Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress Toward the 55% Completion Goal

November 2024

Page 206

2024 Joint Chairmen's Report

Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.
Secretary of Higher Education

Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress Toward the 55% Completion Goal

Executive Summary
The 2024 Joint Chairmen's Report issued a charge to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to report on the State's progress toward its goal to have at least 55% of Maryland residents ages 25 to 64 holding at least an associate's degree by 2025. This report, the 2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal, provides an update on progress toward the established degree targets, as well as a compilation of institutional submissions on reports of best practices.

Increasing the percentage of Marylanders with at least an associate's degree is affected not just by our colleges and universities, but also by such things as in-migration, out-migration, employment opportunities, and other dynamics that are tied to educating, attracting, and maintaining a talented workforce.

For 2024, the degree attainment rate for Maryland is an estimated 51.9%.[1] Based on Census data, over the course of the model, the average annual degree attainment rate of change per year in Maryland has been 0.5%. Therefore, if Maryland were to maintain that trend, by 2025 the degree attainment rate would be 52.4%, which is below the goal set.

Overall, Maryland's colleges and universities have contributed greatly to degree production in the state and have exceeded original targets. As of the 2024 reporting year, the institutions have exceeded the goal for undergraduate degree production by almost 10,000 degrees (the cumulative goal for 2025 is 718,209 degrees and institutions have awarded 727,093 as of 2024). Despite these overall successes, Maryland's institutions, for the first time since the model's inception, had annual outcomes below the targets set (the annual goal was 50,208 and actual counts were 49,524).

Introduction
The April 2024 Joint Chairmen's Report issued the following charge to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC):

> The committees understand that in order to meet the State's goal to have at least 55% of Maryland's residents ages 25 to 64 holding at least one degree credential by 2025, accurate and timely information on degree progression and best practices is needed to ensure that the State is on track to meet the goal. The committees request that the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) annually collect and analyze student- and transcript-level data on progression, graduation, and other relevant metrics from each public institution of higher education, including community colleges and regional higher education centers. MHEC should submit a report by December 15 each year that analyzes the data and shows each institution's progress toward the State and institutional goals in 2025. The report should also include a summary of best practices and findings on the effectiveness of institutions' programs as well as any concerns regarding lack of progress or best practices that are not being implemented by institutions. (page 206)

---

[1] These calculations use U.S. Census Bureau data between 2010 and 2022 using the American Community Survey, One-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), and One- and Five-Year Estimates Detailed Tables.

In light of this mandate, this report aims to do the following[i]:

- Report progress towards the established targets leading to achievement of the 55% goal;
- Provide an overview of the degree attainment model developed to set degree targets for reaching the 55% goal, as well a review of the model;
- Discuss student progression and graduation in the state; and
- Provide institutional reports on best practices implemented by Maryland's public institutions.

This report summarizes retention data from Fall 2023 and graduation outcomes for those who completed in the 2024 academic year. The degree counts that inform the model are taken from the 2024 Degree Information Systems (DIS) file[ii]. The data provided in this report, as well as the submissions on best practices supplied by institutions, reveal that institutions continue to contribute to the statewide goal.

State and Institutional Goals and Targets

What is degree or educational attainment?
Degree or educational attainment refers to the highest level of education an individual has completed. Degree attainment data, collected by the Census, reflect the educational attainment levels of the adult population. Many states, including Maryland, have established degree attainment goals with the aim of ensuring more and more of its citizens obtain a postsecondary degree or other high-quality credential. Research shows that those with a postsecondary credential have higher lifetime earnings, lower odds of unemployment and better health outcomes.[iii] Maryland law established a goal in which "…at least 55% of Maryland's adults age 25 to 64 will hold at least an associate's degree by the year 2025."[iv] This goal relies on 1) ensuring students who enroll in Maryland higher education institutions complete an associate's degree or higher, 2) ensuring educated Maryland residents continue to live and work Maryland, and 3) attracting educated residents from other states to live and work in Maryland.

How are Maryland's colleges and universities contributing to the State's degree attainment goals?
The State's 55% degree attainment goal relies primarily on Maryland colleges and universities, and progress has been buoyed by years of steady and increasing degree production (see Figures 1 and 2, next page and Table 1, page 5). Historically, Maryland's institutions have exceeded the degree goals set in the model. In the 2024 reporting year, Maryland's institutions, for the first time since the model's inception, had annual outcomes below the targets set (the annual goal was 50,208 and actual counts were 49,524). Despite the underperformance compared to the targeted goal, the overall, cumulative degree production (Figure 2) shows a sustained trend of exceeding the targets of the model. See Table 1 for additional data.

Despite the slowing of degree production, the State's institutions are on track, as a whole, to meet the goals set in the model. The model posits that the Maryland colleges and universities must generate at least 718,209 degrees from 2010 to the end of 2025. At this point, the institutions have exceeded the goal for undergraduate degree production by almost 10,000

degrees. See Figure 3 for segment-level comparisons of the 2025 final degree target counts and the actual degrees awarded for the 2024 reporting year.

Figure 1: Trends in Annual Actual and Target Undergraduate Degree Production among Maryland Colleges and Universities
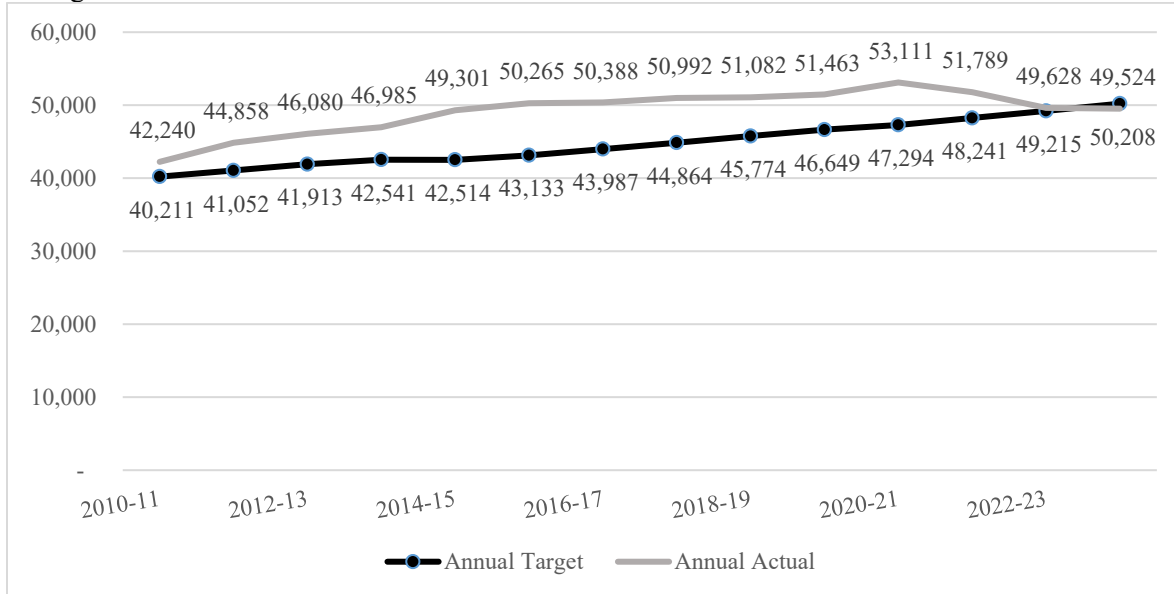

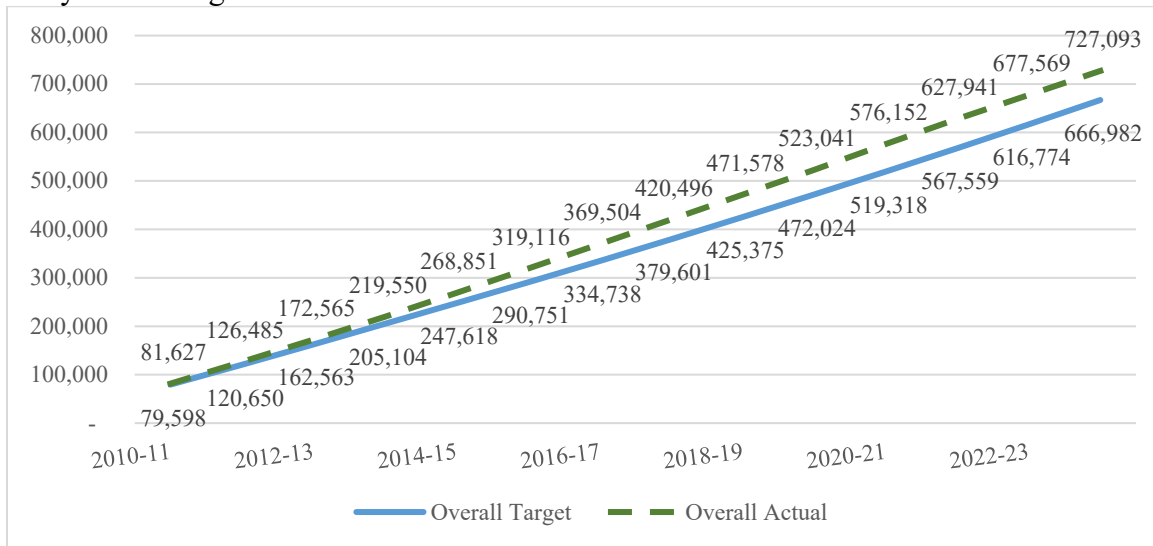Figure 2: Trends in Overall Actual and Overall Target Undergraduate Degree Production among Maryland Colleges and Universities

These institutional trends are commendable in light of the changes in college enrollments over time at Maryland colleges and universities. From 2013 to 2023, undergraduate enrollment declined, overall 10.0%, with the largest hit being felt by the community colleges (32.0% decrease).

Figure 3: Segment-level Comparison of 2025 Degree Goals and 2024 Actual Degrees Awarded
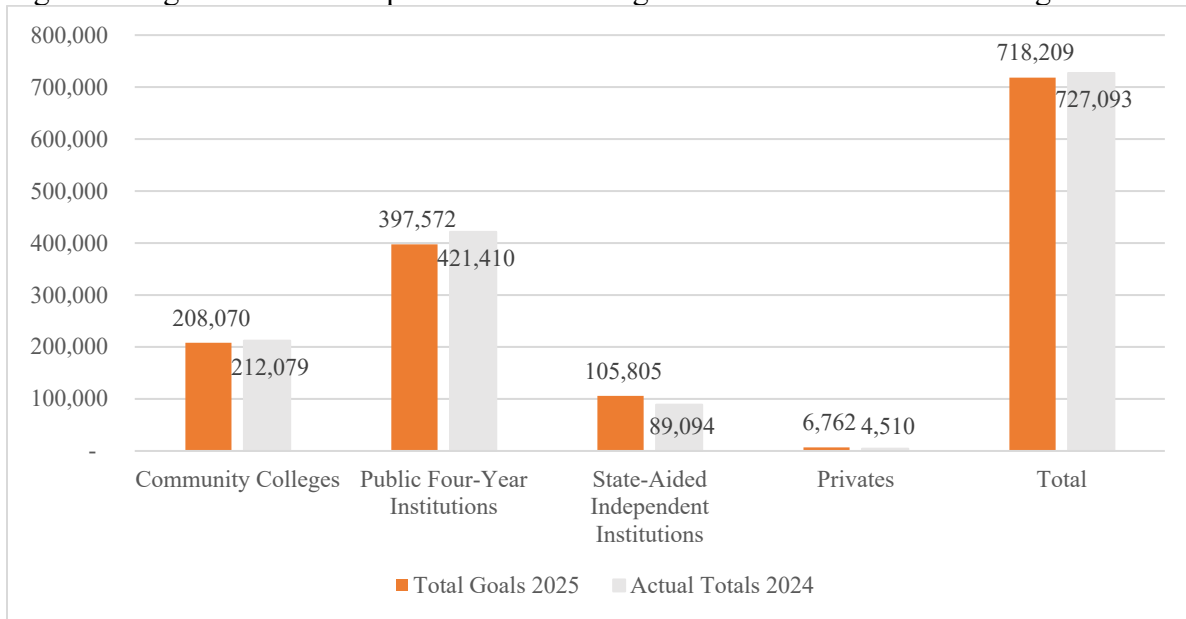
Tables 2, 3 and 4 at the end of this report provide detailed information for each public community college and four-year institution as well as well as targets for the entire period. Table 5, at the end of this report, shows targets and acutals for all sectors of higher education in the State. These tables are updated annually and reflect the instititions' contributions to the 55% goal.

Table 1: Target and actual undergraduate degrees awarded, 2009-2010 through 2023-2024

Institutional Sector		2009-2010 (base-line)	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Community Colleges	Target		11,386	11,614	11,846	12,083	12,325	12,571	12,823	13,079	13,341	13,608	13,880	14,157	14,441	14,729
	Actual	11,163	12,637	13,852	14,269	14,541	15,133	15,138	14,919	14,932	14,897	14,472	15,053	14,239	13,543	13,291
	+/-		1,251	2,238	2,423	2,458	2,808	2,567	2,096	1,853	1,556	864	1,173	82	-898	-1,438
Four-Year Institutions	Target		21,876	22,301	22,736	23,179	23,630	24,091	24,561	25,040	25,529	26,028	26,374	26,891	27,418	27,956
	Actual	21,458	22,735	24,331	25,136	25,606	27,365	28,569	29,194	29,921	30,241	31,263	32,334	31,914	30,509	30,834
	+/-		859	2,030	2,400	2,427	3,735	4,478	4,633	4,881	4,712	5,235	5,960	5,023	3,091	2,878
Independent Institutions	Target		6,281	6,469	6,663	6,863	6,225	6,136	6,269	6,410	6,570	6,680	6,706	6,859	7,022	7,189
	Actual	6,098	6,174	6,303	6,442	6,395	6,572	6,327	5,991	5,915	5,644	5,576	5,581	5,474	5,410	5,192
	+/-		-107	-166	-221	-468	347	191	-278	-495	-926	-1,104	-1,125	-1,385	-1,612	-1,997
Other Private Institutions	Target		668	668	668	416	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334
	Actual	668	694	372	233	443	231	231	284	224	300	152	143	162	166	207
	+/-		26	-296	-435	27	-103	-103	-50	-110	-34	-182	-191	-172	-168	-127
Annual Total	*Target*		*40,211*	*41,052*	*41,913*	*42,541*	*42,514*	*43,133*	*43,987*	*44,864*	*45,774*	*46,649*	*47,294*	*48,241*	*49,215*	*50,208*
	Actual	*39,387*	*42,240*	*44,858*	*46,080*	*46,985*	*49,301*	*50,265*	*50,388*	*50,992*	*51,082*	*51,463*	*53,111*	*51,789*	*49,628*	*49,524*
	+/-		*2,029*	*3,806*	*4,167*	*4,444*	*6,787*	*7,132*	*6,401*	*6,128*	*5,308*	*4,814*	*5,817*	*3,548*	*413*	*-684*
Cumulative Total	**Target**		79,598	120,650	162,563	205,104	247,618	290,751	334,738	379,601	425,375	472,024	519,318	567,559	616,774	666,982
	Actual	39,387	81,627	126,485	172,565	219,550	268,851	319,116	369,504	420,496	471,578	523,041	576,152	627,941	677,569	727,093
	+/-		2,029	5,835	10,002	14,446	21,233	28,365	34,766	40,895	46,203	51,017	56,834	60,382	60,795	60,111

Is the State on track to meet the 55% goal?

