2013 Report

I.   Institutional Definition of the Achievement Gap

Bowie State University defined the achievement gap as the difference in graduation rates between African-American first-time, full-time degree-seeking freshmen at the University and all students in the USM.

II.   Trend Data

Six-Year Graduation Rates:
Gap Student Group vs. Student Group Comparator

	Fall												
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	
African-American First-Time, Full-Time, Degree-Seeking Students													
Cohort size	393	267	325	379	302	337	560	517	711	577	858	717	
6-Year Graduation Rate	40%	38%	38%	38%	39%	36%	36%	41%	40%	37%	40%	35%	*
All USM First-Time, Full-Time, Degree-Seeking Students													
Cohort size	9,226	9,615	10,040	10,589	10,521	10,766	11,796	11,421	11,518	11,736	12,379	12,479	
6-Year Graduation Rate	57%	58%	61%	62%	61%	60%	61%	62%	62%	62%	62%	60%	*
The Gap	17%	20%	23%	24%	22%	24%	25%	21%	22%	25%	22%	25%	

*Preliminary

Note: Graduation Rates are for institution of first-time entry.

Source: IPEDS DataCenter, BSU GRS reports and USM Retention and Graduation Reports

III.   FY 2012 Initiative Summary and Assessment

The following initiatives were undertaken to assist in closing the achievement gap for Bowie State University for FY 2012:

Bulldog Academy: The Bulldog Academy is a 4-week residential academic program designed to provide a "jump start" towards a college education for a first-time freshman. Students are given the opportunity to earn up to 7 credits in English and mathematics.

All admitted first-time freshman were sent a letter describing the program as well as a registration form. Twenty-nine students paid the program fee for the summer 2011 program. In addition to taking classes, Bulldog Academy participants became familiar with student support services available to them, including tutoring centers, and career and counseling services. Class locations were chosen to ensure that students become accustomed to the campus. Students utilized the math labs in the library. Library hours were extended to 10:00 p.m. during the week for the Bulldog Academy students. English classes incorporated assignments using the writing laboratory.   Mandatory tutoring sessions were conducted on Monday - Thursday evenings from

8:00 pm - 10:00 p.m. The sessions continued beyond this time in the study lounge located in the dormitory. Study sessions were conducted by peer tutors. To be eligible as tutors, students must have earned an A or B in the course they will tutor and a letter of recommendation from a professor in the subject verifying that they are capable of tutoring the course. Utilizing best practices, peer tutors were assigned to each Bulldog Academy class. Peer tutors were required to attend all classes and study sessions with the students. Feedback from the participants revealed that the tutors were knowledgeable and very helpful during the tutoring sessions.

The Office of Testing Services administered the placement test for Bulldog Academy students. Fourteen percent of Bulldog students needed developmental English (ENGL 100). The remainder enrolled in the first credit English course (ENGL 101). Three quarters of the Bulldog students in ENGL 100 passed and 76 percent of the ENGL 101 class completed their first college level English course before the fall semester.

In comparison, 86 percent of Bulldog students tested into developmental mathematics (MATH 99) and the remainder enrolled in a first credit mathematics course, pre-calculus (MATH 141). Of the 25 students in MATH 099, 21 completed and were ready for credit mathematics in the fall semester. All students in MATH 141 passed.

Twenty four of the 29 students enrolled for the fall 2011 semester and two students delayed enrolling until the spring 2012. At the end of AY 2011-2012, 73 percent (19 out of 26) of these students had a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher.

- # of Bulldog Academy participants-   29
- # of Bulldog Academy completers
    - N enrolling/% passing developmental English   4/75%
    - N enrolling/% passing Credit English   25/76%
    - N enrolling/% passing developmental Math   25/84%
    - N enrolling/% passing Credit Math   4/100%

Early Alert System: The University continued to roll out the early alert software (Starfish) during FY 2012. However, technical challenges and faculty concerns during the larger role out prevented effective use of the product. In lieu of the early alert software, the Office of Planning, Analysis and Accountability provided midterm grade reports to the Academic Advisement Center and college Retention Coordinators so that these offices could intervene with students in academic difficulty. Beginning in FY 2014, the University will use new functionality in Blackboard Learn, the Bowie learning management system. Learn now includes a retention center with similar functionality as the early alert software (flagging students' absences, tardiness, low academic performance and behavioral issues). A faculty/staff work team of are developing a training strategy and information campaign so that the retention center functionality can be rolled out in fall 2013. This will allow the University to reinvest the funding spent for the additional software into other technology related items to support student success.

