

# COPPIN STATE UNIVERSITY

## CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

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A REPORT NARRATIVE

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## I. DEFINITION OF THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

The University has a unique mission like no other institution within the University System of Maryland (USM). Coppin State University (CSU) strengthens Maryland's workforce by producing quality graduates who meet the critical workforce demands within the State. The University accomplishes this goal by enhancing opportunities for all students, especially those who may be described as *non-traditional*, *transfers* from Maryland's community colleges, and students who of *minority* decent.

As a result of its mission and student population served, Coppin continues to implement strategies and programs to improve student retention and graduation rates. Given its mission and the recent strategic direction driven by its most recent strategic plan and Implementation Plan Initiatives, the emphasis on closing the achievement gap at Coppin State University will be closely monitored by its revised six-year graduation goal of 20% by the year 2020. Also, the University has refined its approach to closing the achievement gap by continuing existing and piloting new programs and initiatives to derive a comprehensive approach to improve the success of its students.

For the purposes of monitoring and eventually closing gaps most noticeable in its retention and graduation rates, the University will continue tracking 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's student profile is a unique blend of achievers, comprising a mix of undergraduate and graduate students who are from Maryland high schools and community colleges, including Baltimore City and County, Prince George's, Howard, Montgomery, and other counties in the region. Our graduates are comprised of a significant number of 1<sup>st</sup> generation college students (61%) and 71% is comprised of working adults with young families. Out of 3,383 students, 2,549 (75%) have children and/or dependents. Coppin students come from households that have a median household income of \$36,000. Twenty-five percent of the student population is male and 75% is female and are on average, 28 years of age. As a traditional Historically Black

College and University, Coppin's mix of rigorous academic programs attract national and international students from as far as Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, and the Near East. Given its unique blend of achievers, college retention and completion rates are varied.

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 70% 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.

### **NOTABLE SUCCESS - ACHIEVEMENT GAPS CLOSED & NARROWED**

In comparison groups III and IV, noticeable success has been attained. In Group III, *the University has closed the gap* between graduation rates among African American males and African American females. Last year, a gap of positive 5% remained. This year, the gap went to (-) 5%. We will continue to use this measure as a means of monitoring institutional progress as it relates to successful execution of program initiatives across the campus. Success in this comparison group may be attributed to programs and strategies such as the Freshman Male Initiative and First-Year and Second-Year advisement strategies employed throughout the campus.

In Group IV, the achievement gap between CSU Freshmen Students graduation rates vs. CSU Freshmen Transfer Student Graduation rates has *narrowed* from 14% to 12%. This is notable success since the cohort size from fall 2007 of 555 was larger than the previous fall 2006 cohort of 494, yet the rates improved. The University will continue to implement best practices towards transfer students in an effort to continue to close the gap among this group of students. The University will also continue to focus efforts on improving the successful matriculation of transfer students through collaborative partnerships with the community colleges.

## **II. THE 2013-2014 INITIATIVES**

The 2013-2014 initiatives include programs that are aimed at increasing persistence and graduation rates. The University continued major initiatives such as the Summer Academic Success Academy (SASA), the University College (First-Year Experience Program), and the Freshmen Male Initiative (FMI). There are also other programs and services developed and implemented by the University to improve persistence and graduation rates. Those will be referenced in this report narrative as well.

The current initiatives are consistent with the University's overall strategic objective of improving retention and graduation rates and with the Implementation Plan initiatives established by the USM Special Review Committee.

### **Summer Academic Success Academy (SASA).**

The Summer Academic Success Academy is one of the institution's hallmark programs. 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 % of SASA participants who required developmental math successfully completed their first credit bearing math course compared to 25.2 % of the overall first-year population.

The SASA 2013 summer program had an initial 110 participants. 107 participants completed the program. There were nine faculty members, five tutors, and 14 peer leaders/mentors supported the program. Out of the 107 completers, 104 actually enrolled into CSU with credits towards General Education courses. Their progress will continue to be monitored throughout the academic year. As can be expected, these students will complete at a much faster rate, make use of prescribed support services, and contribute to the overall retention and graduation rates at the University.

### **University College First Year Experience Program: Formally Referenced as First Year**

The culmination of all initiatives from the Summer Academic Success Academy feeds into

enhancement activities of the First-Year Experience Program (FYE). 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 was implemented in fall 2012. Specialized academic advisement and freshmen seminar courses provide a unique blend of instruction and services needed for the success for the students within FYE. Prior to the existence of the program, there was no model or curriculum specifically designed for students transitioning from high school, further legitimizing the need for an FYE.

