

OSA State Grant Awards

FY 2017 Awards

Bowie State University

Project Title: One Step Away Initiative

Project Director: Becky Verzinski, Ed.D. and Lynn Harbinson

Award: \$58,810.00

Project Abstract: The need to raise college completion rates of students is a priority for Maryland and Bowie State University (BSU). The University was awarded One Step Away (OSA) grants from MHEC in 2013, 2014, 2016, and 2017 to raise college completion rates. During this time, the OSA program increased the number of graduates during each grant cycle by 1%, graduating 21 students. It is anticipated that with additional funding, BSU will be able to expand on this success by graduating five additional students by December 2017. Based on experience with previous grants, the OSA program will have a target of 15 participants in the fall and four in the spring. BSU will focus on three objectives:

1. Continuing/expanding existing outreach strategies to inform and encourage near-completers to re-enroll in college;
2. Enhancing student support systems (concierge service) to include academic, financial and/or advising and support that facilitate smooth re-entry into the educational environment and retention through degree completion before and;
3. Increasing re-enrollment rates of near-completers by offering new campus-based sustainable financial aid options using campus or other financial aid resources for support such as textbook cost waivers and/or tuition discounts. A part-time concierge staff member, who is a recent OSA graduate, was hired by the director, and will have primary responsibility for the OSA administrative functions and project outcomes.

Community College of Baltimore County

Project Title: One Step Away from a College Degree

Project Director: Debra M. Baker

Award: \$56,467.00

Project Abstract: Family and work responsibilities often lead community college students to “stop out” of school for an extended period, even if they have completed most of the requirements for an associate’s degree. The purpose of this project is to encourage “near-completers”—students who have earned at least 45 of the 60 needed credits—to return to school and graduate.

The CCBC Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation has compiled a list of more than six thousand near-completers, including hundreds who have already earned at least sixty credits and only need to satisfy administrative requirements in order to graduate. Also on this list are more than a thousand near-completers who first enrolled in 2011 or later, meaning that they might be able to graduate within six years, a standard benchmark.

Working with the Registrar’s Office, the CCBC Office of College Communications will design a four-color brochure detailing the advantages of completing a degree and the special incentives CCBC can offer the near-completers. Following up on a targeted mailing of this brochure, the Registrar will continue reaching out using email, text messages, and other modes of communication.

Special incentives include partial-tuition scholarships, waivers of graduation fees, and vouchers at the college bookstore for purchase of textbooks. The Registrar’s Office will continue working with the returning students, helping with course selection to insure that the students can graduate in the shortest possible time, and providing referrals to other resources that can also assist the returning students.

Harford Community College

Project Title: One Step Away 2017

Project Director: Patrick Elliott

Award: \$70,768.00

Project Abstract: The Harford CC One Step Away (OSA) Program focuses on reaching out to former Harford CC students who have completed a substantial number of college credits toward an associate degree but who have not yet earned a degree. The program provides the services needed to facilitate and expedite completion. The program was successfully launched with the assistance of Maryland State grants in 2014 and 2016. This 2017 project is a continuation and enhancement of those successful projects.

The program identifies students who are already “Degree-Eligible,” meaning they have completed all degree requirements but never applied to have their degrees awarded. These students will receive a letter from the College President encouraging them to accept their earned degree. For students who are “Degree-Potential,” specialized OSA Concierge Advisors complete individualized degree completion plans and use diverse means of recruiting to reach these students, including social media, email, letters, postcards, and phone calls. As discovered in the 2016 project, providing meaningful scholarship funding to incentivize these past students to re-enroll is an extremely effective strategy and will continue to be a focus in the 2017 project. The “concierge services” include specialized and individualized academic advising for completion, assistance with appeals, financial aid, registration assistance, transfer credit evaluation, prior learning assessment, and tutoring.

The program’s goal is to award 32 associate degrees to “Degree-Eligible” students by December 2017 and an additional 16 associate degrees to “Degree-Potential” students by August 2018.

Notre Dame of Maryland University

Project Title: NDMU COMPLETE!

Project Director: Dr. Kathryn Doherty

Award: \$90,000.00

Project Abstract: NDMU Complete! is a continuation of Notre Dame's One Step Away completer program. NDMU has successfully identified, recruited, readmitted and graduated students who originally enrolled at Notre Dame, but left prior to graduation with only a few credits needed to complete their degree.

This project will continue to draw on NDMU's successful recruitment, advising, and admissions team to reach out to the newly identified near completer students who are eligible for this program, to meet and advise these students, to develop an academic completion plan for graduation, and to implement the plan as students move forward to complete their degree.

The grant will fund tuition and books, provide tutoring and academic support services, and engage the students in near-completer events to ensure that students are active and successful as they wrap up their college career. Personnel assigned to the grant are among the most experienced staff on campus, and have been a part of the One Step Away program since NDMU's first successful proposal in 2012.

The team is excited to be part of this truly impactful program. As one recent near-completer said on the day of her graduation in May 2017, "This program has truly transformed my life! I never imagined that I would be able to finish my degree."