KEEP Program: The Academic Advisement Center implemented the Knowledge Enhancement through Educational Programs (KEEP) program in summer/fall 2011. The KEEP program was

developed after analysis shared with the Closing the Achievement Gap committee identified approximately 200 new fall 2010 freshmen and transfer students on academic warning at the end of the spring 2011 semester. The KEEP program was designed to assist students by addressing issues that contributed to difficulties in academic performance.

Advisement Center staff members worked with students one-on-one and coordinated group support activities to further develop students academically and socially. KEEP students signed a commitment to meet bi-monthly with their academic advisors, participate in at least two enrichment workshops, study two hours outside of class for every hour scheduled in class, participate in tutorial services, register for no more than fourteen (14) semester hours and repeat failed courses. Fifty-five fall 2010 cohort students committed to the KEEP program during the summer 2011 program orientation. Of these students, 43 percent had GPAs above 2.0 at the end of their second academic year. Repeating failed courses, connecting to tutoring services and being consistently monitored have been the most successful strategies of the KEEP program. The KEEP Program has expanded to 85 students with the Fall 2011 cohort.

Retention Coordinators: The University's *Closing the Achievement Gap Plan* included an objective to hire College-level Retention Coordinators. These positions were recommended after reviewing analyses of programmatic retention and graduation reports, which indicated student challenges in transitioning from the Academic Advisement Center to departmental advising. During AY 2011- 2012, three of the four Colleges hired Retention Coordinators. The retention coordinators collaborate with the academic departments to promote retention activities, work with students experiencing academic difficulties, analyze data to identify areas for improvement, offer professional development training, teach freshman seminar sections, and work with the Academic Advisement Center to promote smooth transition to departmental advising. OPAA and the Retention Coordinators developed a set of data files and reports so that the Retention Coordinators could become familiar with their Colleges' student demographics and academic achievement levels, and could then track their achievement through the semester and through the year. The data are also used to support College retention initiatives for the AY 2012-2013.

Increasing Need Based and Academic Scholarships: Institutional funding for need-based and academic scholarships increased less than 1 percent between FY 2011 and FY 2012. Since FY 2008, need based institutional aid increased 27 percent and institutional scholarships increased seven percent. The breakdown of FY 2012 recipients and dollars awarded are as follows:

- **Merit Based: 2011-2012**
  Merit scholarship recipients   498
  Total dollars awarded $2,095,034

- **Need Based: 2011-2012**
  Need Based scholarship recipients   1,046
  Total dollars awarded $1,928,794

Faculty Development: The Center for Teaching and Learning (CETL) is responsible for Faculty Development for the University. The University provides several applications for instructional technology including: Blackboard Learn for learning management system; Bb Collaborate for synchronous lectures and lecture recording; SMARTHINKING for live tutoring; TurnItIn for plagiarism control. This array of tools provides assistance to faculty for better preparing and delivering their courses. The most important pedagogical functions are summarized as: (1) providing a virtual class where instructor and students can interact and collaborate in many ways, accessible anytime; (2) syllabi and instructor-made resources are displayed in an organized manner; (3) collaborative activities are organized through discussion forums, teamwork projects or portfolios; (4) any resource from the Internet can be linked to the course, e.g. e-books, journal articles and interactive learning objects; (5) assessment activities are conducted directly in the virtual environment, which allows the instructor to provide opportune feedback to quizzes, essay tests and research papers; (6) finally, all quantitative and qualitative information about assessment is available to the student via an electronic grade book.

Throughout the academic year, numerous workshops and training experiences are provided to faculty to support teaching and learning. These include:

- **Workshops**: Scheduled throughout the academic year (Fall/Spring), weekly workshops focus on specific topics such as gradebook management, rubrics and assessments, content management, course redesign, multimedia and learning objects, effective online pedagogy, etc., as well as emerging issues in instructional technology.