For the 2024 report, the degree attainment rate for Maryland is 51.9%.[v] Based on Census data from the American Community Survey, over the course of the model, the average annual degree attainment rate-of-change per year has been 0.5%.[2] Therefore, if Maryland were to maintain that trend, by 2025, the degree attainment rate would be 52.4%, which is below the goal set (see Figure 4 for a representation of this trend).

Figure 4: Actuals and Forecast of Annual Statewide Progression toward 55% Goal
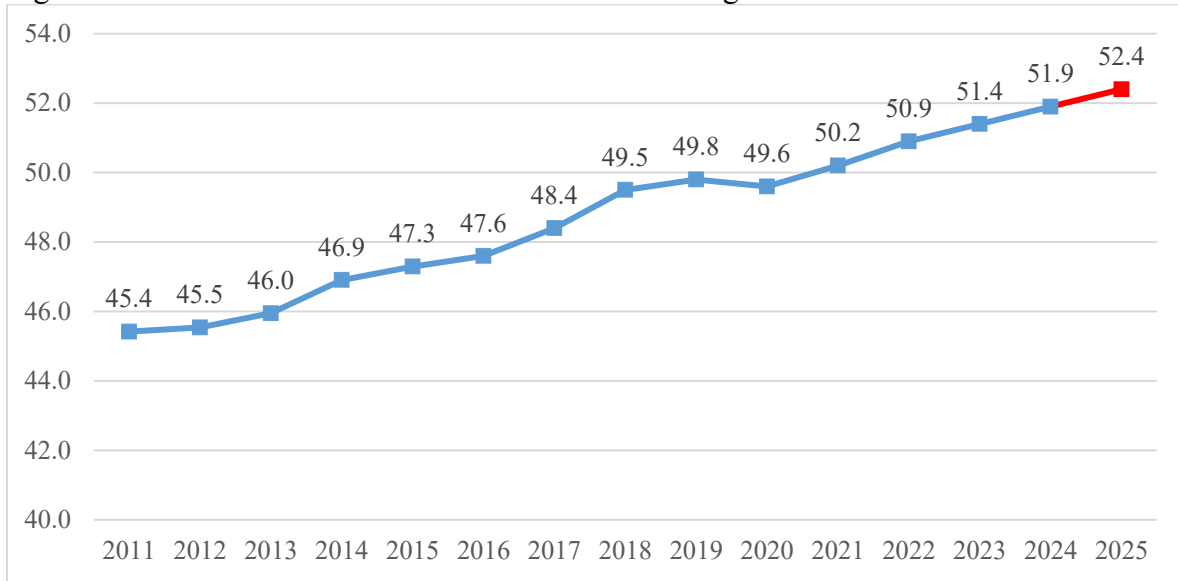
Notes: Forecast assumes a standard .5% increase each year; this is based on the average, annual increase in the attainment rate for Maryland since 2011 (ACS Community Survey, Census data). The 2024 data, while reported as an actual, is calculated using the most recent five-year estimate figure (2018-2022 5 Year ACS Survey data from Census)

Even though, overall, Maryland's colleges and universities are exceeding their mark, as exhibited in Figures 1 and 2 and Table 1, degree production by institutions is not the sole contributor to overall degree attainment rates in the state (see Figure 6 for model components). Having a population that has a degree attainment level of an associate's degree or higher is also affected by such factors as in-migration, out-migration, employment opportunities, and other dynamics that are tied to educating, attracting, and maintaining a talented workforce.

Factors that could have a positive effect on the trend and result in higher year-to-year rates might include increases in undergraduate enrollments and policies and practices at the institutions that would ensure undergraduate retention and timely completion. In addition, such factors as employment opportunities, strong K-12 education, and affordable housing can maintain both current populations and attract new members to Maryland's educated workforce.

[2] Degree attainment calculations rely on population data and educational attainment data from the US Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) which relies on a sample of respondents and calculations to provide estimates. Degree attainment data from the US Census for Maryland is calculated by dividing the number of those who have earned an associate's degree or higher (ages 25 to 64) by the overall state population of those ages 25 to 64. The rate change of .5% for Maryland over time reflects changes to these two populations and therefore changes to the rates.

As the model demonstrates, it relies on: 1) a stable and educated Maryland population, 2) attracting additional people to move to the State who hold an associate's degree or higher, 3) Maryland institutions graduating students who earn an associate's degree or higher and 4) in-migration, especially of educated people, that exceeds out-migration. It is possible that such factors as the economy, housing costs, and other significant, and highly variable elements are contributing to the model in ways that are affecting the overall population of working-age adults holding at least an undergraduate degree in the state.

Are there equity gaps regarding degree attainment in Maryland?
Maryland continues to face challenges in ensuring equitable racial and ethnic outcomes for its diverse citizenry (see Figure 5). In this context, equity would be visualized by each racial and ethnic groups having at least a 55% degree attainment rate within that specific population. Figure 5 highlights the racial and ethnic disparities in obtaining 55% degree attainment within a specific population. As the state approaches 2025, equitable degree attainment of all populations reaching the 55% goal is not possible. The data show progress has been made in degree attainment for all racial and ethnic groups but it will be important for institutions and the state to assess how it can advance equitable opportunities for education and employment for all in the future.

Figure 5: Degree Attainment Rates among Maryland Adults Ages 25 to 64 by Race and Ethnicity: Comparison: 2010 to 2024
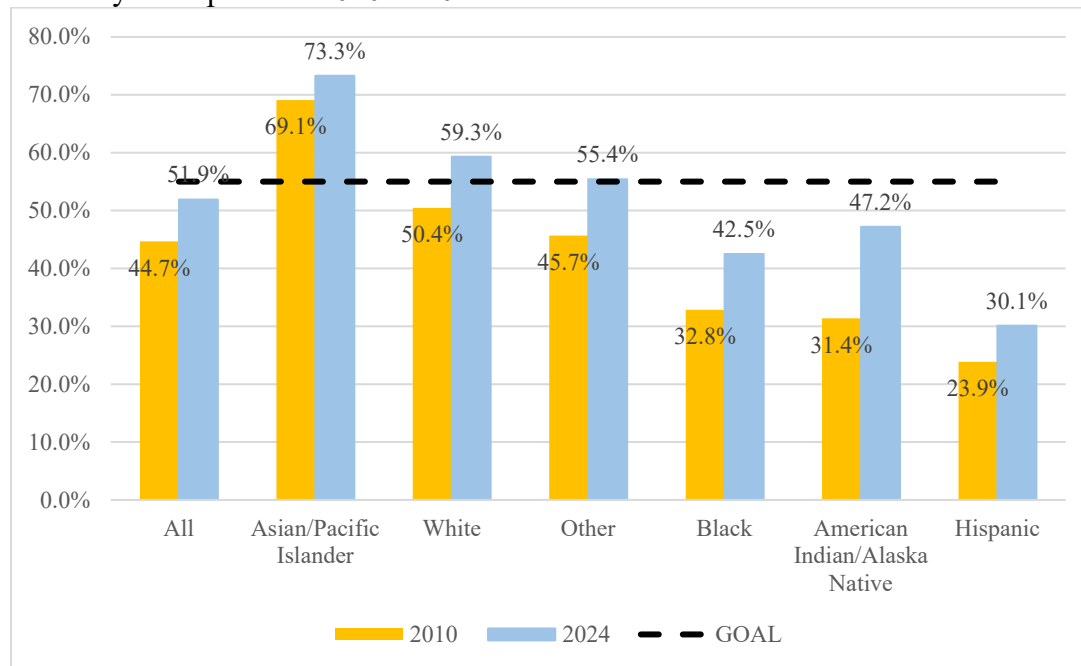
Source: Lumina Foundation Stronger Nation (https://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/#/progress/state/MD)

Note: The aggregation of degree attainment data by race and ethnicity is obtained from the Lumina Foundation's Stronger Nation report. The Stronger Nation report relies on Census data, among other sources, to report on attainment levels across several factors.

Are there avenues for Maryland to explore to achieve its degree attainment goals?

Many states have established attainment goals that include additional high-quality credentials like lower division certificates. These are seen by national organizations like the Lumina Foundation and the National Skills Coalition as valuable contributors to establishing and growing an educated workforce. Lumina estimates that if Maryland included these high-quality credentials in the Progress to 55% goals, the state would have reached an attainment rate of 55.9% in 2019.[vi] As Maryland approaches the end of the 55% goal timeline, discussions are underway regarding draft post-2025 statewide goals (see the October 23, 2024 Commission meeting for more details[3]).

Maryland's 55% Degree Attainment Model

In response to the Joint Chairmen's original charge, in 2012, MHEC developed a model that set initial state and institutional degree targets to help reach the goal of 55% of adults ages 25 to 64 holding degrees by 2025. At the time of the original 2012 model, the State's higher education degree attainment rate was 44.7%.[vii] MHEC estimated that in 2025, 903,511 people aged 25 to 49 who held associate's degrees in 2010 would have aged 15 years but would remain in the target group (between the ages of 25 and 64)[viii]. Therefore, at the start of the model there was an assumption that 903,511 Marylanders would already have an associate's degree or higher. The sources of the remaining degree holders would come from Maryland colleges and universities and positive net migration of those educated outside of Maryland.

Historically, the model has been examined every few years to identify significant changes in the data that inform the model (e.g. population projections, migration data). MHEC performed revisions to the model in 2014[ix] and 2017[x] based on updated Census data findings. For the 2023 report, MHEC revised the model and in doing so estimates that there will be 3,179,039 Maryland residents between the ages of 25 to 64 in 2025.[4] This population estimate forms the denominator of the 55% calculation.[5]

Based on this new figure, to meet the 55% attainment goal in 2025, Maryland will need 1,748,471 individuals (55% of the 3,179,039 projected Marylanders between the ages of 25 and 64) to hold at least an associate's degree.

The sources of those educated individuals are:

- *Public institutions:* The total degree production from the community colleges is projected to be 208,070, and the contribution from Maryland's public four-year institutions is estimated to be 397,572[6], for a total of 605,642 undergraduate degree

---

[3] https://mhec.maryland.gov/About/Pages/agendadetails.aspx?aid=506
[4] See 2023 Report for fuller discussion of the changes to the model in 2023.
https://mhec.maryland.gov/publications/Documents/Dashboards/p%20195_196%20Report%20on%20Best%20Practices%20and%20Progress%20Toward%2055%25%20Goal.pdf
[5] See "Projections to 2045 revised December 2020: Total Population Projections by Age, Sex and Race" at https://planning.maryland.gov/MSDC/Pages/s3_projection.aspx This population estimate is currently the most recent population projections issued by he Maryland Department of Planning and was issued in 2020. which was calculated in 2020 is smaller than the original population estimate of 3,324,400 which was obtained from the MD Dept of Planning in 2010.
[6] This figure was revised in 2021 due to St. Mary's College of Maryland's request to decrease their degree targets

holders.

- *Independent and other private institutions:* The total degree production from the independent and other private sectors for the whole period is projected to be 112,567.

- *Migration from other states and nations:*[xi] The estimated net positive migration of additional degree holders is projected to be 266,750[xii] over the course of the model. [7]

Finally, the model also considers mortality. The mortality rate is estimated to remove 64,668 degree holders from the state total during the period of the model. [xiii],[xiv]
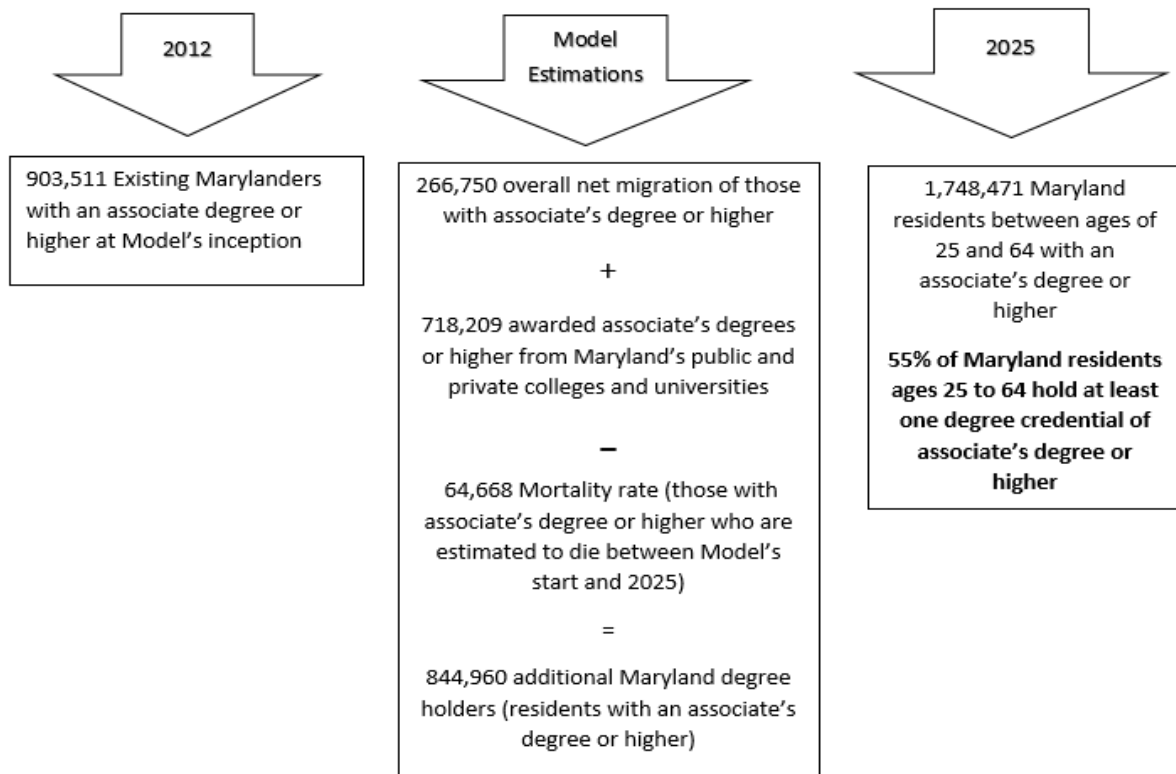
Taken together, the contributions from migration to Maryland, public, independent, and other private institutions minus estimated mortality will provide 844,960 of the degree holders needed.

