

Frostburg State University Closing the Achievement Gap

I. **Definition of Achievement Gap for Frostburg State University**

Frostburg State University is committed to coordinating efforts within the campus community and facilitating the persistence of all students, while focusing on the University System's priority of college completion for under-represented minorities and low income students, determined by Pell eligibility. Since 2009 when the University System of Maryland (USM) launched the "Closing the Achievement Gap" initiative, Frostburg identified the campus achievement gap as significant differences in retention and graduation rates between males and females. This trend has remained relatively steady.

Past reports have noted the slight difference in retention and graduation rates based on family income and race. We are now able to report that we have closed this slight gap in retention for these populations. For the most recent cohort of first-time, full-time freshmen (Fall 2012), the retention rate of both African-Americans (80%) and low-income students (80%) exceeded that of the total population (77%). While we are pleased to report these results, we are concerned that a significant disparity remains between the retention rate of African-American females (our most highly-retained cohort) and African-American males. In addition, we clearly understand that we cannot be content to merely retain students; we must continue to develop effective strategies to increase the number of students who persist to graduation.

II. **Institutional Trend Data: Focus on Underrepresented Minorities and Low Income Students**

The tables below indicate that the University continues to maintain a relatively consistent retention rate with apparent room for improvement. Latino students' 6-year graduation rate had the most significant increase; in fact, the graduation rate for Latinos (49%) for the cohort that entered in 2007 was higher than that of all students (47%). Although, we are pleased with the improvement in the graduation rate of our Latino students, due to the small cohort size we must interpret the results with caution.

The African-American population is one quarter of the overall student population. Frostburg now has the largest percentage of African-American students of all the traditionally white institutions in the system. These students are also among the most engaged students on campus, serving in many significant leadership roles. Since 2003, African-American freshmen have been retained at a rate equal to or higher than all freshmen; however, there remains a slight gap (3%) in the graduation rate of African-Americans (44%) compared to all students (47%). This same pattern is also seen among our low-income students. Since 2002, low-income students have also been retained at a rate equal to or higher than all freshmen, with the exception of one year (2011). For the past four years, however, a gap has persisted in their graduation rates, with the most recent gap also at 3% (44% vs. 47% for all students). The University is aware that low income students often have greater risk factors and are more likely to leave without earning a degree. Feeder schools in disadvantaged areas often have fewer resources, so at higher rates these students enter underprepared. While examining the percentage of low income freshmen entering the University there has been a steady increase, with 38% of the most recent cohort having greater financial need, with the average gap around 3% for this subgroup. Further attention will be provided to this population as our economy brings more challenges.

The Fall 2012 retention rate for males was 73% and females 81%, which is an 8% gap. Please note that since 2002, we have been enrolling from 3% to greater than 20% more freshmen males than females, so this fact must be considered when interpreting the gap. The 6-year graduation rate by gender has a gap in single digits of 7% (Fall 2007 cohort-Males: 43% and Females: 50%), which is the lowest gap we have seen. We need to gather additional information to fully understand the lower retention and graduation rates for all males. One of the

differences appears to be their level of engagement on campus. Activities designed to engage first-semester freshmen (such as the University's leadership retreat) and student organizations consistently report much lower participation rates for males. We need to devise new strategies to intentionally recruit males to be involved in such activities, and explore other ways in which males may experience the campus in ways that are different from females.

Frostburg State University
Second Year Male v Female Retention Rates
Fall First-Time, Full-Time, Student Cohort

	Fall 2001	Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013
Male FSU Students													
Cohort Size N	453	507	538	530	480	552	539	552	524	556	420	451	497
2nd-yr Retent Rate	74%	65%	70%	68%	66%	61%	73%	69%	69%	69%	69%	73%	-
Female FSU Students													
Cohort Size N	474	494	452	429	447	461	520	478	507	472	405	363	392
2nd-yr Retent Rate	78%	75%	78%	74%	77%	74%	76%	76%	79%	73%	75%	81%	-
The Gap	4%	10%	8%	6%	11%	13%	3%	7%	10%	4%	6%	8%	

