

COPPIN STATE UNIVERSITY

CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

A REPORT NARRATIVE

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I. DEFINITION OF THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Recognizing the mission of the institution and the student population served, the University continues to implement strategies and programs to improve student persistence to graduation. Due to the increased emphasis on closing the achievement gap at Coppin State University (CSU) six-year graduation goal of 30% by the year 2019 has been established. Also, the University has refined its approach to closing the achievement gap by piloting new programs and initiatives and using outcomes to derive a comprehensive approach to improve graduation rates for its students.

For the purposes of monitoring and eventually closing gaps most noticeable in its retention and graduation rates, the University will track results using the following four major comparison groups:

- **Group I.** The differences in graduation rates between African-American first-time, full-time degree-seeking freshmen at CSU and African-Americans at other University System of Maryland (USM) institutions will be compared.
- **Group II.** The differences in graduation rates between African-American first-time, full-time degree-seeking freshmen at Coppin State University and African-American first-time, full-time degree-seeking freshmen within the University System of Maryland's historically Black institutions (HBIs).
- **Group III.** The differences in retention and graduation rates between CSU African American males and CSU African American females.
- **Group IV.** The differences in retention and graduation rates between CSU first-time, full-time freshmen and CSU freshmen transfers with less than 29 credits hours.

It is also critical to study the demography of the student population. Coppin State University has a population subset nationally referred to as the adult learner or the non-traditional student. While all USM institutions enroll adult learners, this population has a greater impact on the University. A recent review of fall 2012 student demographics show that 52% of the CSU undergraduate population is aged 24 or older.

Since these data show that this student population is significant, the University has to view the needs of the non-traditional student in a totally different lens than other USM institutions, recognizing their special needs according to current literature apart from the general student body. The amount of life responsibility on this group is drastically different than students entering directly from high school. As a result, the University must constantly adapt its services and other functions to meet the needs of the adult learner. Also, as the University reports on its measures within the two-tiered comparison group, it must recognize that its retention and graduation rates are severely impacted by a multitude of variables that are not shared by other Universities within the USM.

For many Coppin State students, several obstacles impede persistence and progression rates to graduation. Among them is the issue of student finances. Approximately 80% of CSU students receive some type of financial assistance and 55% remain dependent on Pell Grants. While they receive these funds, they are often not sufficient to cover total costs even though Coppin State has the lowest tuition costs within the USM. As a result, students fail to return to the University due to outstanding balances from previous semesters. "Stopping out" of the institution to gain employment to pay overdue balances or to satisfy the *State's* central collection unit slows progression on a semester-to-semester basis for many students.

II. THE 2012-2013 INITIATIVES

The 2012-2013 initiatives include programs that are aimed at increasing persistence and graduation rates. The major initiatives include the Summer Academic Success Academy (SASA), the University College (First-Year Experience Program), the Freshmen Male Initiative (FMI), and Faculty Absentee Reporting (known as no-show reporting). There are also other programs and services developed and implemented by the University to improve persistence and graduation rates. Those will be alluded to in this report narrative as well.

The 2012-2013 initiatives are consistent with the University's overall strategic objective of improving retention and graduation rates. It has been mentioned in other major CSU reports that because CSU's freshman class consists of three (3) distinct population of students - new, direct from high school; freshman mature (first-time students who graduated from high school a year or more ago); and adult learners (age 24 or older), the University analyzed academic performance and persistence to degree variables and used these data to developed programs that target the specific needs of this diverse population of first-year students.

Summer Academic Success Academy (SASA).

The Summer Academic Success Academy (SASA) is a comprehensive, six-week summer residential program designed for first-time, full-time students enrolling directly from high school. SASA is designed to help incoming freshmen successfully make the transition from high school to college. The major aims of this program are to provide academic development, personal growth and development, social and cultural enrichment, study strategies, academic planning and advising, financial literacy, career development, numerous other activities and workshops. Major program elements include: supplemental instruction; specialized workshops; learning communities; tutorial services (daily and on weekends); cultural and educational events; mandatory housing and program attendance; and mandatory assigned peer leaders.