- **Walk-in-clinics**: Every Wednesday afternoon, faculty are invited to walk-in at any time to seek help for their online course redesign, using Blackboard Learn and Bb Collaborate tools, or related instructional technology questions.

- **Boot Camps**: The focus of LMS boot camp is on demonstrating the technical tools within the learning management system and quick sessions addressing pedagogy, best practices and copyright issues. These highly compressed training sessions are delivered 1-2 weeks before the semester begins.

- **LOTTO Institute**: The Learning Online, Teaching with Technology Online Institute is a weeklong faculty development experience for 15 faculty participants, offered in June, that provides a collegial environment for exploring online teaching and learning; tutorials on various learning management system and live classroom tools; guest speakers, workshops and opportunities for personalized support; and advanced workshops on emerging technology and social media.

Strengthen Student Tutoring Services and Course Mentoring: Consistent with best practices, Bowie State University employs supplemental instructional opportunities through collaborative learning strategies in an effort to enhance student success. Supplemental instruction is normally used for difficult courses that have a failure or withdrawal rate of at least thirty (30) percent (Martin, et al., 1977). It provides for out-of-class learning opportunities that allow students a

chance to discuss and process course information in a structured setting with peer and instructional assistance.

Bowie State University's English/Writing and Mathematics laboratories are directly supported by Access and Success funds. These labs are focused primarily on students taking developmental mathematics, English and reading courses but also assist others in college-level classes. Other tutoring services available to students include the PRISEM Center which offers both individual and group tutoring sessions in the following content areas: biology, chemistry, computer technology, English, French, mathematics, physics, physical sciences and Spanish. Online tutoring through SMARTHINKING is also available. For the fall 2011 semester, 1,342 assignments were submitted to SMARTHINKING. While most of the assignments were for ENGL 101, faculty in computer science, nursing, psychology, sociology and criminal justice encouraged students to utilize SMARTHINKING before submitting written assignments. The area where students requested the most assistance was content development, followed by grammar and mechanics, introduction and conclusion, and main idea. SMARTHINKING is available 24/7. All students can use this support service.

In addition through Blackboard, students are able to have out-of-class opportunities to communicate directly with faculty to have questions clarified and/or answered. Workshops are offered regularly through CETL so faculty can maximize the usage of Blackboard as a tool to strengthen students' academic performance.

The University is also exploring the use of undergraduate learning assistants (ULAs) within courses that have low success rates. In 2011, Bowie State received a grant from the University System of Maryland (USM) as part of their Course Redesign Initiative to redesign General Psychology. As the flagship entry in the University's course redesign initiative, the face-to-face version of General Psychology, which utilized the NCAT's Replacement Model, has seen its success rate increase considerably since the implementation of several practices including the use of ULAs.

ULAs are upper-level psychology majors who act as peer mentors/tutors for students enrolled in General Psychology. The ULAs must apply for the position, demonstrate academic excellence, and successfully complete an interview process. They are enrolled in a 400-level course that meets weekly to reinforce pedagogical concepts, best practices, and curriculum planning. The benefit of peer tutoring in higher education has been documented (Munley, Garvey, & McConnell, 2010), and is believed to be the result of a student's comfort in discussing their learning difficulties with someone they regard as a peer. This practice creates the advantage of having students who can communicate effectively with their peers and reduces misconceptions.

In General Psychology, the ULAs provide support through virtual office hours and discussion boards. ULAs also reinforce course content, post reminders, and function as ambassadors to the world of psychology. ULAs can close the gap between a faculty member and the student when there is a sensitive topic, personal challenge, or growing concern that is difficult to express. The ULA program enables participants to become more appealing candidates for post-baccalaureate

education. They are also better prepared for teaching assistant positions in graduate school. It is anticipated that other courses will utilize ULAs as part of their redesign strategy.

IV.   Target Group Trajectory

African-American, First-Time, Full-Time, Degree-Seeking Students Fall Cohorts 2004 - 2014 Six-Year Gradation Rates

	Reporting Year											
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	**2016**	2017	2018	2019	2020
Trajectory	39%	40%	41%	43%	45%	46%	47%	**48%**	52%	55%	58%	60%
Actual	40%	37%	40%	35%								
Fall Cohort Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	**2010**	2011	2012	2013	2014