Data Source: P409 Student Research Population File, Enrollment Information System

Six-year Male v Female Graduation Rates
Fall First-Time, Full-Time, Student Cohort

	Fall 2001	Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013
	As of 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	As of Fall 2014	As of Fall 2015	As of Fall 2016	As of Fall 2017	As of Fall 2018	As of Fall 2019
Male FSU Students													
Cohort Size N	453	507	538	530	480	552	539	552	524	556	420	451	497
6-yr Grad Rate	46%	39%	43%	42%	38%	37%	43%						
Female FSU Students													
Cohort Size N	474	494	452	429	447	461	520	478	507	472	405	363	392
6-yr Grad Rate	56%	57%	56%	54%	54%	53%	50%						
The Gap	10%	18%	13%	12%	16%	16%	7%						

Data Source: P409 Student Research Population File, Enrollment Information System

Frostburg State University
Institutional Report Format

Frostburg State University	Six-year Graduation and Retention Rates at Institutions of First-Entry												
	Fall Cohort First-Time Full Time	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
	FY Graduation Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total	6-Year Graduation Rate	48%	49%	48%	45%	44%	47%						
	2 nd Year Retention	70%	74%	70%	72%	68%	74%	72%	74%	71%	72%	77%	
	3 rd Year Retention	59%	61%	58%	57%	56%	60%	59%	61%	60%	60%		
	4 th Year Retention	54%	54%	55%	54%	52%	54%	54%	57%	54%			
	5 th Year Retention	26%	29%	30%	30%	29%	27%	30%	31%				
African American	6-Year Graduation Rate	40%	45%	42%	43%	41%	44%						
	The Gap	8%	4%	6%	2%	3%	3%						
	2 nd Year Retention	66%	78%	73%	76%	74%	78%	72%	73%	71%	77%	80%	
	3 rd Year Retention	53%	64%	63%	56%	56%	60%	58%	60%	56%	64%		
	4 th Year Retention	47%	55%	58%	54%	52%	52%	53%	57%	49%			
	5 th Year Retention	27%	28%	41%	35%	36%	33%	35%	37%				
Hispanic	6-Year Graduation Rate	35%	35%	21%	28%	35%	49%						
	The Gap	13%	14%	27%	17%	9%	-2%						
	2 nd Year Retention	50%	91%	53%	62%	65%	75%	72%	68%	66%	62%	65%	
	3 rd Year Retention	45%	59%	26%	47%	46%	57%	53%	57%	48%	52%		
	4 th Year Retention	45%	50%	26%	50%	46%	54%	50%	52%	46%			
	5 th Year Retention	1%	32%	0%	30%	27%	26%	34%	31%				
Institution's Low-income (Pell)	6-Year Graduation Rate	45%	51%	44%	41%	42%	44%						
	The Gap	3%	-2%	4%	4%	2%	3%						
	2 nd Year Retention	72%	77%	70%	72%	68%	74%	75%	75%	71%	70%	80%	
	3 rd Year Retention	60%	64%	59%	55%	57%	59%	58%	62%	60%	60%		
	4 th Year Retention	54%	58%	53%	51%	53%	54%	53%	56%	52%			
	5 th Year Retention	26%	30%	35%	32%	33%	35%	34%	34%				

Notes:

- Non>Returns are cumulative
- Program Source: A_RETENTION_COHORTxx.SAS'
- Data Source: P409 Student Research Population File
- Last Update: January 10, 2014

III. Summary of Initiatives Implemented to Close Achievement Gap

We have identified the following initiatives in an effort to impact persistence and completion. We understand that the more interventions the greater the likelihood of improvement. In recent years, a number of our initiatives have focused on first-year students. Although, we continue our efforts to support students during this critical transition year, we are also developing programs that focus on sophomores and other populations. We recognize that retention alone is not the goal; we must retain students through graduation. Diversified programming meets the needs of a wide range of students.