Figure 6 outlines the main components of the model. Table 2, on page 16 shows a matrix with annual targets for each public institution. The data included in this report provide a blueprint based on conservative estimates to enable the State to achieve the 55% degree attainment goal. These figures can also be used to gauge progress toward that goal.

---

within the model. This revision reduces the overall target by 826 degrees.

[7] Calculated using U.S. Census Bureau. "Geographical Mobility in the Past Year by Educational Attainment for Current Residence in the United States." American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, Table B07009, 2021, and U.S. Census Bureau. "Geographical Mobility in the Past Year by Educational Attainment for Residence 1 Year Ago in the United States." American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, Table B07409, 2021. The calculation of net migration includes only the data for those with at least a bachelor's degree, as the associate's degree level is not a measure provided by the Census for these tables (associate is combined with "some college').

Figure 6: Progress toward 55% Completion Goal Model

2012	Model Estimations	2025
903,511 Existing Marylanders with an associate degree or higher at Model's inception	266,750 overall net migration of those with associate's degree or higher + 718,209 awarded associate's degrees or higher from Maryland's public and private colleges and universities − 64,668 Mortality rate (those with associate's degree or higher who are estimated to die between Model's start and 2025) = 844,960 additional Maryland degree holders (residents with an associate's degree or higher)	1,748,471 Maryland residents between ages of 25 and 64 with an associate's degree or higher **55% of Maryland residents ages 25 to 64 hold at least one degree credential of associate's degree or higher**

Data on Enrollment, Progression, and Graduation

Statewide undergraduate and graduate student enrollment increased 3.5% from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023.[xv] Encouragingly, snapshot data from MHEC's Opening Fall Enrollment report shows an overall increase of around 3.0% from Fall 2023 to Fall 2024. [xvi]

The first-to-second year retention rate for the 2022 cohort of first-time, full-time students re-enrolling in Fall 2023 at the state's public four-year institutions was 80.8%, and the state-aided independent institutions' retention rate was 82.8%. Both are consistent with a 10-year stable trend. [xvii] The six-year graduation rate for the 2017 cohort of first time-full time undergraduate students at the public four-year institutions was 68.3%, and it was 70.6% for state-aided independent institutions, both of which are consistent with long-term trends.[xviii]

A community college metric for success is the four-year graduation and transfer rates for first-time, full time undergraduate students. For the 2019 cohort, the most recent entering cohort, the graduation and transfer rate was 39.6%.[xix]

Community colleges also rely on another means of measuring student success; the Degree Progress Analysis measure. While the calculation of graduation and transfer rates, noted above, establishes a cohort based upon full-time students, this cohort-based Degree Progress Analysis tool aids in accounting for the large number of part-time students at community colleges. The

strength of this is that it identifies the predominant community college student – those who enroll part time, who are not captured in metrics that focus solely on full-time students.[xx]

Among those students included in the most recent Degree Progress Analysis cohort, the Fall 2018 cohort, 52.4% had graduated or transferred within four years. This overall statewide rate masks differential achievement rates across developmental groups - those students who entered the community college "college ready" and those students who were assessed to need remediation and completed the necessary courses. Both student groups graduated or transferred at higher rates than the statewide rate: 66.6% for college ready students and 51.4% for those who completed their developmental coursework. In contrast, those students identified as needing remedial courses and who did not complete them, have a much lower rate (23.2%).[xxi]

Best Practices
Since the inception of the 55% completion goal, institutions can report annually to MHEC on the programs and initiatives aimed at student success and completion. These best practices are included as comprehensive compilation in appendices to recent reports.[xxii] These supplements encompass a number of topics, and the thematic index provided can assist institutions and other interested readers in discovering which institutions are using practices effectively in each area. Institutional practices presented in these reports focus on efforts to support degree completion.

For the 2024 report, MHEC sought to focus on institutions' efforts to support the Moore-Miller Administration 2024 State Plan's Goal "Setting up Maryland Students for Success" (see https://governor.maryland.gov/priorities/Documents/2024%20State%20Plan.pdf for Plan; pp 11-13). Specifically, MHEC wanted institutions to respond to the Plan's Objective 2.4: *Provide more resources for student success by strengthening wraparound and mental health services through community schools, establishing workgroups on multilingual learners, improving students' access to state financial aid, and increasing funding for special education, financial assistance, and other evidence-based support.*

As such, institutions were asked to: (1) identify at least three initiatives the institution has in place or will be developing to support (a) student mental health, (b) multilingual learners and/or (c) students' access to financial aid, (2) describe how and what evidence-based practices inform the initiatives' efforts, and (3) describe how the institution is tracking the impact of those initiatives on retention and completion (and any other relevant outcomes) and a brief description of relevant analyses.

All institutions were required to submit reports[8]. A review of the institutional submissions show that there are common themes around the how institutions are and will continue to support students facing mental health issues, multilingual students and students who rely on financial aid. Many discussed additional staffing needed for these initiatives including hiring additional mental health counselors and ESL instructors. They also discussed leveraging inter-campus collaborations and team work (e.g., faculty and deans, advising services, disability services and counseling services) to identify and support students facing mental health

---

[8] Two institutions (Allegany College of Maryland and Capitol Technical University) did not submit reports. All remaining community colleges, public four-year institutions and state-aided independent institutions did submit.

challenges and/or difficulties in the classroom due to language barriers. Lastly, many institutions reported training staff and faculty in areas of mental health support to aid in early intervention and connecting students to resources.

In addition, institutions discussed leveraging technology to support students. This comes in the form of telehealth services, software and applications to communicate with students via cell phone/text messaging, smart phone apps that help with language and translation, and tools used to help students navigate the financial aid process. Most rely on vendors and purchased products for these technological tools.

All institutions discussed their focus on FASFA initiatives they oversaw, both to encourage more FAFSA filing and to smooth the processes for students in the wake of the challenging 2023-2024 roll out of the revised FAFSA form. Many leveraged state and national networks and resources to help with this, especially with the nationwide challenges all campuses were facing.

Institutions report using best practices identified through faculty, professional associations, advocacy organizations, affinity groups, national leaders, and federal and state government sources. They report relying on these entities to share best practices, provide training and resources, and help establish benchmarks and metrics to help institutions monitor progress and track successes and challenges.

Fewer institutions were able to report on findings and analysis from their work tracking and monitoring programs and interventions. This is due in part to the timing of the institutions' work; many have increased their focus on issues of mental health, for example, in the past few years. Often "success" is measured through such metrics as graduation, declaration of a major and other achievements with a longer time horizon. Similarly, FAFSA complications continued into Fall 2024 such that institutions are still unsure the short- and long-term effects of the problems faced this year. Despite limited reporting on data analytics and findings, most reported having systems in place to track and report in the future.

Institutional reports are included, unedited by MHEC, as an appendix to this statewide report.

Conclusion

The Commission will complete a final report on the 2025 goal attainment in 2025. In addition, the Commission, in collaboration with statewide stakeholders, will consider new goals for Maryland in the coming months. Lastly, MHEC continues to support institutional best practices on helping institutions achieve equitable access, success and completion outcomes for its students. To that end, MHEC hosted a statewide Student Success Summit (November 14-15, 2024) wherein state and institutional leaders worked together to discuss draft goals for equity in completion, postsecondary attainment, completion of specific credentials, and research and innovation which reflects a commitment to postsecondary success for all of those attending Maryland institutions.

---

[i] The 2024 Joint Chairmen's Report requests information on the contributions of regional higher education centers

(RHECs) to progression and completion. Although these entities serve their local communities by hosting classes offered by multiple institutions of higher education, these entities do not report directly to MHEC. Instead, the institutions operating at the RHECs include their data together with that of students on the main campus.

[ii] Degree Information System collection reflects degrees and awards in credit bearing programs and reflect a July 1 to June 30 reporting cycle.

[iii] Bachelor's Degree Attainment in the United States: 2005 to 2019 American Community Survey Briefs. February 2021. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2021/acs/acsbr-009.pdf

[iv] Maryland Education Article §10–205

[v] Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2022.B15001?q=%22SEX%20BY%20AGE%20BY%20EDUCATIONAL%20ATTAINMENT%20FOR%20THE%20POPULATION%2018%20YEARS%20AND%20OVER%20%22&g=040XX00US24 MHEC applied the annual growth rate of .05 to the value from the 2018-2022 ACS (50.9%) for 2023 and 2024 to obtain the 51.9% reported.

[vi] States differ in how they define high-value certificates and some states have no definition. Data on certificate completion are limited, as the primary source for attainment data (the American Community Survey of the US Census) does not include certificates in its traditional measure of educational attainment... The Lumina Foundation has estimated certificate attainment, counting only certificates whose holders are employed in the field in which they received their credential to ensure that their attainment rates only count credentials that have economic value (based on Stronger Nation analysis https://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/#/progress/state/MD

[vii] Using U.S. Census Bureau data from the American Community Survey, One-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), and the average growth rate per year has been .5%. According to the Census, Maryland's degree attainment rate was 49.6% in 2020, and using an average rate increase of .5%, the estimated degree attainment rate for 2021 was 50.1%.; Census has not released 2020 ACS data as of the production time for this report (December 2022); therefore data from 2020 onward are estimates using the .5% average rate of change.

[viii] This number is an estimate based on the percentage of Marylanders ages 25-49 within the 25-64 age group (65%), and that percentage multiplied by the number of Marylanders ages 25-64 with a degree. This model assumes a flat rate of degree attainment across age brackets and recognizes that this number is only an estimate.

[ix] Maryland Higher Education Commission, December 2014, "Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress Toward the 55% Completion Goal." https://mhec.maryland.gov/publications/Documents/Research/AnnualReports/2014BestPracProgressCompletionGoal_020615.pdf the model was revised to reflect additional input from Maryland colleges and universities as well as additional information on migration patterns within the State and increased degree output at independent colleges and universities in Maryland.

[x] This assessment included an analysis of the trends in actual degree awards and the data that inform the model. MHEC also sought input from Maryland colleges and universities regarding the model's institutional targets. Additional details about the initial and revised models are provided in the 2012, 2014, and 2017 Best Practices reports. Maryland Higher Education Commission, December 2017, "Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress Toward the 55% Completion Goal." https://mhec.maryland.gov/publications/Documents/Research/AnnualReports/2017BestPractices.pdf

[xi] Net migration figures were recalculated for the 2014 and 2017 reports, which can been found on the MHEC Office of Research and Policy Analysis website (https://mhec.maryland.gov/publications/Pages/research/index.aspx under Student Outcomes).

[xii] This is an alteration from the 2017 revision, which projected net positive migration of 275,088.

[xiii] The 2023 analysis shows an alteration of the mortality rate to 0.4%; this rate is higher than the mortality rate used in earlier reports' calculations (past rate was 0.2%).

[xiv] This value was calculated by taking the average mortality rate of Maryland residents in 2012 between the ages of 25-64 (0.2%) and then multiplying this by the estimated total number of Maryland residents with degrees in this same age range in 2025 (1,828,420).

[xv] See credit headcount enrollment data dashboard https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiZWUwYTNiMDUtYzZmOC00YWQ4LWE2MDctZTQwNGM0OTQyMGY1IiwidCI6IjYwYWZlOWUyLTQ5Y2QtNDliMS04ODUxLTY0ZGYwMjc2YTJlOCJ9

[xvi] See Opening Fall Enrollment Dashboard: https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiNGRhZmFlZGItZDMxYi00OWM2LThlYjgtNzBhNWE1MGIwM2ZkIiwidCI6IjYwYWZlOWUyLTQ5Y2QtNDliMS04ODUxLTY0ZGYwMjc2YTJlOCJ9

[xvii] The retention rate reflects first time, full time cohorts of students who enroll in a given year and return to the same Maryland four-year institution they enrolled in the prior year; the graduation rate reflects these cohorts' graduation

from any Maryland four-year   institution.

xviii Additional   data and analyses, including institutional tables, can be found in the dashboard "Retention and Graduation Rates at Maryland Four-Year Institutions"
https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiNjQyY2I2OWItOWQzMi00NjYwLTg4M2YtZjYzY2MxZWFiZGE2Iiwid CI6IjYwYWZlOWUyLTQ5Y2QtNDliMS04ODUxLTY0ZGYwMjc2YTJlOCJ9

xix Additional data and analyses can be found in the dashboard "Retention, Graduation, and Transfer Rates at Maryland Community Colleges"
https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiY2I4Y2FlYzUtZDQ4Yi00NjU2LWEyYjYtZmZkNGQ4MWRlOWIyIiwi dCI6IjYwYWZlOWUyLTQ5Y2QtNDliMS04ODUxLTY0ZGYwMjc2YTJlOCJ9

xx The Degree Progress Analysis examines students who complete at least 18 credit hours within their first two years of enrollment and identifies students as successful if they have graduated, transferred to a four- year institution, or are still enrolled with a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or better.

xxi See Degree Progress Analysis dashboard at MHEC Office of Research and Policy Analysis website
https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiNzFhNGI3ZDEtNjcwZi00ZGYyLWEwM2UtNWU0MWJiODJlMzczIiw idCI6IjYwYWZlOWUyLTQ5Y2QtNDliMS04ODUxLTY0ZGYwMjc2YTJlOCJ9

xxii Maryland Higher Education Commission, December 2014, "Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress Toward the 55% Completion Goal – Appendix."
http://mhec.maryland.gov/publications/Documents/Research/2014Studies/2014_Best_Practices_Appendix.pdf
 and Maryland Higher Education Commission, December 2012, "Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal – Appendix".
https://mhec.maryland.gov/publications/Documents/Research/2012Studies/2012BestPracticesAppendix.pdf

Table 2. Degree targets for public institutions, by institution (2.0% annual growth*)