Data indicate that SASA has had a positive impact on credit accumulation during the first-year, first-year GPA and second-year retention. For example, while the second-year retention rates for the overall student population was 60.9% for the Fall 2011 cohort, SASA participants were retained at a rate of 67%. Overall, these students earned a slightly higher first-year GPA (2.5 vs. 2.4) than the overall first-year student population. Furthermore, SASA participants were more likely to complete successfully their first credit-bearing math course than the overall first-year student population. For example, 72 percent of SASA participants who required developmental

math successfully completed their first credit bearing math course compared to 25.2 percent of the overall first-year population.

University College First Year Experience Program: formally referenced as First Year

The culmination of all initiatives from the Summer Academic Success Academy leads into the enhancement and expansion of the First-Year Experience Program (FYE) in the 2011-2012 academic year. During AY 2010-2011, CSU began planning for the development and implementation of a First-Year Experience program with Phase I. This phase was implemented in fall 2011. Phase II will be implemented in fall 2012. Although CSU has a freshmen seminar course prior to the development of this FYE program, there was no model or curriculum specifically designed for students transitioning from high school, further legitimizing the need for an FYE.

Data on FYE for fall 2011 student participants will not be available until fall 2012. University College First Year Experience serves as a unit where first year students would receive specialized services. First year students receive guidance through the completion of the 40 credits of the recently approved General Education's (GER) Plans of Study. Through participation in FYE, students are monitored on their progression of the GER and scheduled for coaching services through the Math and Writing Centers. First year students are also required to participate in co-curricular activities that promote engagement with the campus community. Major elements of the FYE current include:

- Intrusive academic advising for General Education Requirements
- Math and Writing Coaching
- Co-Curricula engagement in social and professional activities to connect students to the academic community

Freshmen Male Initiative (FMI)

In this program, first-time, male students from each freshman class are paired with junior or senior men. These upperclassmen serve as mentors and meet with their mentees 12-15 hours a week through study sessions, and social networking. Groups meet often for team and relationship-building workshops and participate in various community outreach activities.

Data indicate that FMI has had a positive impact on credit accumulation during the first-year, first-year GPA and second-year retention. For example, while the second-year retention rates for the overall student population was 60.9 percent for the fall 2011 cohort, FMI participants were retained at a rate of 81 percent. Overall, FMI students earned a slightly higher first-year GPA (2.56 vs. 2.4) than the overall first-year student population.

The Freshmen Male Initiative (FMI) is a learning community project that was established to provide freshmen males enrolling into Coppin with guidance for their academic endeavors. Upon acceptance into the program, the student is paired with a peer mentor or mentor who volunteered among the campus community. The mentor meets with a mentee or set of mentees

for at least 12-15 hours weekly. Peer mentors selected into the program are those who are able to provide assistance with time management, study strategies, help address concerns regarding coursework, and other information beneficial to the success of the mentee. Furthermore, the mentee is provided an opportunity to become fully acclimated with the college culture.

In the first year of the program, FMI students who participated in the program had consistently higher grade point averages that were statistically higher than those students who had not. This program like others, is part of the enrollment management plan for the University and will continue to serve larger numbers of students with the goal of retaining and graduating an increased number of students.

Coppin State University continues to develop and implement other programs that target the needs of CSU's student population and incorporate research-based programs and best practices that effectively address the many variables associated with improving retention and graduation rates. Together with the A&S funded programs, these initiatives target a broad range of CSU's undergraduate population and are a key part of the University's efforts to increase retention and graduation rates for all students. In summary, these initiatives focus on four major themes:

- Easing the Transition and Early Intervention;
- Providing Continuous Academic Support;
- Changing the Academic Paradigm; and
- Creating a Welcoming and Attractive Environment.

While some of these programs are supported by University funds, a few of them are funded by Access and Success dollars and are based on the best practices identified by the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

As the University continues to realize success through the initializing of these programs, data collection and analysis will be key in determining program effectiveness for all programs aimed at improving retention and graduation rates. As the University develops systematic data collection processes, it is important to note that there will be considerable variation in program effectiveness data because of differences in various elements of the program and differences in the impacted student population. For example, data from a program targeted towards new, students coming directly from high school (e.g., SASA) will differ from data collected from a program targeted towards adult learners.