First year students in the program also 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)**

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.

Data indicate that FMI students continue to outperform the general population of CSU students. The participants in the program have produced an 80% 2<sup>nd</sup> year retention rate for the fall 2012 cohort which exceeded the University's rate by 26%. The program normally accommodates 40 to 60 students who typically have an average of a 2.7 GPA which means credits earned are also higher and on track for graduation. Data also show that 80% of the FMI participants consistently register ahead of their campus counterparts which reveal they are being closely informed about financial aid processes and following academic plans towards college completion.

### **University Assessment**

In the fall of 2013, the University formed an assessment network of faculty and staff charged with enhancing assessment activities across General Education and program-level courses. A major goal of this group is to improve student learning and success and strengthen Coppin's academic program inventory. The network plans to purchase assessment software during the spring semester which will plug into the existing Blackboard technology infrastructure. The

software will help produce needed reports to inform assessment practices that allow for mid-year curricular improvements. The Middle States Commission recently affirmed Coppin's assessment practices, however, in an effort to improve and strengthen student success and initiatives related to closing achievement gaps, the University will continue to support this effort and provide data towards progress in the upcoming semester.

### **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 1995	Fall 1996	Fall 1997	Fall 1998	Fall 1999	Fall 2000	Fall 2001	Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	Fall 2006	Fall 2007
								As of Fall 2008	As of Fall 2009	As of Fall 2010	As of Fall 2011	As of Fall 2012	As of Fall 2013
<b>Target Group 1 (CSU African-American vs. USM African-American)</b>													
CSU African-American Cohort Size	416	492	354	439	424	396	516	561	557	567	633	476	371
CSU African-American Rates	26%	28%	22%	25%	19%	18%	19%	16%	13%	15%	15%	16%	12%
USM African-American Rates <sup>2</sup>	41%	43%	44%	43%	46%	42%	40%	37%	39%	40%	41%	43%	
<b>The Gap<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>27%</b>	
<b>Target Group 2 (CSU African-American vs. USM HBI African-American)</b>													
CSU African-American Cohort Size	416	492	354	439	424	396	516	561	557	567	633	476	371
CSU African-American Rates	26%	28%	22%	25%	19%	18%	19%	16%	13%	15%	15%	16%	12%
USM HBI African-American Rates <sup>2</sup>	41%	41%	43%	41%	42%	35%	34%	38%	36%	34%	35%	33%	
<b>The Gap<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>17%</b>	
<b>Target Group 3 (CSU African-American Males vs. CSU African-American Females)</b>													
CSU African-American Males Cohort Size	122	139	100	110	127	119	146	141	131	130	145	98	77
CSU African-American Males Rates	25%	26%	9%	19%	14%	8%	10%	11%	14%	12%	12%	12%	16%
CSU African-American Females Rates <sup>2</sup>	27%	29%	27%	28%	22%	22%	21%	18%	13%	16%	16%	17%	11%
<b>The Gap<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>-1%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>-5%</b>
<b>Target Group 4 (CSU Freshmen Students vs. CSU Freshmen Transfer Students)</b>													
CSU Freshmen Cohort Size		513	382	457	441	417	540	578	571	588	661	494	555
CSU Freshmen Students Rates		29%	22%	25%	20%	18%	18%	16%	13%	15%	15%	16%	13%
CSU Freshmen Transfer Students Rates <sup>2</sup>		41%	23%	23%	29%	36%	34%	20%	20%	33%	44%	30%	25%
<b>The Gap<sup>3</sup></b>		<b>12%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>-2%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>12%</b>

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 from 2013 continue to indicate that the Living-Learning Community has 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 61% percent for the fall 2012 cohort, living-learning participants were retained at a rate of 85 percent. Overall, nursing students who participate in the community continue to earn a higher first-year GPA (2.68 vs. 2.4) than the overall first-year student population at the University.

### **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 2014) 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.

### **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 that effective teaching and learning are twin foundations on which this university rests.

In the fall of 2013, the University officially opened a STEM Center and identified a coordinator, and has completed the redesign of one course. The purpose of the Center is to increase the number of STEM graduates and professionals to the State. A collaborative process is in place between the University's colleges to establish additional STEM professionals. For example, with the School of Education, the development of an STEM education major is underway. The university expects to propose a new program that will be a joint effort between natural sciences and education.