Frostburg acknowledged that a number of students leave for other than academic reasons. Often it is for financial reasons. Through small focus groups with students and listening tours with faculty and staff, we have gained further insight into some of the factors that may be impacting retention and completion. Although the information collected has been primarily anecdotal, it has been valuable in identifying some of the reasons that students are leaving the University. In order to make our efforts more systematic, we have proposed implementing exit interviews to build a database that will categorize the various reasons that students leave the institution. This will enable us to devise strategies that are more intentionally targeted to address the issues that students are identifying. These are small, successful programs that are having a positive impact on both our retention and graduation rates:

One-Step-Away Grant

Frostburg was the recipient of MHEC Near-Completers grant for \$ 60,000. This recruit-back program uses prescriptive advising strategies, and a one-stop registration process to facilitate a smooth reentry. With the assistance of MHEC, we initially identified 37 students who had completed more than 90 credit hours and who had stopped out for more than a full academic year. We were able to re-enroll nineteen (19) of these students. The results of our efforts are summarized in Section IV.

Championship Forum

In addition, Frostburg was the recipient of the Maryland College Access Challenge Grant, that we titled "Championship Forum". The purpose of this grant is to improve the retention and graduation rates for at-risk students. The risk factors required to meet eligibility to participate in this program low income, underrepresented and or at-risk students. The target population for our program is defined as Pell Eligible, academically at-risk, freshman and sophomore males. Further details about this program and our results are reported in Section IV.

Survey Non-registered students for the upcoming semester

We have a new intervention recently implemented for unregistered students. The Retention Office and the Office of Programs Advancing Student Success administered a survey to students not registered for the upcoming semester. Our purpose was to determine why they had not registered and whether they needed assistance with registration. Our experience has been positive. Students repeatedly expressed their gratitude for the demonstrated concern and help offered. The survey was sent to 850 students, and 132 responded to the survey. Multiple contacts were made to these students, including emails, phone calls and in-person advising. The primary reasons for students not registering were Billing and Health Center Holds, and students had not met with advisors for registration to get activated. Intuitively, we believe most of the students with financial holds are low income students. We also sent emails to students who did not respond to the survey, offering assistance with registration and providing support to help resolve issues precluding them from registering. The intervention is labor intensive, but it is another good faith effort to improve semester to semester retention. Our plans are to create procedures for working with this population of matriculating students not registered for the following semester and identify staff responsible for contacting the survey responders as well as the non-responders.

Academic Enrichment Series

This program features workshops on academic and personal development, and is collaboration between the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student and Educational Services. They are designed to effectively meet the unique needs of our students providing academic enrichment and social connections. Faculty and staff present workshops on learning strategies and personal development. Students attending can make connections with faculty and staff presenters, increasing likelihood of increased use of campus resources. Attendance is taken. Participants in the past have mirrored or surpassed the percentages of the identified student subgroups we aim to impact. Fall 2012: 191 students attended. Spring 2013: 402 students attended, which was a 47.5% increase in participation.

IV. Succinct, but Detailed Summary of Initiatives and Corrective Actions

These are our initiatives and now we are revising and improving them. Our plans are to make adjustments, as needed to ensure our intended goals are being met. We have identified certain best practices that are effective within our campus community, and now we are taking these measures to implement them. We have shared these ideas with the campus community for endorsement and to promote the University's mission while simultaneously adhering to System's mandate. Our aim is to diversify programs for particular cohorts. We have primarily identified small successful programs and given them a treatment and at the end of every semester we will assess and evaluate to report the results.

One-Step-Away Grant

Eighteen students have graduated since the program was implemented a year ago, which is 51% of the students in this pilot. A profile of these students reveals that most students withdrew for financial reasons. Although most of the students graduated in the major of pursuit, some were held up, because of difficulty passing a course in their major. These students were advised to pursue our Liberal Studies major. This option provides the freedom to design their own major with a unique focus, and still have the benefit of rolling over the credits from the major into a minor. As a result of this program, we have gained further insight into the obstacles that prevented these students from initially graduating. We are exploring ways to implement new practices to ensure that we more consistently reach out to students who are nearing graduation but encountering various difficulties.