III. Data on CSU's Four Comparison Groups Follows on the Next Page

Coppin State University (CSU)

Six-year Graduation Rates:

Closing the Achievement Gap

	Fall 1994	Fall 1995	Fall 1996	Fall 1997	Fall 1998	Fall 1999	Fall 2000	Fall 2001	Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	Fall 2006
								As of Fall 2007	As of Fall 2008	As of Fall 2009	As of Fall 2010	As of Fall 2011	As of Fall 2012
Target Group 1 (CSU African-American vs. USM African-American)													
CSU African-American Cohort Size	364	416	492	354	439	424	396	516	561	557	567	633	476
CSU African-American Rates	25%	26%	28%	22%	25%	19%	18%	19%	16%	13%	15%	15%	16%
USM African-American Rates ²	42%	41%	43%	44%	43%	46%	42%	40%	37%	39%	44%	44%	
The Gap ³	17%	15%	15%	22%	18%	27%	24%	21%	21%	26%	29%	29%	
Target Group 2 (CSU African-American vs. USM HBI African-American)													
CSU African-American Cohort Size	364	416	492	354	439	424	396	516	561	557	567	633	476
CSU African-American Rates	25%	26%	28%	22%	25%	19%	18%	19%	16%	13%	15%	15%	16%
USM HBI African-American Rates ²	39%	41%	41%	43%	41%	42%	35%	34%	38%	36%	34%	35%	33%
The Gap ³	14%	15%	13%	21%	16%	23%	17%	15%	22%	23%	19%	20%	17%
Target Group 3 (CSU African-American Males vs. CSU African-American Females)													
CSU African-American Males Cohort Size	119	122	139	100	110	127	119	146	141	131	130	145	98
CSU African-American Males Rates	17%	25%	26%	9%	19%	14%	8%	10%	11%	14%	12%	12%	12%
CSU African-American Females Rates ²	29%	27%	29%	27%	28%	22%	22%	21%	18%	13%	16%	16%	17%
The Gap ³	12%	2%	3%	18%	9%	8%	14%	11%	7%	-1%	4%	4%	5%
Target Group 4 (CSU Freshmen Students vs. CSU Freshmen Transfer Students)													
CSU Freshmen Cohort Size			513	382	457	441	417	540	578	571	588	661	494
CSU Freshmen Students Rates			29%	22%	25%	20%	18%	18%	16%	13%	15%	15%	16%
CSU Freshmen Transfer Students Rates ²			41%	23%	23%	29%	36%	34%	20%	20%	33%	44%	30%
The Gap ³			12%	1%	-2%	9%	18%	16%	4%	7%	18%	29%	14%

1. Target Group

2. Comparison Group

3. The Gap = difference between graduation rate of comparison group and target group

Other Initiatives Designed to Improve Persistence and Graduation Rates

In 2009, the Maryland Higher Education Commission identified the following strategies as national best practices for accelerating student success, particularly among the least academically prepared students. MHEC recommended that these strategies be components of a comprehensive plan for increasing institutional persistence thru graduation rates. Of the recommended best practices identified by MHEC in 2009, both the course redesign and the Honors Program were initiated prior to the 2009 MHEC report.

College of Health Professions' Living Learning Community

The Living-Learning Community was created in 2011 as an educational experience based on a specific theme which integrates academic learning and residential community living. This program is designed for entering first-year and transfer pre-nursing/nursing students who desire to live on-campus. The program provides nursing students a unique opportunity to live and study with fellow dedicated nursing and pre-nursing students. Students attend block scheduled English, biology, and nursing classes as well as first-year classes in the residence hall. A service-learning component enhances the living-learning experience for the students and assists in the development of civic responsibility and awareness. In addition, students develop leadership skills through academic and social activities while building relationships with faculty and staff.

Data indicate that the Living-Learning Community has had a positive impact on credit accumulation during the first-year, first-year GPA and second-year retention. For example, while the second-year retention rates for the overall student population was 60.9 percent for the fall 2011 cohort, living-learning participants were retained at a rate of 84 percent. Overall, these nursing students earned a higher first-year GPA (2.68 vs. 2.4) than the overall first-year student population.

NCAA Pilot Program to Enhance the Success of Student-Athletes

In fall 2012, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) chose CSU to participate in the “Limited Resources Institutions Grant Pilot Program,” a three-year grant valued at \$900,000. This program will enhance the academic support services provided to student-athletes by increasing the number of advisors and tutors available, as well as enhance our ability to monitor the academic progress of student-athletes. The grant will also increase opportunities for student-athletes to take courses during the summer and winter semesters. Furthermore, this program provides support for the creation of faculty enrichment and peer mentoring programs. One

unique feature of this pilot program will be the creation of mobile ‘hot spots’ or satellite computer labs so that student-athletes will have continued access to technology while traveling.