Institution	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	Total
COMMUNITY COLLEGES																	
Allegany College of Maryland	572	583	595	607	619	632	644	657	670	684	697	711	725	740	755	770	10,662
Anne Arundel Community College	1,336	1,363	1,390	1,418	1,446	1,475	1,505	1,535	1,565	1,597	1,629	1,661	1,694	1,728	1,763	1,798	24,902
Baltimore City Community College	411	419	428	436	445	454	463	472	482	491	501	511	521	532	542	553	7,661
Carroll Community College	466	475	485	495	504	515	525	535	546	557	568	579	591	603	615	627	8,686
Cecil College	190	194	198	202	206	210	214	218	223	227	232	236	241	246	251	256	3,541
Chesapeake College	230	235	239	244	249	254	259	264	269	275	280	286	292	298	303	310	4,287
College of Southern Maryland	822	838	855	872	890	908	926	944	963	982	1,002	1,022	1,042	1,063	1,085	1,106	15,321
Community College of Baltimore County	1,703	1,737	1,772	1,807	1,843	1,880	1,918	1,956	1,995	2,035	2,076	2,117	2,160	2,203	2,247	2,292	31,743
Frederick Community College	682	696	710	724	738	753	768	783	799	815	831	848	865	882	900	918	12,712
Garrett College	96	98	100	102	104	106	108	110	112	115	117	119	122	124	127	129	1,789
Hagerstown Community College	442	451	460	469	478	488	498	508	518	528	539	550	561	572	583	595	8,239
Harford Community College	611	623	636	648	661	675	688	702	716	730	745	760	775	790	806	822	11,389
Howard Community College	675	689	702	716	731	745	760	775	791	807	823	839	856	873	891	908	12,582
Montgomery College	1,919	1,957	1,997	2,036	2,077	2,119	2,161	2,204	2,248	2,293	2,339	2,386	2,434	2,482	2,532	2,583	35,769
Prince George's Community College	690	704	718	732	747	762	777	793	808	825	841	858	875	893	910	929	12,861
Wor-Wic Community College	318	324	331	337	344	351	358	365	373	380	388	395	403	411	420	428	5,927
Sub-Total	**11,163**	**11,386**	**11,614**	**11,846**	**12,083**	**12,325**	**12,571**	**12,823**	**13,079**	**13,341**	**13,608**	**13,880**	**14,157**	**14,441**	**14,729**	**15,024**	**208,070**
FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS																	
Bowie State University	606	618	630	643	656	669	682	696	710	724	739	753	769	784	800	816	11,295
Coppin State University	378	386	393	401	409	417	426	434	443	452	461	470	479	489	499	509	7,046
Frostburg State University	768	783	799	815	831	848	865	882	900	918	936	955	974	993	1,013	1,034	14,315
Salisbury University	1,661	1,694	1,728	1,763	1,798	1,834	1,871	1,908	1,946	1,985	2,025	2,065	2,107	2,149	2,192	2,235	30,960
Towson University	3,625	3,698	3,771	3,847	3,924	4,002	4,082	4,164	4,247	4,332	4,419	4,507	4,597	4,689	4,783	4,879	67,567
University of Baltimore	516	526	537	548	559	570	581	593	605	617	629	642	654	668	681	694	9,618
University of Maryland, Baltimore	379	379	380	380	381	381	381	382	382	382	383	383	384	384	384	385	6,110
University of Maryland, Baltimore County	1,915	1,953	1,992	2,032	2,073	2,114	2,157	2,200	2,244	2,289	2,334	2,381	2,429	2,477	2,527	2,577	35,694
University of Maryland, College Park	6,569	6,700	6,834	6,971	7,110	7,253	7,398	7,546	7,697	7,851	8,008	8,168	8,331	8,498	8,668	8,841	122,441
University of Maryland Eastern Shore	463	472	482	491	501	511	521	532	542	553	564	576	587	599	611	623	8,630
University of Maryland Global Campus.	3,365	3,432	3,501	3,571	3,642	3,715	3,790	3,865	3,943	4,021	4,102	4,184	4,268	4,353	4,440	4,529	62,721
Morgan State University	772	787	803	819	836	852	869	887	905	923	941	960	979	999	1,019	1,039	14,390
St. Mary's College of Maryland	441	445	450	454	459	463	468	473	478	482	487	330	333	337	340	343	6,784
Sub-Total	**21,458**	**21,876**	**22,301**	**22,736**	**23,179**	**23,630**	**24,091**	**24,561**	**25,040**	**25,529**	**26,028**	**26,374**	**26,891**	**27,418**	**27,956**	**28,504**	**397,572**
Statewide Total	**32,621**	**33,262**	**33,915**	**34,582**	**35,262**	**35,955**	**36,663**	**37,384**	**38,120**	**38,870**	**39,635**	**40,254**	**41,048**	**41,859**	**42,685**	**43,528**	**605,642**

15

Table 3. Target and actual undergraduate degrees awarded, community colleges.

Institution		2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	Total
Allegany College of Maryland	Target		583	595	607	619	632	644	657	670	684	697	711	725	740	755	770	10,662
	Actual	572	603	562	588	576	532	517	524	506	489	431	519	468	497	488		
	+/-		20	-33	-19	-43	-100	-127	-133	-164	-195	-266	-192	-257	-243	-267		
Anne Arundel Community College	Target		1,363	1,390	1,418	1,446	1,475	1,505	1,535	1,565	1,597	1,629	1,661	1,694	1,728	1,763	1,798	24,902
	Actual	1,336	1,505	1,567	1,581	1,800	1,852	1,778	1,705	1,622	1,785	1,749	1,791	1,570	1,401	1,429		
	+/-		142	177	163	354	377	273	170	57	188	120	130	-124	-327	-334		
Baltimore City Community College	Target		419	428	436	445	454	463	472	482	491	501	511	521	532	542	553	7,661
	Actual	411	470	540	446	385	405	425	380	443	431	384	426	383	362	327		
	+/-		51	112	10	-60	-49	-38	-92	-39	-60	-117	-85	-138	-170	-215		
Carroll Community College	Target		475	485	495	504	515	525	535	546	557	568	579	591	603	615	627	8,686
	Actual	466	534	557	658	656	622	614	582	507	502	492	541	476	471	455		
	+/-		59	72	163	152	107	89	47	-39	-55	-76	-38	-115	-132	-160		
Cecil College	Target		194	198	202	206	210	214	218	223	227	232	236	241	246	251	256	3,541
	Actual	190	235	244	219	290	319	341	291	468	355	398	278	355	315	327		
	+/-		41	46	17	84	109	127	73	245	128	166	42	114	69	76		
Chesapeake College	Target		235	239	244	249	254	259	264	269	275	280	286	292	298	303	310	4,287
	Actual	230	251	272	308	282	272	237	250	266	243	243	239	910	229	247		
	+/-		16	33	64	33	18	-22	-14	-3	-32	-37	-47	618	-69	-56		
College of Southern Maryland	Target		838	855	872	890	908	926	944	963	982	1,002	1,022	1,042	1,063	1,085	1,106	15,321
	Actual	822	821	990	1,082	1,215	1,193	1,123	1,272	1,262	1,116	926	968	910	869	749		
	+/-		-17	135	210	325	285	197	328	299	134	-76	-54	-132	-194	-336		
Community College of Baltimore County	Target		1,737	1,772	1,807	1,843	1,880	1,918	1,956	1,995	2,035	2,076	2,117	2,160	2,203	2,247	2,292	31,743
	Actual	1,703	1,854	2,132	2,086	2,020	2,200	2,174	2,133	2,131	2,168	1,925	2,007	1,813	1,718	1,672		
	+/-		117	360	279	177	320	256	177	136	133	-151	-110	-347	-485	-575		
Frederick Community College	Target		696	710	724	738	753	768	783	799	815	831	848	865	882	900	918	12,712
	Actual	682	778	846	883	847	897	981	877	882	855	862	911	806	847	863		
	+/-		82	136	159	109	144	213	94	83	40	31	63	-59	-35	-37		
Garrett College	Target		98	100	102	104	106	108	110	112	115	117	119	122	124	127	129	1,789
	Actual	96	98	133	105	108	107	149	111	107	102	94	108	104	97	113		
	+/-		0	33	3	4	1	41	1	-5	-13	-23	-11	-18	-27	-14		
Hagerstown Community College	Target		451	460	469	478	488	498	508	518	528	539	550	561	572	583	595	8,239
	Actual	442	490	551	573	601	634	661	622	568	570	592	599	578	543	598		
	+/-		39	91	104	123	146	163	114	50	42	53	49	17	-29	15		
Harford Community College	Target		623	636	648	661	675	688	702	716	730	745	760	775	790	806	822	11,389
	Actual	611	772	834	923	903	997	1,088	1,067	883	905	812	872	870	854	943		
	+/-		149	198	275	242	322	400	365	167	175	67	112	95	64	137		
Howard Community College	Target		689	702	716	731	745	760	775	791	807	823	839	856	873	891	908	12,582
	Actual	675	872	955	1,066	1,113	1,165	1,168	1,241	1,290	1,331	1,355	1,341	1,271	1,147	1,103		
	+/-		184	253	350	382	420	408	466	499	524	532	502	415	274	212		
Montgomery College	Target		1,957	1,997	2,036	2,077	2,119	2,161	2,204	2,248	2,293	2,339	2,386	2,434	2,482	2,532	2,583	35,769
	Actual	1,919	2,183	2,383	2,318	2,374	2,662	2,553	2,611	2,577	2,754	2,798	2,913	2,778	2,594	2,457		
	+/-		226	386	282	297	543	392	407	329	461	459	527	344	112	-75		
Prince George's Community College	Target		704	718	732	747	762	777	793	808	825	841	858	875	893	910	929	12,861
	Actual	690	800	904	963	948	908	925	856	1,057	972	1,093	1,213	1,354	1,258	1,236		
	+/-		96	186	231	201	146	148	63	249	147	252	355	479	365	326		
Wor-Wic Community College	Target		324	331	337	344	351	358	365	373	380	388	395	403	411	420	428	5,927
	Actual	318	371	382	470	423	368	404	397	363	319	318	327	291	341	284		
	+/-		47	51	133	79	17	46	32	-10	-61	-70	-68	-112	-70	-136		
Sub-Total	**Target**		11,386	11,614	11,846	12,083	12,325	12,571	12,823	13,079	13,341	13,608	13,880	14,157	14,441	14,729	15,024	208,070
	Actual	11,163	12,637	13,852	14,269	14,541	15,133	15,138	14,919	14,932	14,897	14,472	15,053	14,937	13,543	13,291		
	+/-		1,251	2,238	2,423	2,458	2,808	2,567	2,096	1,853	1,556	864	1,173	780	-898	-1,438		

Table 4. Target and actual undergraduate degrees awarded, four-year colleges and universities.

Institution		2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	Total
Bowie State University	Target		618	630	643	656	669	682	696	710	724	739	753	769	784	800	816	11,295
	Actual	606	683	688	739	741	801	832	713	781	826	870	881	850	855	757		
	+/-		65	58	96	85	132	150	17	71	102	131	128	81	71	-43		
Coppin State University	Target		386	393	401	409	417	426	434	443	452	461	470	479	489	499	509	7,046
	Actual	378	379	460	409	478	416	464	421	399	378	335	332	329	322	289		
	+/-		-7	67	8	69	-1	38	-13	-44	-74	-126	-138	-150	-167	-210		
Frostburg State University	Target		783	799	815	831	848	865	882	900	918	936	955	974	993	1,013	1,034	14,315
	Actual	768	850	892	969	1,012	1,032	964	1,060	1,027	1,078	967	1,023	928	728	818		
	+/-		67	93	154	181	184	99	178	127	160	31	68	-46	-265	-195		
Salisbury University	Target		1,694	1,728	1,763	1,798	1,834	1,871	1,908	1,946	1,985	2,025	2,065	2,107	2,149	2,192	2,235	30,960
	Actual	1,661	1,709	1,787	1,872	1,899	1,935	1,967	2,026	1,873	1,805	1,907	1,842	1,664	1,605	1,468		
	+/-		15	59	109	101	101	96	118	-73	-180	-118	-223	-443	-544	-724		
Towson University	Target		3,698	3,771	3,847	3,924	4,002	4,082	4,164	4,247	4,332	4,419	4,507	4,597	4,689	4,783	4,879	67,567
	Actual	3,625	3,948	4,103	4,147	4,291	4,422	4,428	4,628	4,609	4,619	4,701	4,628	4,529	4,064	3,986		
	+/-		251	332	300	367	420	346	464	362	287	282	121	-68	-625	-797		
University of Baltimore	Target		526	537	548	559	570	581	593	605	617	629	642	654	668	681	694	9,618
	Actual	516	631	625	670	665	694	721	755	711	615	521	468	391	373	340		
	+/-		105	88	122	106	124	140	162	106	-2	-108	-174	-263	-295	-341		
University of Maryland, Baltimore	Target		379	380	380	381	381	381	382	382	382	383	383	384	384	384	385	6,110
	Actual	379	359	340	337	337	333	399	416	433	438	420	415	410	429	433		
	+/-		-20	-40	-43	-44	-48	18	34	51	56	37	32	26	45	49		
University of Maryland, Baltimore County	Target		1,953	1,992	2,032	2,073	2,114	2,157	2,200	2,244	2,289	2,334	2,381	2,429	2,477	2,527	2,577	35,694
	Actual	1,915	1,905	2,140	2,230	2,250	2,432	2,521	2,572	2,578	2,658	2,632	2,643	2,674	2,419	2,263		
	+/-		-48	148	198	177	318	364	372	334	369	298	262	245	-58	-264		
University of Maryland, College Park	Target		6,700	6,834	6,971	7,110	7,253	7,398	7,546	7,697	7,851	8,008	8,168	8,331	8,498	8,668	8,841	122,441
	Actual	6,569	6,987	7,043	7,192	7,279	7,166	7,253	7,292	7,559	7,768	8,295	8,100	8,420	8,028	7,989		
	+/-		287	209	221	169	-87	-145	-254	-138	-83	287	-68	89	-470	-679		
University of Maryland Eastern Shore	Target		472	482	491	501	511	521	532	542	553	564	576	587	599	611	623	8,630
	Actual	463	506	627	514	585	577	574	514	482	508	516	384	300	304	276		
	+/-		34	145	23	84	66	53	-18	-60	-45	-48	-192	-287	-295	-335		
University of Maryland Global Campus	Target		3,432	3,501	3,571	3,642	3,715	3,790	3,865	3,943	4,021	4,102	4,184	4,268	4,353	4,440	4,529	62,721
	Actual	3,365	3,555	4,280	4,631	4,715	6,197	7,112	7,413	7,971	8,065	8,661	10,150	10,098	10,127	10,943		
	+/-		123	779	1,060	1,073	2,482	3,322	3,548	4,028	4,044	4,559	5,966	5,830	5,774	6,503		
Morgan State University	Target		787	803	819	836	852	869	887	905	923	941	960	979	999	1,019	1,039	14,390
	Actual	772	813	902	976	922	933	902	970	1,153	1,091	1,102	1,138	964	964	936		
	+/-		26	99	157	86	81	33	83	248	168	161	178	-15	-35	-83		
St. Mary's College of Maryland	Target		445	450	454	459	463	468	473	478	482	487	330	333	337	340	343	6,784
	Actual	441	410	444	450	432	427	432	414	345	392	336	330	357	291	336		
	+/-		-35	-6	-4	-27	-36	-36	-59	-133	-90	-151	0	24	-46	-4		
Sub-Total	**Target**		21,876	22,301	22,736	23,179	23,630	24,091	24,561	25,040	25,529	26,028	26,374	26,891	27,418	27,956	28,504	397,572
	Actual	21,458	22,735	24,331	25,136	25,606	27,365	28,569	29,194	29,921	30,241	31,263	32,334	31,914	30,509	30,834		
	+/-		859	2,030	2,400	2,427	3,735	4,478	4,633	4,881	4,712	5,235	5,960	5,023	3,091	2,878		

Totals for University of Maryland Global Campus include both associate and baccalaureate degrees and consist of stateside and overseas figures.