Our tactics with Near Completers, using high impact and intrusive advising to facilitate the graduation of students who have stopped out are practices we plan to employ to alleviate gaps for identified populations across the campus. In addition, students who have accumulated more than 90 credits will be personally contacted at the end of each semester to customize and facilitate their graduation strategy.

Championship Forum

We required intrusive advising with Academic Coaches, who are professional staff with consistent contacts through weekly study hall sessions. Participants attended mandatory workshops covering financial literacy, learning strategies and personal growth topics.

In February 2012, we were awarded a Maryland College Access Challenge Grant (MCACG) in the amount of \$31,324 to improve the persistence rate of Pell-awarded, academically at-risk freshman and sophomore male students. The main components of The Championship Forum program are intrusive advising with academic coaches, mandatory workshops covering financial literacy, learning strategies, personal growth topics, and weekly supervised study hall sessions. Participants who fulfilled program requirements were eligible for stipends of \$250 each semester. Data from the first year:

- 79.6% (39) of the 49 program participants are African-American, Hispanic, or multi-racial.
- Of the 10 participants who entered the program on academic probation, eight successfully reached good academic standing.
- 33% of the program participants earned a 3.0 or better for the Fall 2012 semester.
- 93.9% (46 of 49) participants remain at FSU and are making steady progress toward graduation.

In February 2013, we were awarded an MCACG grant in the amount of \$32,111 for the second year, allowing us to continue the Championship Forum program. Of the original 49 participants, 33 elected to continue with the program, and 18 new students joined, totaling 51 participants. Data from the second year:

- 86.3% (44) of the 51 program participants are African-American, Hispanic, or multi-racial.
- Of the 4 participants who entered the program on academic probation, 1 has been removed, 1 has been academically dismissed, and the other 2 significantly improved their cumulative GPA with a strong academic showing in the Spring semester.
- 27.5% (14 of 51) of participants earned a 3.0 or better for Spring 2013 semester.
- 94.1% (48 of 51) of participants returned Fall 2013 semester.

The University is applying for another Maryland College Access Challenge Grant (MCACG), and if successful, we plan to add a Peer Mentor component. This peer support strategy would provide social and emotional support combined with academic assistance outside of the classroom, and enable us to keep past participants engaged as mentors and expand our program to serve more students in the future.

V. Year to Year Progress and Additional Initiatives to Achieve Institutional Goals

Current Initiatives providing access and facilitating success for identified at-risk student populations are gradually moving in a positive direction. These programs will be revised and periodically reviewed for revisions and improvement while determining how well the initiatives are diminishing the achievement gap.

Frostburg has been implementing a delicate balance of proactive and reactive initiatives. Adhoc committees have been formed to survey the various interventions across the campus to build consistency. We have students who enter as freshmen, and need remediation based on their placement test scores. As a remedy, the campus has focused on the Developmental Studies Program. This fall with DVMT095, an introductory algebra course, we started using the same software currently being used by the Math Department, MyMathLab. We anticipate further improvement in the pass rates of DVMT graduates. DVMT 100 has a consistent pass rate of nearly 80% for Fall classes and just over 75% for Spring classes. These rates exceed the overall pass rate of 59% in AY 2010-2011.

Student Support Services (SSS)-the retention and graduation rate is consistently much higher than the overall population. This program serves low income and underrepresented minority populations, which is also two of our achievement gap target groups. The program is funded to serve 275 students. Services include academic, financial and personal assistance. Persistence and completion rates are consistently higher for SSS students than the overall population. The 6-year graduation rate for all students in the 2007 cohort was 44%; in comparison SSS students had a 55.6% graduation rate.

On Course program- Students who earn less than a 2.3 GPA during their first semester are invited to participate on a first-come first serve basis in a second semester course that focuses on study skills, time management and other areas that a critical to student success. Another emphasis of this course is encouraging students to become independent learners who are actively involved in their education. We have learned that students in this program become more effective in utilizing campus resources, including scheduling individual conferences with faculty members. Students who have completed the program made significant improvements in their academic standing.