With the financial support of the NCAA, Coppin State University will have the opportunity to enhance its commitment to the education and welfare of student-athletes. CSU welcome’s NCAA’s effort to assist the university in providing opportunities for the underserved and collaborating in efforts to graduate students that participate in athletics.

Coppin Launch’s First Mobile Application

Coppin State has partnered with a leading mobile solutions vendor to design and implement a mobile app to meet the demands of students, faculty, and staff. With this app, the university community will be able to easily access EagleLINKS via smart phones and mobile devices such as iPhones, iPads, Android phones, Blackberry phones, Windows phones and other tablet/slate devices to complete important tasks. Students will be able to use this app to register for classes, accept financial aid award packages, check their grades and make payments while faculty will be able to use this app to view teaching schedule, input grades, lookup student information and more! This app will also provide a campus pocket guide containing faculty/staff office locations, and the university calendar. CSU will phase-in this app during the Spring 2013 semester.

Enhancing Student Analytics to Boost Student Retention Outcomes

A new release of student analytics software (version 4.0) will enhance CSU’s ability to track and monitor student success indicators and ultimately improve student retention and outcomes. This new release (Spring 2013) will allow users to track student progress more closely, leading to better student outcomes. Daily, users will have access to reports such as enrollment activity by date as well as application, enrollment, and graduation trends by academic program or school. Academic departments will be able to initiate contact with applicants, monitor and manage enrollment and the view graduation application status of students.

Using Social Networking to Enhance Learning

This semester, a cadre of faculty will pilot a program called Course Networking (“The CN”), which will provide a social networking environment to compliment CSU’s current Blackboard environment. With “The CN”, students will have the opportunity to connect globally with other learners interested in the same course subject or topic. Such experiences can improve team-building skills, challenge students to effectively express themselves to diverse groups, enable students to obtain peer support for their academic endeavors, and increase students’ technology skills.

Students Take Charge in their Own Success

Last fall, CSU piloted *Analytics for Learn* (A4L). A4L is software system that provides the faculty and students with dashboard indicators that show their progress in a course. Faculty can intervene if needed based on the information provided. As one adjunct faculty member stated, “*The Analytics for Learn*” graphs makes it possible for me to see a snapshot of student performance versus activity and allows me to quickly identify students at-risk.”

In addition, students benefit from this software system as well. Students see their progress status compared to their peers in the course. As one management major said: ‘A4L is helpful to me because it allows me to see where I am in the course as opposed to the average. It also allows me to see where I would need to make any improvements, if necessary.’ Another student noted: “I believe the “My Activity” section of A4L is great! It just gave me an extra boost of confidence as far as grades are concerned.”

Supporting the State’s STEM Initiatives

The university plans to continue to establish an appropriate physical presence on the south side of North Avenue so that it can extend its academic operations and better fulfill the community outreach dimension of its mission, while at the same time increasing and improving programs and services to its student body.

The new Science and Technology Center (STC) will have several positive effects on the university, including enhanced educational experiences for our students that will be comparable to those provided at many other colleges and universities in Maryland. This new facility will assist the university in producing graduates to advance the State’s Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) agenda. The STC will be designed to house science related disciplines including natural sciences, biology, physics, chemistry, and general sciences. STC will also include new academic space to support mathematics and computer science programs. The STC will introduce Coppin’s future students to a world-class, state-of-the-art educational facility, sending a message that effective teaching and learning are twin foundations on which this university rests.

Preparing Students for 21st Century Careers

CSU is one of 100 minority-serving universities selected to participate in the American Meteorological Society’s (AMS) Climate Studies Initiative. The AMS partnered with Second Nature, the lead coordinator of the American College & University Presidents’ Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) to implement this initiative at minority-serving institutions over a five-year period. The purpose of this program is to introduce and enhance climate studies and

geoscience coursework at CSU, while helping the university meet the academic requirement of the ACUPCC that includes "making climate neutrality and sustainability a part of the curriculum and other educational experience for all students." This initiative is supported by the School of Arts and Sciences specifically the Department of Natural Sciences and the Department of History, Geography and Global Studies. This is a great program that will develop a large network of faculty trained to be change agents in higher education institutions. Also, this program introduces our students to the geosciences, empowering them to compete in the highly competitive green economy and while creating a healthy, just, and sustainable society for all.