At the request of St. Mary's College of Maryland, MHEC has reset their target degree value to their actual value for 2020-2021 and reset the multiplier for the years thereafter.

Table 5. Cumulative targets and actual degree awards for all sectors.

Institutional Sector		2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	Total
Community Colleges	Target		11,386	11,614	11,846	12,083	12,325	12,571	12,823	13,079	13,341	13,608	13,880	14,157	14,441	14,729	15,024	208,070
	Actual	11,163	12,637	13,852	14,269	14,541	15,133	15,138	14,919	14,932	14,897	14,472	15,053	14,239	13,543	13,291		
	+/-		1,251	2,238	2,423	2,458	2,808	2,567	2,096	1,853	1,556	864	1,173	82	-898	-1,438		
Four-Year Institutions	Target		21,876	22,301	22,736	23,179	23,630	24,091	24,561	25,040	25,529	26,028	26,374	26,891	27,418	27,956	28,504	397,572
	Actual	21,458	22,735	24,331	25,136	25,606	27,365	28,569	29,194	29,921	30,241	31,263	32,334	31,914	30,509	30,834		
	+/-		859	2,030	2,400	2,427	3,735	4,478	4,633	4,881	4,712	5,235	5,960	5,023	3,091	2,878		
Independent Institutions	Target		6,281	6,469	6,663	6,863	6,225	6,136	6,269	6,410	6,570	6,680	6,706	6,859	7,022	7,189	7,365	105,805
	Actual	6,098	6,174	6,303	6,442	6,395	6,572	6,327	5,991	5,915	5,644	5,576	5,581	5,474	5,410	5,192		
	+/-		-107	-166	-221	-468	347	191	-278	-495	-926	-1,104	-1,125	-1,385	-1,612	-1,997		
Other Private Institutions	Target		668	668	668	416	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	334	6,762
	Actual	668	694	372	233	443	231	231	284	224	300	152	143	162	166	207		
	+/-		26	-296	-435	27	-103	-103	-50	-110	-34	-182	-191	-172	-168	-127		
Annual Total	Target		40,211	41,052	41,913	42,541	42,514	43,133	43,987	44,864	45,774	46,649	47,294	48,241	49,215	50,208		718,209
	Actual	39,387	42,240	44,858	46,080	46,985	49,301	50,265	50,388	50,992	51,082	51,463	53,111	51,789	49,628	49,524		
	+/-		2,029	3,806	4,167	4,444	6,787	7,132	6,401	6,128	5,308	4,814	5,817	3,548	413	-684		
Cumulative Total	Target		79,598	120,650	162,563	205,104	247,618	290,751	334,738	379,601	425,375	472,024	519,318	567,559	616,774	666,982		718,209
	Actual	39,387	81,627	126,485	172,565	219,550	268,851	319,116	369,504	420,496	471,578	523,041	576,152	627,941	677,569	727,093		
	+/-		2,029	5,835	10,002	14,446	21,233	28,365	34,766	40,895	46,203	51,017	56,834	60,382	60,795	60,111		

<div align="center">

Anne Arundel Community College
2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress
toward the 55% Completion Goal

</div>

<u>MHEC Prompts:</u>

Question 1. Identify at least three initiatives the institution has in place or will be developing to support (a)student mental health, (b) multilingual learners and/or (c) students' access to financial aid.

Initiatives on (a) student mental health: provided free, solution-focused mental health counseling and psycho-educational workshops for all students; and launched a college-wide Mental Health Awareness initiative

Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) is committed to providing support, resources, and access to mental health care to our students. The faculty and staff fully recognize the fact that college years can be stressful and challenging, both academically and personally. Research studies indicate the positive effects of counseling for college students and a reduction of social/emotional difficulties, adjustment challenges, and improved grades overall. The Office of Personal Counseling at AACC attempts to reach the student population through social media posts, meet and greets, and a short welcome video introducing some of counseling's common presenting issues, with information about making an appointment. Additionally, the College offers a variety of psycho-educational workshops to improve overall mental health knowledge, self-awareness, and awareness of others, with an average of 25 workshops per academic year. Last year, a total of 2,085 students participated in these workshops. Further, the College has received a grant to improve mental health awareness through a variety of identified activities in fiscal year 2024 and 2025. The College will host two visual events to bring mental health awareness to our community. One entitled "Send Silence Packing" is a suicide prevention visual that helps those who may be struggling with suicide feel less alone and recognize the impact of acting on their thoughts. The other "Clothesline Project" highlights domestic violence and provides a voice for those who have been victimized, which empowers its participants and creates awareness of the available resources. This year, AACC will also have two professional speakers presenting on mental health awareness. These events will be open to the entire college community.

Initiatives on (b) multilingual learners: 1) expanded instructional pathways and inclusion for multilingual learners, and 2) established interdisciplinary partnerships linguistically relevant pedagogy

In 2022, AACC launched a Multilingual Learners in College initiative, through an AACC-AACPS collaborative partnership, hosted by AACC's English Language Learning and Adult Education department with support from AACPS's Office of English Language Development, and AACC's School of Liberal Arts. This 6-week summer college and career readiness program has now engaged three cohorts of AACPS English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students dually enrolled at the College.

All 51 AACPS ESOL students have participated in Multilingual Learners in College at no cost thanks to Maryland Blueprint funding and/or scholarships provided by the AACC Foundation. Participants are rising juniors and seniors from schools across Anne Arundel County who take Capstone Grammar & Editing (ELL-319) paired with Student Success Seminar (ACA-100). The program also includes an arts-integrated extension through a partnership with AACC's Visual Arts & Humanities Department. The arts extension includes field trips to expose students to multilingual careers in the Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) area and includes a project-based assessment of student work through an end-of-program art showcase.

AACC's Nursing Department has taken multiple measures to ensure equity for multilingual learners in their approach to both instruction and assessment methods. For example, Nursing Professor Heidi Rayner organized and implemented a test item-writing workshop for Nursing faculty including staff and faculty from World Languages, English, English Language Learning, and Academic Literacies to introduce reading comprehension levels, language clarity, and sentence structure to the nursing department. The Nursing faculty then spent time re-wording test questions to best serve all students. Additionally, Nursing Professor and Department Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Anti-racism, Accessibility (DEIAA) Liaison Tanesha Meade, led an effort to track data so faculty could avoid inadvertently selecting test item language that would benefit some students and disproportionately disadvantage multilingual learners. For every exam in every course, faculty complete a form entitled "Dictionary Use on Exams." At the end of every academic year, they collaborate with staff and faculty in World Languages and the English Language Learning department to get their insight on the words our students have looked up. This list is then reviewed for clarity in lecture, clarity on exam, or considered for editing.

Initiatives on (c) financial aid: Expanded financial aid outreach efforts to dually enrolled students, homeschoolers, and historically marginalized populations

The Office of Financial Aid has expanded financial aid outreach efforts over the last two years. Along with individual high school counselors, the Office works directly with AACPS, the Coordinator of Counseling for grades 9-12 and the AACPS Communications Outreach Specialist to broaden events to include multiple schools and create a centralized schedule for financial aid applications. In addition, the office strategically reaches out to underprivileged or historically marginalized student populations, including international students, and DREAMERS, undocumented students brought to the U.S. as children, eligible for protections under the DREAM Act, with admissions, as well as teen moms with the Teacher Education and Child Care Institute, outside mentoring organizations, and Homeschoolers. The Office created new materials to inform counselors and students of changes and updates to the new process of Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process.

Question 2 Of those initiatives, describe how and what evidence-based practices inform the initiatives' efforts.

The College used evidence-based practices and systematic data analyses to inform the initiatives' efforts. According to best practices and related literature on supporting college mental health, normalizing and destigmatizing mental health can create a culture of care, enhance conversations about mental health, and encourages support-seeking steps or accessing professional assistance.

2

Counselors use research to choose topics that are relevant to the college community and provide tools that are proven effective. Locally, the College also surveyed 294 AACC students who utilized counseling services in the past two years through one-on-one mental health counseling. Of those who responded, 84% stated that counseling played a role in their success at the college with 68% stating it played a significant in their success. More than 72% of responders stated that counseling was effective in helping to manage their overall stress. More than 60% reported counseling assisted with better organization and 71% stated it helped them connect to college and community resources (data source: the Office of Personal Counseling).

AACC's program design on expanding instructional pathways is strongly informed by the findings from the Blueprint Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools report and was cited on page 114. Additionally, program staff collaborated with Columbia University's Community College Research Center to understand the severity of the equity gap that marginalized ESOL students participating in dual enrollment in Maryland; as of the 2017-2018 school year of the "7,500 English language learners in high school only 23 were reported as having enrolled in any dual enrollment course," which represented just 0.3% of all dually enrolled students (Andrews & Marron, 2022).

The Office of Financial Aid staff used an evidence-based approach to inform the initiatives' efforts described above. For example, Maryland's SB 664, also known as the "FAFSA Completion Initiative," is a bill that aims to give our high school seniors a boost toward college by encouraging and assisting them in completing and submitting the FAFSA. The FAFSA Completion Initiative recognizes that completing the FAFSA is a powerful predictor of whether a high school senior will continue into college. When students complete the FAFSA, they become 84% more likely to immediately enroll in college. During the 2019–2020 FAFSA cycle, only about 64% of Maryland's graduating seniors completed the FAFSA. Full details are in SB 664 document.

Under Maryland's SB 644, high schools are required to report their FAFSA completion numbers to the state by July 1st each year. According to the 2023 Student FAFSA Completion Report, the FAFSA completion rates in Maryland have shown some fluctuations. The 2023 report indicates that the overall completion rate for the 2021-2022 academic year was lower compared to previous years, but several factors impacted the 2021-2022 FAFSA including the COVID pandemic. As outreach efforts continue, we will continue to track the Student FAFSA Completion Report with the 2024 report reflecting the 2022-2023 FAFSA completion numbers.

Questions 3. Describe how the institution is tracking the impact of those initiatives on retention and completion (and any other relevant outcomes) and a brief description of relevant analyses.

Aligned with the national trend, AACC has witnessed an increase in students who registered for accommodations for the Disability Support Services (DSS). The Office of Planning, Research, and Institutional Assessment (PRIA) has been tracking the impact of college initiatives on student success, measured by retention, completion, course success, and equity gaps. Per the MHEC-S-25 report, the most recent data shows that the number of first-time, full-time and part-time students with documented disabilities increased from 102 students to 125 students, a 22.5%

increase over the last four years at AACC. The overall successful transfer and persistence rate improved from 77.6% to 91.2%, during the same time. Further, the momentum credit completion rate for students with documented disabilities outperformed their counterparts in Fall 2022 (61.9% vs. 58.4%) and Fall 2023 (62.8 vs. 61.9%); the fall-to-fall persistence rate for students with documented disabilities outperformed their counterparts in Fall 2021 (65.9% vs. 55.8%), and Fall 2022 (73.6% vs. 57.1%); the four-year completion rate for students with documented disabilities outperformed their counterparts in Fall 2021 (27.5% vs. 19.4%) and Fall 2022 (25.6% vs. 15.1%) (data source: PRIA).

The Multilingual Learners in College program provides a significant head start on college and career readiness for the AACPS ESOL students. Program staff regularly assess student learning outcomes and track their continued enrollment after graduating from high school; 22% of student participants have registered for additional classes at AACC. Four of these students are currently enrolled in Fall 2024 credit courses (data source: PRIA).

Due to the intentional efforts for linguistically relevant pedagogy and other student support services in the Nursing department, the program enrollment increased from 407 in fall 2022 to 443 in fall 2023.Noteably, the percentage of Nursing students representing minoritized ethnic groups increased from 41.6% to 47.9%, and first-generation college students increased from 41.7% to 44.4% during the same period, and the program persistence rate remains above 90% during the last five years (data source: PRIA). Although the population of multilingual learners overlaps significantly with minoritized ethnic groups and first-generation students, the College is actively exploring ways to code language diversity within the student information system.

In FY 2023, 36.7% of AACC credit students received some form of financial aid, with 18.4% of credit students receiving Pell grants. As part of the College's commitment to DEIAA, the PRIA office developed interactive dashboards to track if equity gaps exist in student success measures for historically marginalized student populations and the progress made in closing the equity gaps. Although the gap in course success rates between Pell recipients still exists, the overall course success rate for Pell recipients improved from 71.4% in Fall 2022 to 72.7% in Fall 2023. Additionally, the momentum credit completion rate increased from 59.4% to 66.1% at the same time (data source: PRIA).

<div align="center">References:</div>

Andrews, O.S., & Marron, D.S. (2022, June 13). Opening the dual enrollment door wider for English Learners: A case study From Maryland (Community College Research Center). The Mixed Methods Blog.

BCCC
Baltimore City Community College

2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal

Introduction

The mission of Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) is to provide quality, affordable, and accessible education meeting the professional and personal goals of a diverse population, changing lives, and building communities. BCCC returned to a primarily in-person environment in spring 2022. Baltimore City, the College's primary service area, remained among the highest jurisdictions in the State for COVID-19 positivity and the lowest for vaccinations throughout the pandemic. Liberty Campus's zip code, 21215, had the highest positivity rate in the City. The pandemic's effects lasted longer than anticipated as related to enrollment, completion, and students' needs for support.

BCCC is the only urban community college in Maryland and serves a population that typically needs academic support and wrap-around services. Most students attend part-time and often have job and personal responsibilities competing for their time and attention. The College is committed to providing services to support students, which align with the State's priorities.

1) *Identify at least three initiatives the institution has in place or will be developing to support (a) student mental health, (b) multilingual learners and/or (c) students' access to financial aid.*

a. *Student Mental Health*

The students' overall well-being is essential to their completion. In spring 2024, BCCC filled the full-time Coordinator of the Student Support and Wellness Services Center (SSWSC) position, a licensed social worker, to provide additional support for students' social and emotional needs along with the full-time counselor. The SSWSC provides free and confidential counseling to students for extra support with personal concerns affecting their academic success and general well-being. Services include teletherapy, individual and group counseling, consultation and training, classroom presentations, referrals to campus and community resources, and workshops for students, faculty, and staff. Workshops include time and stress management, drug and alcohol awareness, mental health, and sleep mindfulness. The SSWSC webpage offers resources for crisis intervention, housing assistance, food/nutrition services, and substance abuse.