Currently our Diversity Office teaches the first year transition course ORIE 101- Introduction to Higher Education (IHE) for our International student population. The Diversity Office leads the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) workshops to support retention and mitigate any campus climate issues for all freshmen, who are required to participate in the FYE program/ ORIE curriculum. Since we have had success in developing a special section of this course for international students, we will explore the feasibility of identifying other special sections for

various at-risk populations. The staff of the Diversity Office can serve as a valuable resource for both instruction and training of instructors.

VI. Summary Statement of Intermediate Goals

2014-15 Initiatives

Frostburg State has established protective programs that consider students' needs and provide interventions that place students in a better position to graduate in spite of the risk factors. We continue to recognize the critical nature of the first year that students spend on our campus. It provides the best opportunity to integrate them into the University, both socially and academically. We are completing a thorough review of our First-Year Experience course that includes analysis of retention rates and academic performance by sections. We will be using the results of this thorough assessment to make changes in this course. In addition, we will be creating a new comprehensive advising center that will be designed to serve all undergraduates.

Retention Initiatives and suggested tactics:

A new Advising Center will be created providing a comprehensive system of individualized advising and intervention to assist students to develop strategies for personal problem solving. Monitoring of freshmen student engagement and their overall college experience through a support network will include Faculty, Academic Advisors, Coaches and Peer Mentors. We are confident that the successful implementation of this Center will improve both retention and graduation rates.

Beacon -the Fall 2013 semester represented the first full implementation of the Beacon program, an online early alert system that is part of the Campus Labs software. Although we have seen a significant increase in the use of this program by faculty and staff (71 users in Spring 2013, compared to 21 the previous semester), it is still perceived by too many as something to be used only for "emergencies." Our goal is for faculty and staff to more routinely report students who are demonstrating various levels of disengagement, including such indicators as failure to complete assignments and missing class. This is a faculty and staff development challenge that is on-going.

Expand campus-wide use of Beacon-an Early Warning System for students at-risk

- Provide workshops/trainings for faculty and staff involved in Introduction to Higher Education (IHE) and academic advising
- Devise method for ensuring updates and alerts are read and addressed accordingly
- Ensure an administrative structure capable of supporting a full scale implementation
- Devise protocols to isolate data on students targeted under the Achievement Gap

Increase Financial Support for low income students

- Establish fundraising initiatives specific to scholarships for Achievement Gap students
- Seek grant funding from MHEC, USM, and other governmental and private entities
- Provide more opportunities for student on-campus employment
- Establish a program to raise students' financial literacy
- Inform faculty and staff of financial aid opportunities, rules, and regulations
- Incorporate alumni giving in the available funding for students in need
- Establish new scholarships with public funds, such as the Allegany County Opportunity Scholarship

Maximize benefits of current IHE course and Learning Community Programs and strengthen retention rates into sophomore year

- Support the establishment of a FYE for our students; enhance and identify programs for second-semester freshmen

- Further define the roles of the IHE and academic advisors, including strategies such as intrusive and Strengths-Based advising
- Devise initiatives to maintain students' level of engagement through their sophomore year, to include a requirement that freshmen and sophomores live on campus.
- Study and identify issues relative to the process for the declaration of major
- Identify how academic departments welcome and orient students to their new majors and make recommendations for improving this process
- Study student cohorts with developmental placements
- Enhance Peer Advisor/Mentor program for students to build networks on campus to help reach their potential
- Study benefits for mentors and mentees

Identify academic coaches for students violating alcohol and drug policies

Develop a program that intentionally follows up with students who have been found responsible for violating alcohol and drug policies. These violations are often early warnings of poor academic performance; however, our contact with these students is primarily through our student conduct system. We will explore the feasibility of identifying a group of faculty and staff who are prepared to focus on the academic implications of the alcohol and drug use of these students. Since males are disproportionately represented among these violators, this program has the potential to address the gender gap that persists in both our retention and graduation rates.