Mental health services are more broadly integrated throughout the College. Students can receive direct counseling in-person or virtually. Mental health workshops are held frequently on campus for students, faculty, and staff. Mental Health Workshops to include (topics subject to change): Suicide Prevention, Sleep Awareness, Signs of Depression, Food & Mental Health, Reducing Stress, Seasonal Affective Disorder, Test Anxiety, Building Healthy Relationships, Destigmatizing Mental Health in Black & Brown Communities, NARCAN Training, Surviving Family Addition and BIPOC. A Mental Health Expo is being planned for spring 2025 which will provide a variety of information and community resources to support mental and behavioral health. Student appointments, faculty/staff consultations and types of support needed are tracked confidentially for programming and training purposes.

When faculty recognize signs that a student may be dealing with a mental health challenge, they refer students to the SSWSC which can provide immediate intervention and referrals to external resources. The Center for Teaching, Learning, and Innovation will be vital in providing professional development to faculty about how to recognize a student in emotional distress. or otherwise dealing with mental health challenges.

Academic Affairs will conduct ongoing training to educate faculty, staff, and students about mental health, reduce the stigma around mental illness, and promote self-care strategies. By increasing the knowledge base and skillset for faculty the College can better augment the services provided through the Student Support and Wellness Center and facilitate educational awareness. Effective academic advising is crucial for aligning students' academic and career pathways with their future aspirations. Students who are well-advised are less likely to drop out which positively impacts persistence, retention, and completion.

BCCC offers PRE 100, a first-year seminar course designed to orient students to the academic, social, and cultural environment to foster a successful introduction to the higher education landscape and campus resources and services. The course plays a pivotal role in assisting students to develop academic success strategies such as notetaking, effective study habits, time and stress management, and organizational skills. Students also build a sense of community with their peers.

The Center for Academic Achievement (CAA) offers free tutoring and retention services to students. On-site, virtual, and online tutoring services are provided. Data are collected to capture the modalities utilized and tutoring sessions' content.

(b) Multilingual Learners

Through the newly developed Center for Teaching, Learning, and Innovation (CTLI) faculty will receive professional development on course design and enhancement focused on supporting multilingual learners. Innovative approaches will be piloted and utilized to address the unique needs of multilingual learners.

In the English Language Services (ELS) department, which is housed in the Workforce Development and Continuing Education division, multilingual staff are recruited to be able to interact with the over 2,000 English learners that are served through ELS. All ELS staff are trained in using telephonic interpretation via LanguageLine. Welcome signs and basic instructions have been translated into a myriad of languages to ease students' anxiety and transition when they take their initial placement exam. Many ELS faculty are multilingual, which improves new student retention. Some of the languages represented by staff and faculty include Spanish, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Russian, Ukranian, Arabic, Amharic, Swahili, Dari, and Pashto. All print/marketing materials are translated into Spanish. ELS supports all English learners who are residents of Maryland, which includes over 700 newly resettled refugee and asylee adults. The Services to Older Refugees program provides both English language instruction and cultural immersion for newly resettled refugees and asylees who are at least 60 years old.

c. Access to Financial Aid

In FY 2023, the number of financial aid awards offered to credit students increased as compared to FY 2022. Access to financial aid plays a crucial role in college completion. The Financial Aid Office is conducting a series of in-person and virtual FAFSA completion workshops, targeting low-income and first-generation students. This will include multilingual workshops to assist students and parents. The College is implementing a financial literacy campaign aimed at educating students on different types of financial aid and scholarship opportunities. Workshops will be conducted in both English and Spanish. Students participating in BCCC's early college and access program benefit from no cost credit (including developmental education) courses while still enrolled in high school. In accordance with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the College is collaborating with Baltimore City Public Schools to create developmental math, English, and science courses. This reduces the students' timeframe for completion and their financial burden.

BCCC
Baltimore City Community College

2) *Of the initiatives, describe how and what evidence-based practices inform the initiatives' efforts.*

Increasing mental health awareness throughout the College community will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of providing immediate attention to students who may be experiencing mental health issues. The College will increase resources for faculty to provide classroom intervention that better serves students in need of mental health support. Developing a stronger referral network of mental health service providers will help ensure that students receive and sustain routine services and care.
Increasing cultural awareness is key to developing instructional approaches for multilanguage learners. Sessions will be incorporated into the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Innovation's professional development offerings.

3) *Describe how the institution is tracking the impact of those initiatives on retention and completion (and any other relevant outcomes) and a brief description of relevant analyses.*

Through the College's 2024-2029 strategic planning process, it has selected a planning and assessment tool to centralize its institutional effectiveness processes. This will include the development of objectives, metrics, and outcomes to assess progress and inform actions for decision making.

Students in all programs in ELS are given surveys about their classroom experience, and support received before, during, and after their class(es). Staff review the surveys and note opportunities for improvement. The ELS department prepares narrative, and data reports as required for their grantors. This information is shared at the departmental and Cabinet levels, to ensure the intended outcomes are achieved.

Appendix: Comments on Degree Targets Established by MHEC

The Commission should consider providing opportunities for institutions to share input regarding the establishment of targets for enrollment and degree completion. The targets do not appear to account for the lasting effects from the COVID-19 pandemic. As stated, the impact of the pandemic lasted longer than anticipated. The delays related to in-person experiential learning opportunities created by the pandemic affected program completion for many students, especially in the Nursing and Health Professions. Required clinical and field placements could not be scheduled due to the protocols in place throughout pandemic.

Best Practices and progress towards the State's 2025 completion goal
Carroll Community College

Two of Carroll Community College's strategic priorities for the 2023-2024 academic year, included wraparound support for students (including mental health), and an increased spotlight on multilingual learners.

Mental Health Initiatives

Community colleges serve a wide variety of needs in the community, but their mission is to serve the most disadvantaged within the community. Lower income populations are less likely to attend college, and graduation rates for this population are lower than other groups. The challenges of accessing mental health services include cost, transportation, stigma, and navigating a complicated system. Nationally, mental health providers are reporting back-logs and colleges are unable to keep up with demand.

New Counseling Service: Timely Care

Carroll Community College's Strategic Priority 1: Student Success, includes a specific initiative focused on enhancing resources to support student wellbeing. After assessing the student body regarding their attitudes and behaviors about wellbeing, the College's Wellbeing Committee surmised that students have an interest and a motivation to learn more strategies to support their own mental health. The Wellbeing Committee created a multi-year, multi-part plan that included increasing access to mental health resources for students. College students' mental health is at an all-time low. Prior to the pandemic there were concerns about the number of college students reporting challenges with their mental health (https://www.nsls.org/blog/how-mental-health-is-impacting-student-retention) and since the pandemic, the rates of depression, anxiety, hopelessness and thoughts of suicide have increased at unprecedented rates. According to one study of 373 campuses nationwide, more than 60% of students have at least one mental health issue and, in another national survey, 75% of students reported psychological distress. (https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/10/mental-health-campus-care). These students are more likely to drop out of college, with some research indicating that students with mental health concerns are *twice* as likely to drop out and not graduate (https://nscresearchcenter.org/current-term-enrollment-estimates/).

As a result of the survey, the College invested in a new third-party counseling service, Timely Care. Throughout the academic year, there was a 20% increase in student participation in counseling services. Over 70% of student engagement with the service was categorized as 'Scheduled Counseling.' Among the most common issues discussed in the counseling sessions were anxiety (30%), stress (23%), and depression (12%). Students also sought counseling regarding relationships, family problems, and substance abuse.

Strategic Planning for Wellbeing

The Wellbeing Committee at Carroll applied for a grant from the JED Foundation to acquire resources to create a strategic plan that would focus on student wellbeing, with mental health as the focus area. The application was initiated and submitted in the 2023-2024 academic year, for a fall 2024 start date. The JED Foundation's programs include the JED Campus and JED Campus Fundamentals, and they focus on building and strengthening systems, policies, programs, and practices in higher education institutions. Inclusion in the grant application was a request for funds to do a more extensive student survey. The Healthy Minds Study (HMS) is an annual web-based survey administered to students across various post-secondary institutions. It assesses mental health status, knowledge, attitudes, and help-seeking behavior. Both the JED Campus equitable implementation framework and the Healthy Minds Study would aid Carroll's strategic initiative related to fostering wellbeing and furthering the College's mission.

Multilingual Learners

Carroll has invested time and resources to recruit, retain, and graduate multilingual students (MLLs) as part of the comprehensive enrollment plan. In the 2023-2024 academic year, the College committed to initiatives that included providing professional development programs for Carroll's faculty and staff that focused on MLLs, recreating courses for English Language development, and promoting the CLEP tests for eligible MLLs to earn college credits.

Professional Development for Employees

There are very few multilingual or multicultural faculty or staff at Carroll Community College. To ensure that the programs and support services for MLLs were appropriate, the College created a professional development program focused on the needs of MLLs. The cohort of 18 faculty and staff was comprised of members of the Student Affairs division, the Academic Center, Marketing and Creative Services, and Continuing Education and Training. The group met eight times throughout the academic year. Topics included building institutional capacity for MLLs, ethnic identity, the role of family in Hispanic communities, and language acquisition topics. Each session ended with the members of the group making commitments to Carroll's institutional practices to better support the recruitment, retention, and completion of MLLs.

English Language Courses

The Hispanic population of Carroll County is one of the fastest growing groups in the region. At this time, Carroll Community College has a strong connection with the Carroll County Public Schools English as a Second Language (CCPS ESOL) Coordinator and key lead instructors. These important stakeholders informed Carroll that there were students who would like to come to the College, but who need English Language Learner (ELL) support to be successful. In 2022, Carroll did not offer any language courses for this group of students. The College therefore began to pilot ELL courses, and though enrollment was sluggish at first, through word-of-mouth and connections with CCPS, MLLs began to enroll at Carroll. Recruiting MLLs is dependent upon

having the ELL courses in place to support language acquisition. Research on second language acquisition shows that students need seven to ten years to develop full academic language proficiency; students who arrive in the United States in high school require additional language development support to be successful.

Beginning as a pilot in fall 2022, and continuing at full implementation in fall 2023, Carroll created two levels of ELL courses. The College also began to increase wraparound services: offering financial aid resources regarding FAFSA and MSFAA information in Spanish on the website, developing information materials on College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and interviewing students and community members to determine needs. As part of the enrollment process, Carroll re-examined placement testing for MLLs, including cut scores and additional formats for initial tests and retests.

Using College Level Examination Program (CLEP) as a Completion Strategy

The World Languages department and the Advising Office focused their efforts on developing opportunities for MLLs to earn college credit through the CLEP. This initiative was created to help students earn credits that would accelerate their completion. Students who were identified as non-native English speakers were encouraged to take the CLEP test in their first language. The Spanish language CLEP test was the most popular option this year. To market the program, the College offered 10 tests free of charge to eligible students. Eligible students were given information about the format and content of the CLEP test prior to their test date. All 10 free tests resulted in 12 credits for each test taker for a total of 120 credits earned towards degree completion. The College will continue to advise students to take the CLEP test in order to earn college credits.

Hispanic Community Advisory Board Recommendations

There is a significant overlap of the Hispanic population in Carroll County and students who need English-language instruction. Though not all Hispanic students are multilingual, and not all multilingual students are Hispanic, the overlap does exist. Though its efforts are focused on all MLLs, Carroll's largest multilingual population speaks Spanish.

The Hispanic Community Advisory Board created a plan to increase Hispanic student enrollment for students who needed English-language instruction, as well as for those who did not. This Advisory Board, along with the College's MLLs (Spanish speakers), operationalized Spanish-language sessions during each of the Carroll's Open House events during the 2023-2024 academic year. These sessions, presented in Spanish, focused on the enrollment processes for both credit and non-credit programs, available student support services, financial aid options, and the value of an associate's degree and short-term credentials. Sessions were created with the full family in mind, including activities for younger siblings, sharing information specific to parents and family members, and highlighting current students who could share their experience as a bi-lingual and bi-cultural student at Carroll Community College.

Though enrollment for fall 2024 has not yet ended, the College is seeing a higher rate of enrollment by our Hispanic population in the County. Firm numbers will be reported by the September census date. The College now offers day and evening sections of ELL courses.

None of the initiatives listed above have one-year timelines. Carroll Community College will continue to use research-based strategies to support students with increased mental health initiatives and enhanced support for multilingual learners.

Community College of Baltimore County
2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal

The Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) is committed to providing holistic student support to help all students achieve their educational goals. Through initiatives that strengthen students' mental health, support English language learners, and improve access to financial aid, CCBC sets students up for success in completing an associate degree. This report describes some of the initiatives CCBC has in place, discusses evidence-based practices that inform the efforts, and highlights the ways in which we track their impact on student outcomes.

Student Mental Health: Success Navigators, Togetherall, and the CARE Team

CCBC has three initiatives in place to support students' mental health: Success Navigators, Togetherall, and the CARE Team. Success Navigators provide consultations and referrals for a variety of human services, including clinical counseling for mental health concerns. They operate via a one-stop model whereby multiple services can be accessed at a single location. Referrals connect students to free and insurance-funded local resources for in-person care. Students seeking free, 24/7 access and/or an online peer-to-peer experience have access to Togetherall for mental health support. The Campus Assessment, Response, & Evaluation (CARE) team is a collective of professionals from key student-facing departments who meet regularly to assess notifications of student concerns. With guidance from their training with the National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment (NaBITA), they take a holistic approach to student support. When reports are submitted, they are initially reviewed by the Directors of Student Conduct and Community Outreach to determine if the matter relates to basic needs, conduct, an escalation of concern, or a combination. The CARE team convenes to collect resources and design an approach to support which may include off-campus partners. They respond to crises and monitor their resolution. This team is engaged when students need more intensive services and/or longer-term support.

One-stop models that underlie CCBC's Success Navigator approach have proven to be efficient and effective service delivery models in multiple industries (e.g., employment services, financial services, health and human services) and across settings (e.g., urban and rural locales). Transportation can be a challenge for many lower-income individuals. The need to travel to and navigate the bureaucracy of multiple agencies can be time-consuming, frustrating, and exhausting. This can be especially challenging for younger adults who are less familiar with accessing services. One-stop arrangements reduce obstacles and service avoidance due to stigma. By bundling service offerings, they help to normalize mental health services as one of a range of services that anyone might need at any time. They connect students who may be struggling to focus or get organized to professionals who can address their needs.

Peer-to peer models, such as that which underlies Togetherall, have been shown to increase the availability and reduce the cost of support resources, capitalize on students' tendency to seek

help from peers, satisfy the needs of those who prefer advice based on mutuality and lived experience, and mobilize students to become agents of change for their and others' mental health. Online options for mental health support such as Togetherall increase accessibility and flexibility of appointments and capitalize on users' familiarity with social media in an anonymous, private, and safe space. Discussions are moderated by mental health professionals to ensure an appropriate environment and to provide intervention in response to crises.

Crisis intervention models, such as that which underlies CCBC's CARE Team approach, are common in behavioral health management. They involve completing several key steps such as 1) defining the problem by actively listening with empathy, 2) ensuring the individual cannot harm self or others, and 3) securing buy-in and cooperation by providing support and exploring multiple options before making an action plan. When used in emergency rooms, this approach has led to crisis de-escalation, faster resolution, and lower relapse.

CCBC students struggling with mental health issues are not turned away to resolve the issues on their own before being allowed to return. Through initiatives such as Success Navigators, Togetherall, and CARE Teams students can regain their health and remain enrolled or return to campus sooner. While the direct impact of these initiatives on retention and completion has not been measured, students who experience fewer disruptions to their enrollment tend to make more and faster progress toward completion.

Multilingual Learners

For credential-seeking students who are English language Learners, CCBC offers an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program at the intermediate, advanced, and academic levels. The courses help multilingual learners reach their goals through innovative teaching techniques such as theme-based instruction and opportunities to study in accelerated learning programs and learning communities. Classes are offered in the day and evening and in various instructional modalities such as face-to-face, blended, and online (synchronous and asynchronous).

ESOL courses cover grammar, communication, reading and writing. Students develop skills to become active readers and formulate critical responses through speaking and writing. They learn recursive writing processes to develop and organize ideas, write with coherence, and use advanced grammar structures. The highest-level courses (ESOL 054 and ESOL 052) prepare students for success in English Composition (ENGL 101). Through intensive and extensive reading and writing, students make connections to academic disciplines and their personal experiences. They develop and expand academic vocabulary, study skills, research skills, and multimedia literacy. Disciplinary literacy is developed through thematic course content that reflects the diversity of the student population, the global nature of society, and the expectations of college-level courses.

Furthermore, CCBC is gearing up for the implementation of the Credit for All Language Learners (CALL Act), a state-wide legislative bill that gives community college students credit for English as a Secon Language (ESL) courses. The ESOL discipline is preparing ESOL 054 to be the course that receives Humanities and World Language credit. Currently, faculty are working on revising the Common Course Outline Objectives to expand the course to academic reading and listening. The course will strengthen the program by increasing students' academic receptive language skills as ESOL 052 increases students' productive language skills.

Students who participate in CCBC's ESOL learning communities develop the necessary skills to write, learn and participate in academic discussions and assignments with confidence. They enroll in two or more linked courses where they experience a collaborative learning environment that includes peer support, teacher support, integrated coursework between linked courses, activities that strengthen higher-level thinking skills, and special activities such as service learning, guest speakers, field trips, and other events.

Standards such as the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's Adult ESL Program Standards underlie approaches to educating multilingual learners. Programs that meet these standards promote English literacy skills in contexts that include academic and workplace settings. They do so by providing small class sizes, incorporating relevant life experience in instruction, and emphasizing critical thinking and problem-solving skills in a non-threatening environment. They assess students' progress toward functional literacy and attainment of post-secondary credentials.

CCBC's multilingual learners do well in their ESOL courses and in English Composition after completing the ESOL program. They also have course success rates better than the overall college value in highly enrolled general education courses such as Communication Studies 101 and Psychology 101. ESOL students tend to have higher next semester retention rates than students in the general population. Their success is even more pronounced when they also participate in learning communities.

Access to State Financial Aid

CCBC's tuition-free initiative allowed 85% of students and 90% of Baltimore County residents to attend CCBC without incurring debt in FY 2024. From College Promise scholarships to other unique opportunities, CCBC taps into a combination of funding sources to support the community. We believe that we can help nearly all who walk through our doors stay on track or find a new path, tuition-free.

Examples of Maryland financial aid programs available to students include:

- Edward T. and Mary A. Conroy Memorial Scholarship Program & Jean B. Cryor Memorial Scholarship Program
- Howard P. Rawlings Program of Educational Excellence Awards

- Legislative Scholarships
- Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship
- Near Completer Grant
- Part-Time Grant
- Workforce Development Sequence Scholarship
- Workforce Shortage Student Assistance Grant Program

Students are actively invited to apply for scholarships. They are identified through student finance reports and encouraged to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and a Maryland State Financial Aid Application (MSFAA).

With over 40% of CCBC students being Pell recipients each fiscal year, we have a substantial population with financial need. The tuition-free initiative allows students to overcome financial barriers to entering, remaining enrolled, and completing an associate degree program.

Cecil College
Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal
2024

Identify at least three initiatives the institution has in place or will be developing to support (a)student mental health, (b) multilingual learners and/or (c) students' access to financial aid

Mental Health Initiatives

Cecil College launched three important initiatives for the 2023-24 academic year to support student mental health. The initiatives included the following: 1) adopting the *You at College* digital well-being platform, 2) creating a Coordinator of Mental Health Services position, and 3) implementing Maxient software and a "Report It" system for college community members to easily report "care and concern" referrals.

You at College

The College contracted with Digital Health Services to provide the campus community with a wellness platform called *You at College*. The platform provides students, faculty and staff with tools focused on: 1) personalizing well-being, 2) promoting self-care and resilience, and 3) connecting students to campus. Users can access the platform from their desktop or phone 24/7/365. Individuals have unique log-ins so that they can create personalized goals and content. There are over 2,500 proprietary, evidence-based resources comprehensive of the student experience. *You at College* normalizes and personalizes well-being for each user through timely content, skill-building tools, student posts, and campus specific resources. College administrators have access to a dashboard that provides data on student usage and topics that are of particular interest to our campus population.

Since the launch of *You at College* in September 2023, 390 students have created log-ins to the platform. The most viewed topics of interest in order of most viewed are the following: 1) finance and basic needs, 2) stress and anxiety, 3) sexual health, 4) internship and career path, 5) managing anger, 6) degree and career options, 7) mindfulness and balance, 8) leadership, 9) understanding loneliness, and 10) fitness and nutrition. There were 30 students who used the "crisis in action" which helped them connect to mental health crisis resources.

Coordinator of Mental Health Services

The College created a new position, Coordinator of Mental Health Services, and hired a professional with a Master's degree in Social Work who began August 2023. The coordinator serves as a resource, consultant, and collaborator with faculty, staff, and students for the early identification and intervention of at-risk students or students in distress. Additionally, the coordinator provides mental health first aid training sessions, coordinates the College's annual wellness resource fair, and facilitates workshops on a variety of topics that support students' well-being. The coordinator also develops and maintains relationships with local treatment providers, hospitals, victim advocate resources, and law enforcement agencies as appropriate to supporting students' well-being. The College has a CARE team that meets bi-weekly, and the Coordinator of Mental Health Services is an active member of that committee.

Maxient Software and "Report It" System

The College implemented Maxient in the summer of 2023. Maxient is a software application that facilitates the submission and tracking of incident reports involving student discipline, academic integrity,

care and concern, or Title IX matters. The "Report It" initiative integrates with Maxient and allows members of the college community to easily refer students in real time to the appropriate College staff who can meet with them and provide them with assistance.

Faculty were trained on how to submit "care and concern reports" throughout the months of September and October 2023. Since that time, there have been 20 care and concern reports submitted through Maxient to the Coordinator for Mental Health Services. The coordinator responded to all reports within a 48-hour timeframe.

Plans for 2024-25

Cecil College applied for the Maryland Community College Behavioral Health Grant and was awarded $149,000 to expand its mental health services and programs. The College is looking forward to launching free telehealth counseling services to all students. The College will also be opening a new Student Wellbeing Office staffed with mental health professionals who will meet individually with students and provide programs and activities on campus designed to help students live their best healthy lives.

Multilingual Learners

According to the US Census Bureau, 6.6% of Cecil County persons over the age of 5 speak a language other than English at home. In response to this need, Cecil College's Adult Education Program offers Basic and Advanced Level ESOL classes throughout the year. ESOL classes focus on improving the speaking, reading, and writing skills of students who are learning English as a second language. Basic classes are grant-funded, multi-level classes which cover all aspects of English skills. Advanced courses address specific skills and are designed for foreign born students who assess at high-intermediate or advanced level. In FY24, the Adult Education Program, in collaboration with the division's Workforce Development Program, also ran a successful contract training ESOL class at the Fair Hill Training Center.

In FY24, the Adult Education Program served 87 ESOL students, representing a total of 27 countries of origin and 18 different primary languages. Forty percent of the students demonstrated educational gain by either completing one or more advanced ESOL classes or advancing an educational functioning level as determined by post-test results.

In 2023-24, four writing tutors in the College's Academic Success Center completed training designed to provide tutors with insights into how to work with multilingual writers, including: identifying the common challenges faced by multilingual writers; demonstrating intercultural competence in supporting diverse writers; applying strategies to help multilingual writers more effectively; categorizing and prioritizing second language errors; tailoring feedback to multilingual writers; and building a welcoming environment for all English language users. This training was provided by TASMY Consulting. In the past year, tutors have worked with at least 10 multilingual learners for a total of fifty hours.

Student Access to Financial Aid

During the 2023-24 academic year, the Financial Aid Office (FAO) implemented an outreach campaign to support Cecil College students' access to financial aid. The FAO provided Financial Aid Information Sessions and FAFSA Completion Night workshops at each of the county high schools. Additionally, the FAO participated in the Cecil County Public Schools college and career fair and expo, as well as multiple on-campus open houses, information sessions, and orientation events. The FAO also conducted outreach to all financial aid applicants throughout the year on a variety of topics from eligibility notification for federal, state, and institutional aid, to notices for the foundation application opening and closing dates, to

reminders of the newest year FAFSA becoming available. The FAO also performed direct outreach to students with state aid eligibility who were required to turn in documents or increase enrolled hours.

In a review of the two most recently completed school years (22/23 and 23/24), the FAO saw an increase in FAFSA submission of just over 11%, showing that outreach efforts were a success in this area. When evaluating outreach impact for state aid, the FAO saw an increase of 4.7% in number of recipients and 13.5% in the total number of dollars awarded to students during the same time period. The biggest increase came when reviewing the results of outreach for scholarships, which saw number of awarded students almost doubling with an increase of 93.9% and a significant increase in dollars given with an increase of 82.1%

Of those initiatives, describe how and what evidence-based practices inform the initiatives' efforts.

Mental Health: The Healthy Minds Study, discussed in the American Council on Education's "What Works for Improving Mental Health in Higher Education?" has shown that a greater proportion of students are reporting symptoms of anxiety or depression. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of students seeking mental health services. Because students with depression are more likely to drop out of college without graduating, researchers conclude that providing students with mental health services improves retention rates. This and similar studies have informed the College's mental health initiatives.

Multilingual learners: The founders and consultants at TASMY Consulting, who led the training on tutoring multilingual learners, "have won numerous teaching and service awards, mentored dozens of language educators, and presented at premier regional, national, and international conferences." (TASMY website; About Us) The instructors for the course have all served as clinical faculty members at the NYU Language Institute. Their research and experience inform multilingual tutoring practices at Cecil College.

Student Financial Aid: An article in *Inside Higher Education* summarizes a report by the Higher Learning Advocates and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. This report concluded that students with the highest financial need would likely benefit from government assistance programs beyond financial aid. Data from the FAFSA could be used to identify students who were eligible to access public social welfare benefits (insidehighered.com). Findings from a 2021 study conducted by the State Higher Education Executive Officer Association (SHEEO) concluded students who receive financial aid "are more likely to persist and graduate from their institutions and are more likely to graduate on time." (https://sheeo.org/new-analysis-finds-that-you-get-what-you-pay-for-state-higher-education-funding-directly-impacts-student-success/) These and similar studies have informed the College's student financial aid initiatives.

Describe how the institution is tracking the impact of those initiatives on retention and completion (and any other relevant outcomes) and a brief description of relevant analyses.

In addition to the analyses listed below, the College will launch a strategic planning cycle starting January 2025 and a Student Success Committee has been created to collect and analyze data to evaluate initiatives, including their impact on retention and completion, and inform future practices.

Mental Health

You at College: The College is tracking log-ins on the *You at College* platform, as well as statistics on topics of interest. The number of students who used the "crisis in action" function is also tracked. This

project was recently launched; as a result, analyses have not yet been completed regarding the impact of this service on retention and completion.

Coordinator of Mental Health Services: Two questions related to mental health will be added to the 2025 Graduating Student Exit Survey to better understand how the availability of the mental health services impacts the student experience.

Maxient Software and "Report It" system: The College tracks the number care and concern reports submitted through Maxient to the Coordinator for Mental Health Services. This initiative was recently launched; as a result, analyses have not yet been completed regarding the impact of this service on retention and completion.

Multilingual learners: while the College has tracked the number of multilingual students who have used writing tutoring services, no analyses have yet been completed regarding the impact of these services on retention and completion. This initiative was recently launched; as a result, analyses have not yet been completed regarding the impact of this service on retention and completion.

Financial aid: Cecil College and the Cecil College Foundation track information on the number of students awarded financial aid and Foundation Scholarships, as well as the total dollars received and the average award amount. Grade point averages are tracked for students who receive summer scholarships. The College plans to conduct additional analyses through the work of the Student Success Committee.

Cecil College
Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal
2024
Appendix

Completion Targets

Cecil College awarded 322 degrees in 2023-24; this represents significant growth beyond the goal of 2% growth each year, which identified a target of 251 for 2023-24.

Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress toward 55% Completion Goal

Submission from: Chesapeake College

September 20, 2024

As contribution to the Maryland Higher Education Commission's annual report documenting best practices and progress toward the State's 2025 completion goal, please provide the following.

For the 2024 report, MHEC seeks to focus on institutions' efforts to support the Moore-Miller Administration 2024 State Plan's Goal "Setting up Maryland Students for Success". Specifically, MHEC seeks to focus on Objective 2.4: *Provide more resources for student success by strengthening wraparound and mental health services through community schools, establishing workgroups on multilingual learners, improving students' access to state financial aid, and increasing funding for special education, financial assistance, and other evidence-based support.*

Institutions are asked to report on the following (respond to all three prompts):

1) Identify at least three initiatives the institution has in place or will be developing to support (a)student mental health, (b) multilingual learners and/or (c) students' access to financial aid, and,

2) Of those initiatives, describe how and what evidence-based practices inform the initiatives' efforts.

3) Describe how the institution is tracking the impact of those initiatives on retention and completion (and any other relevant outcomes) and a brief description of relevant analyses.