Explore the feasibility of participating in the Student Success Collaborative

Offered by the Education Advisory Board, this program includes data analytics and predictive modeling that mines University data to identify at-risk students and uncover systemic obstacles to degree completion. By participating in this program, we will be able to more systematically identify critical courses and grades that predict the likelihood of student success in specific majors. Consistent and informed use of this information could significantly improve academic advising on campus.

This initiative is an example of how we are shifting our emphasis in the strategies we are employing to close the achievement gap. As noted above, we now have an overall retention rate that exceeds the national average for comprehensive institutions and a retention rate for both African-Americans and low-income freshmen that is higher than that for all freshmen. Although we will continue to invest significant resources in meeting the needs of students during the critical first semester so that we can sustain this progress, we must engage in developing programs that are focused on the completion agenda. As an institution we are looking forward to this challenge and to achieving results that are comparable to the success that we have had in retention.

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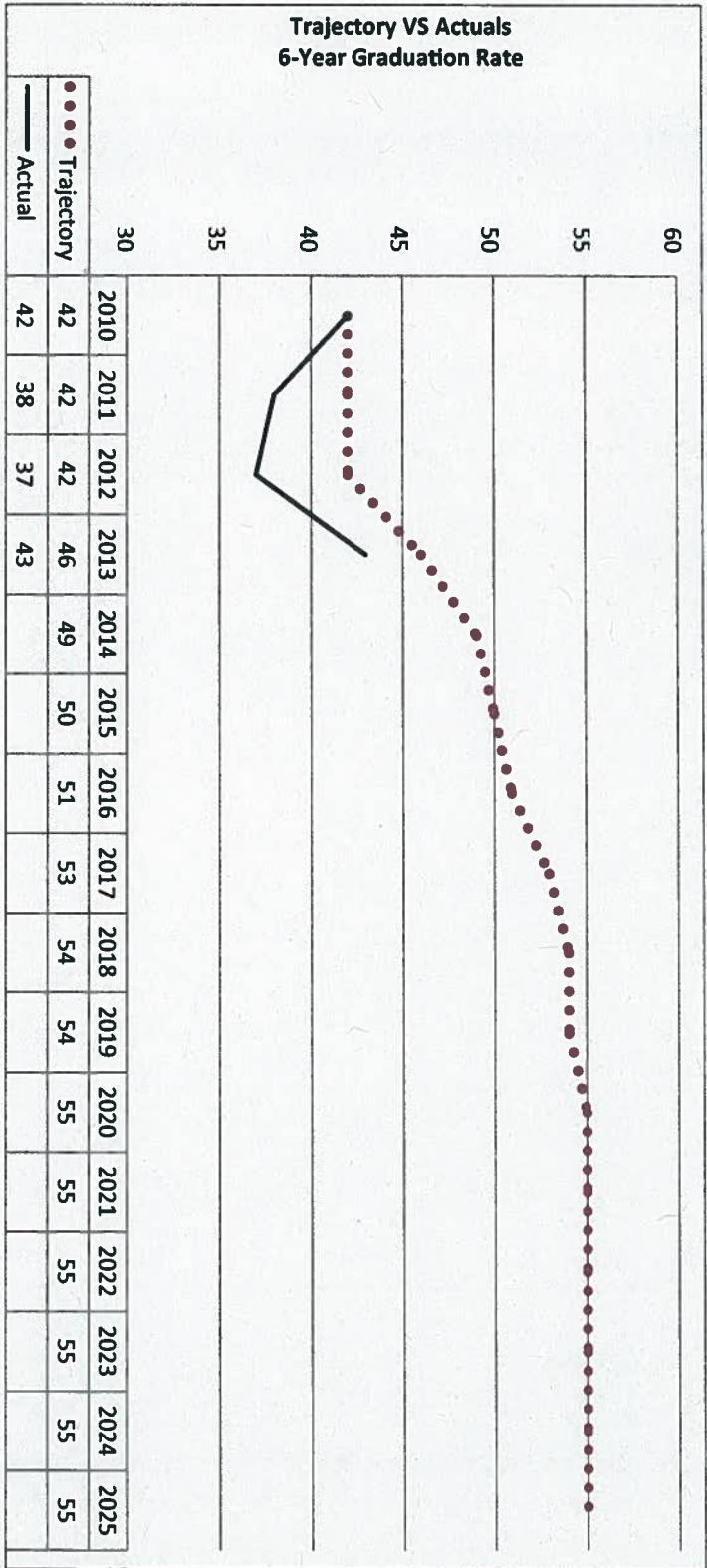
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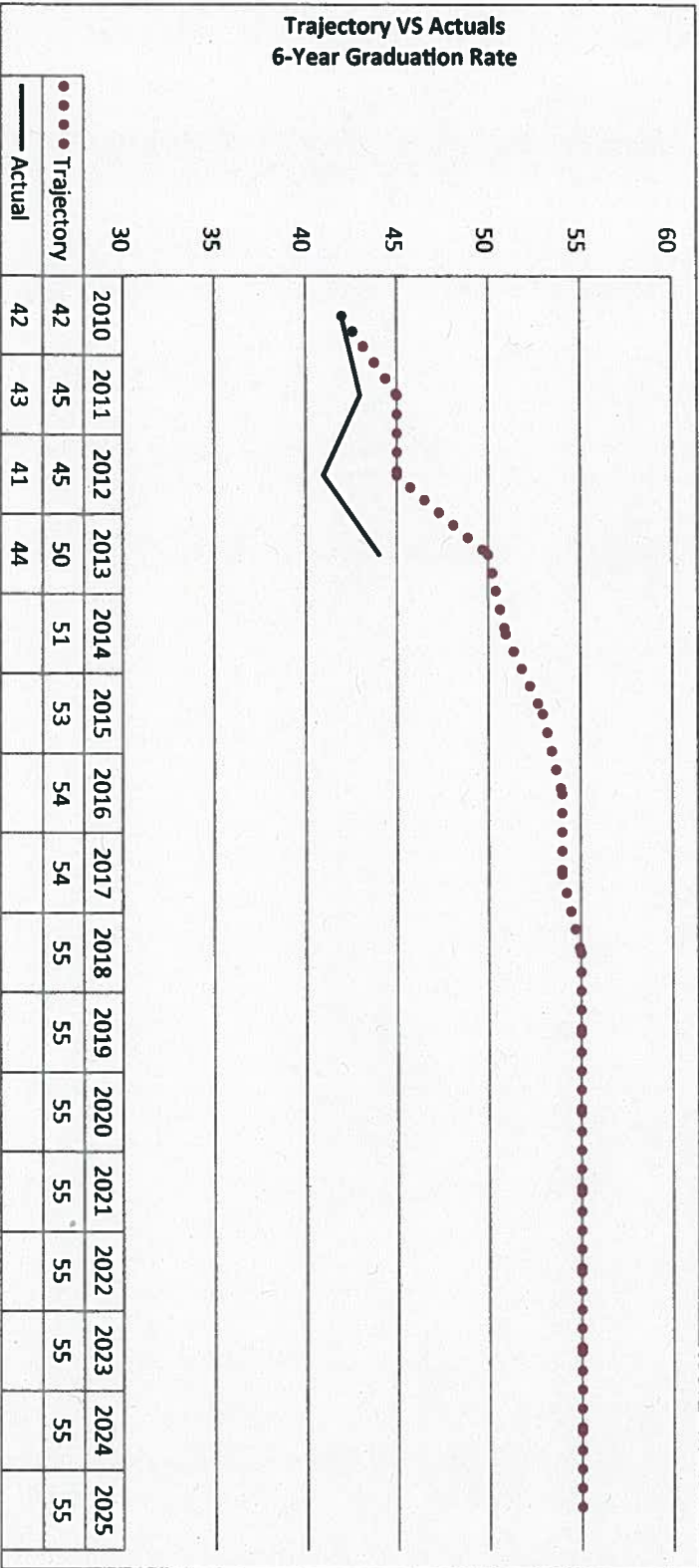
Target Group 1:

First-time Full-time Male Undergraduate Students



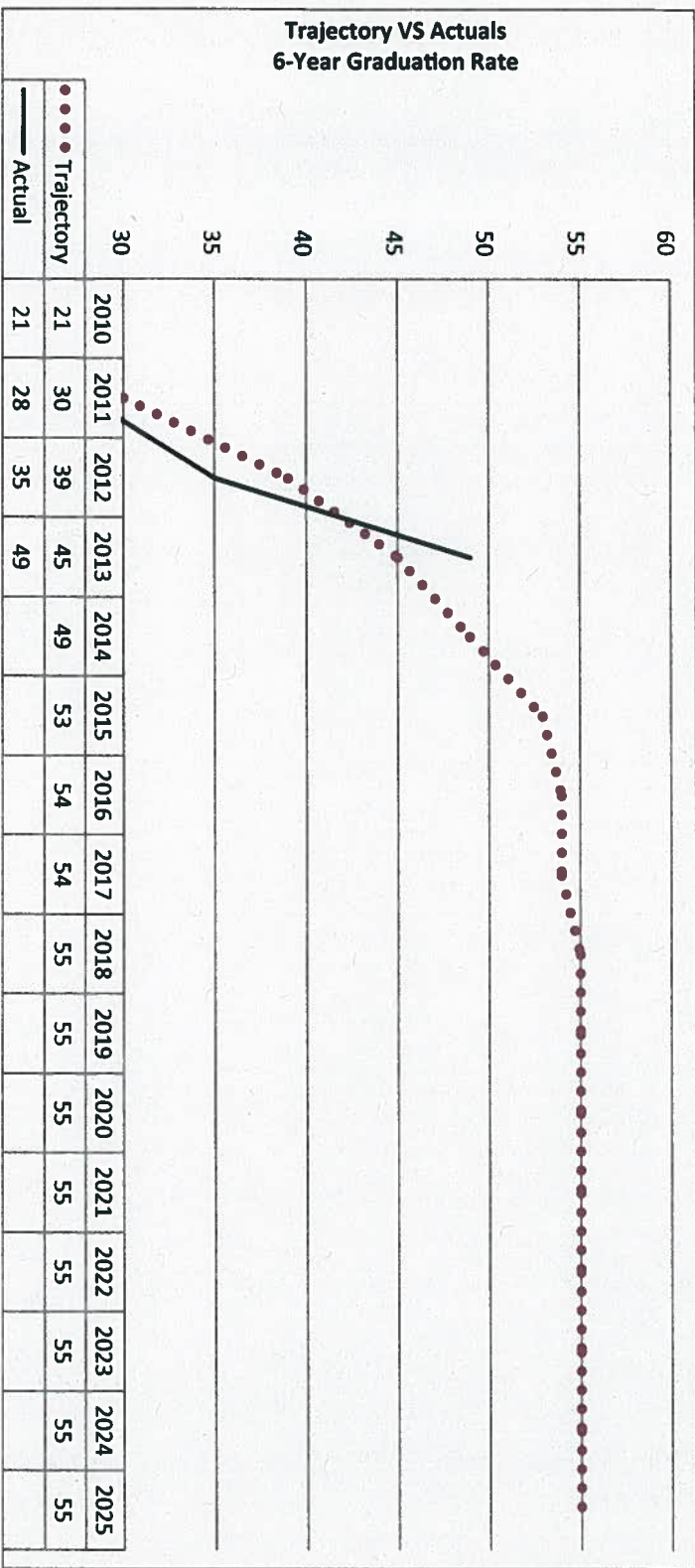
Target Group 2:

First-time Full-time African American Undergraduate Students



Target Group 3:

First-time Full-time Hispanic Undergraduate Students



Target Group 4:

First-time Full-time Low Income Undergraduate Students