Supporting Students' Mental Health

Chesapeake College has partnered with For All Seasons to provide access to on-campus mental health services.

For the Chesapeake College campus, the most utilized evidence-based practices include, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Motivational Interviewing, Person Centered Therapy, Narrative Therapy, and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy. These are used in the one-hour individual therapy sessions for the clients, either in person or via Telehealth to accommodate comfort levels, schedules, and access.

The success of these methods and therapy as a whole, is measured by self-report by the client, and success with their treatment plans/goals that are created collaboratively. Once the client's goals have been met, they are either modified, for further progression, or changed, if their life circumstances or trajectory has changed. The results of these are tracked using Credible, a system utilized by For All Seasons for notes, treatment plans, etc. In addition, when clients begin to feel more regulated, stable, confident, they often naturally begin spacing out time

between sessions indicating they are feeling better about their circumstances that originally brought them to therapy.

Reflecting on the progress of a number of students who have been served as clients, the success and efficiency of therapy can be seen in their achievements, both personal and academic. Clients often reflect in session on where they currently are in their life, emotionally and otherwise, versus when they began therapy and report they are happy they took the step to engage in the therapy. Clients often note how nice it is to have the services on campus for the "in person" connection. The number of sessions has increased in each of the past three years. Clients state the reliability, consistency, and accountability of therapy have been key to maintaining goals and focus in their lives.

Transition from ESL/ABE to Workforce Training.

Chesapeake College serves a number of multi-lingual learners. In FY2024, 677 students were served in the ESL program. The program operates intentionally to move English-language learners toward further educational goals after acquiring English language skills. This developing initiative is supported by multiple workforce scholarships and various grants, the Business and Industry Navigator and the Skilled Trades recruiting team along with the ABE/ESL program. It aims to support multilingual learners in continuing education and workforce training by bridging Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs with workforce training opportunities. This collaboration facilitates the seamless transition of multilingual learners into both credit and non-credit training programs, enhancing their employability and career advancement prospects. Evidence-based practices such as contextualized instruction, integrated education and training (IET), career pathway models, and proactive advising inform these efforts, ensuring that language acquisition is directly linked to vocational skills. Additionally, the initiative incorporates reverse job fairs, where employers visit students to discuss job opportunities, and organizes visits and tours of relevant companies in the region to expose students to potential career paths. Job readiness and transferable skills are integrated across all levels of language acquisition courses and workforce skilled trades training programs, providing learners with comprehensive preparation for the job market. The institution employs data-driven approaches to track the impact of these initiatives, focusing on metrics such as retention, completion rates, and job placement outcomes. Regular assessments and feedback loops will be implemented to refine strategies and ensure continuous improvement, thereby fostering an inclusive learning environment that supports the academic and professional success of multilingual learners.

The English-language learning classes employ multiple evidence-based practices to ensure high-quality education and promote success. These include using contextualized instruction to connect students to real world applications and integrated education and training (IET) to provide job training along with the educational experience. And all along career pathway models and proactive advising inform these efforts, ensuring that language acquisition is directly linked to vocational skills.

There are a few different measures employed to assess the success of this program. The department regularly reports enrollments and successful completions in the Literacy, Adult, and Community Education System (LACES) database, used throughout the state of Maryland to collect and report data on adult education programs. The student achievement data is used in the annual Performance Accountability report to show the percentage achieving at least one functional level. And the College included the number of students who are transitioning to career or education pathways, through strategic plan Key Performance Indicator 1.09. This measure identifies program participants who subsequently enter either noncredit workforce development courses or degree/certificate seeking credit programs within the same or next fiscal year.

Increasing access to Financial Aid

An important strategy to aid completion is reducing the barrier of college expenses through access to financial aid. The financial aid office employs a number of annual initiatives to inform current and potential students of various grant/scholarship opportunities and promote FAFSA completion. There is regular outreach to prospective students and returning students regarding FAFSA and scholarship application submissions. The College holds FAFSA workshops to assist students and their parents with completion of the FAFSA. One-on-one assistance with FAFSA completion is also provided for those who seek or require it. The office conducts "Money for College" presentations in each of the five supporting counties. These efforts benefit all students, but are particularly helpful to first-generation students and students who may not have the financial means to complete college.

Efforts to educate the public and encourage students' FAFSA completion requires a strategic approach that involves coordination among several offices. Marketing assists with updating the financial aid webpage, providing mailing postcards, and reminders to students. The Admissions office communicates financial aid and scholarship information to all prospective students. The financial aid office connects with TRiO advisors and high school counselors to help reach students.

Institutional assessment practices track and evaluate FAFSA and scholarship application completions annually to inform the efficacy of these efforts. Over time, completion of the FAFSA has been consistent, but difficult to increase. There are still many students who resist completing the FAFSA. The process of educating and advertising is ongoing and essential.

These actions cumulatively contribute to student success by reducing and removing financial barriers amongst eligible students. Each year approximately 40% of students receive some form of financial aid and about 30% of students receive Pell grants specifically. When students who are at risk of losing aid eligibility, or have lost eligibility, are provided with specific communications to remind them that there are resources in place to ensure their success, it can help them continue on their educational path. When we focus on retention by aiding eligible students, we are supporting program completion. One measure of this success has been an

increase in retention of Pell eligible students between Fall 2021 and Fall 2022, which increased from 48.8% to 54.8%.

Discussion of providing aid to colleges would be incomplete without understanding the excellent work of the advancement office in procuring and distributing funding for scholarships.

In FY2024, the College assessed current funding sources and student needs and began a plan to get new funds in areas of deficiencies, of which noncredit workforce or healthcare programs funding for students was the largest area of need. The grants office applied for and received two workforce grants, the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) and the Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) grant from the Maryland Dept. of Labor amounting to $110,000 for scholarships and job placement support for multiple workforce development programs.   Between the grants and committed partner resources, approximately $345,000 has been raised to support students. Students who receive scholarships will be supported through the program and into the workforce. Other donations have been received to provide scholarships for specific programs such as noncredit healthcare, skilled trades and marine trades. The Chesapeake College Foundation awarded approximately $550,000 in scholarships in FY2024 and have disbursed $359,000 so far for FY2025.

College of Southern Maryland

2024 MHEC Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal

The College of Southern Maryland (CSM) enhances lives and enriches our region through accessible, high-quality instruction and services that support our students along their personal paths to success. CSM is dedicated to removing barriers, increasing retention, and providing resources and support to ensure students accomplish their goals. CSM has implemented programs and services to support student mental health, multilingual learners, and access to financial aid.

Student Mental Health Initiatives

1. **Ongoing outreach and delivery of individual counseling and psychoeducational programming to students**
2. **Bimonthly "drop-in" sessions providing a mediated space for students to discuss their challenges, mental health concerns, and other topics of interest in their lives; these sessions also provide a forum in which students can interact with each other and build connections**
3. **Interactive Screening Program through American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**

CSM's Counseling Services offers services to all enrolled students and is comprised of two full-time licensed mental health professionals. Students are engaged through campus outreach, website presence, class presentations, and other initiatives. During the most recent fiscal year (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024), counseling staff held 676 individual counseling sessions. In addition, multiple mental health-related programs were held throughout the academic year on topics including stress management, grief, self-care, value exploration/goal setting, and more. Counselors use an array of evidence-based practices while tailoring the counseling approach to the individual needs of each student. Counseling Services very recently adopted Titanium software, which will allow staff to transition to digital notetaking and record-keeping. This software will enable staff to gather and analyze data related to student usage, presenting issues and concerns, and the relationship between counseling usage and academic attainment. In turn, we will be able to do a much deeper assessment and more targeted outreach and programming to better serve students.

New for the Fall 2024 semester, Counseling Services is implementing a bimonthly "drop in" program in which students are invited to join with counselors and fellow students to simply chat about their lives and experiences, to ask for and receive support, and to foster connection with others in the campus community. CSM counselors see loneliness and disconnection as a frequent area of concern among students who seek out counseling. This issue was, of course, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. What is seen on campus tracks with what is happening nationally. In

a Gallup poll of college students released in August 2023, 39% indicated that they had experienced loneliness during the previous day. Moreover, students ranked loneliness above sadness and anger as a primary emotional concern. The goal of the new "drop-in" sessions, which will include both virtual and in-person meetings at each campus, will be to provide students with a safe space for socialization and to provide counselors with more information about their needs. Exit surveys will be administered at the end of each "drop-in," allowing for more data as we continue to learn about our diverse student population and how to serve them most effectively.

Counseling Services adopted the Interactive Screening Program (ISP), an evidence-based program offered through the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and designed to break down barriers to help-seeking, in 2018. Initially provided through a three-year grant from AFSP, the college decided to continue with the program due to its effectiveness in engaging students who may not otherwise reach out for assistance with mental health concerns. The platform gives students the ability to communicate with a counselor in complete anonymity. Counselors engage with students within a quick timeframe, providing support, resources, and gentle encouragement to follow through by scheduling an appointment. Although not all students go on to schedule an appointment, many do. For those who decide not to proceed further, their engagement with counseling staff through the platform nevertheless offers an important intervention in which they have taken the action of reaching out and receiving a caring response.

Counseling Services can track student utilization through ISP-generated reports. During the most recent fiscal year (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024), Counseling Services assessed 51 participant questionnaires through the Interactive Screening Program (ISP). Students are asked to complete a brief questionnaire measuring symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress, and suicidality. The following is the ISP participant distress level broken down by tier:

Tier 1A: High distress with suicidal thoughts, behaviors: 36/70.6%

Tier 1B: High distress with no suicidal thoughts, plans, behaviors: 12/23.5%

Tier 2: Moderate distress: 3/5.9%

Tier 3: No distress: 0

Of the 51 questionnaires received and assessed, 40 participants logged back in to the portal to review the counselor's response, and additional dialogue was held with 6 of the 51 participants assessed. The data provided above might suggest that 11 participants concluded their interaction with the ISP portal after submitting their questionnaire. It is important to note it is possible that a participant could submit a questionnaire, simultaneously connect with Counseling Services via email, and schedule an appointment without logging back in to the ISP portal or identifying as an ISP participant. Therefore, it cannot be concluded if post-ISP counseling was scheduled for these participants. Counseling Services plans to utilize our new Titanium platform to collect additional data regarding counseling appointments scheduled following ISP participation.

Multilingual Learners Initiatives

1. **Grant-based Adult Education Program provides free English as a Second Language classes to students**
2. **English Language Learning Resource Team**
3. **Developing a Multicultural Center**

Over the past decade, Maryland has seen a significant increase in its Spanish-speaking population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Hispanic or Latino population in Maryland grew by approximately 43% from 2010 to 2020. CSM data shows the headcount of Hispanic students increased 2% since 2018 for credit and credit free students and this number is steadily increasing.

As the community grows and evolves, so does the need for comprehensive language education. The grant-based Adult Education Program provides free English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to students and is an entry point to the institution. CSM serves a range of students from those that do not speak any English to students that have degrees in their country. These students have goals of increasing their language skills, obtaining a high school diploma, workforce training, and going to college.

A newly developed resource to help with college access is the English Language Resource Team (ELRT). ELRT was established in October 2023 to help students register for courses and navigate the college while bridging the communication gap between students and families. Between October 2023 and April 2024, over 600 students received support through various channels, including phone calls, emails, in-person visits, and community events. CSM will continue to provide access points to all speakers of other languages and welcome them with open arms at the institution.

The Multicultural Center will focus on supporting prospective, current, and returning students while providing a sense of community and belonging. The center will host programs and services and provide resources for students who often feel invisible. This includes accessing web resources, completing the admissions application, registering for courses, academic program and development, and career exploration. The Multicultural Center will bring focused support and resources to the region's multilingual and international student populations.

The success of all three of the initiatives will be measured by the number of students who complete ESL courses, enroll into credit free and credit programs, secure employment; and student testimonials. Last year, there were 47 students in the Adult Education classes, moving on to credit and credit free classes.

Access to Financial Aid Initiatives

1. **Streamlined financial aid forms and increased financial literacy information**
2. **Chatbot & text messaging**

3. FAFSA February

At CSM, the Financial Assistance Department (FAD) ensures students fully understand the cost of attending college and payment/financial aid options available to them. For example, FAD streamlined and tailored the CSM financial aid forms to reduce the time and stress for students to complete. In addition to streamlining the application process, CSM made the documents available for students to download and submit via their only myCSMD portal. This allows staff to receive the documents quicker and allows for students to access their status in "real time" as staff review and/or update student accounts. FAD also enhanced the website to include financial literacy information on the Financial Aid webpage, the Student Life webpage, and Scholarship Finder webpage. CSM also expanded messaging regarding Scholarship Finder and other ways for students to apply for institutional funding. The 2023-24 application data shows that the Scholarship Finder total conditional application submission remained steady, despite an overall decrease in CSM student headcount.

Next, the Ocelot chatbot was instituted to communicate with students, providing additional access to information outside normal business hours. FAD also uses text messages to communicate with students with actionable steps, instead of sending long emails. The utilization of text messages has improved the "action" rate as students tend to act upon text messages more frequently than emails.

Finally, to build interest amount students and families regarding the March 1st priority deadline, FAD designed a series of programs and services in the month of February entitled "FAFSA February."

Frederick Community College
2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal

Frederick Community College (FCC) is invested in providing resources for student success by strengthening wraparound and mental health services, supporting multilingual learners, and enhancing students' access to financial aid. Initiatives to support these areas are described below along with the evidence-based practices that have informed these efforts and how FCC is tracking the impact of these initiatives.

Support of Student Mental Health

Since Fall 2023, Frederick Community College (FCC) has offered Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training at no cost to employees or students. Research from the National Council for Behavioral Health indicates that MHFA helps reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues while enhancing mental health literacy. By educating non-clinical individuals, the program empowers them to provide timely and effective support, which can be a critical factor in crisis situations. MHFA equips participants with practical skills to identify early signs of mental health issues, engage in supportive conversations, and connect those in need with professional help.

To date, FCC has trained 172 employees and students in MHFA, including 100% of the Athletics Department staff, in compliance with Maryland House Bill 204. Additionally, two FCC employees are certified MHFA instructors, allowing for the ongoing provision of training sessions. This ensures that more members of the FCC community are equipped to handle mental health crises, contributing to a safer and more supportive environment.

Of the 83 students who have become certified in MHFA, nearly 100% of them indicated the training was helpful for them and provided them with the necessary skills to help others. FCC's emphasis on providing mental health wellness responds to a 2019 study conducted by the American Council on Education which noted the importance of colleges providing mental health supports, which can positively impact academic performance, persistence, and graduation rates.

Support for Multilingual Learners

In fall 20204, FCC created a **Bilingual First Year** program to support multilingual language learners placing in *English for Academic Purposes* courses (ESOL 80 and ESOL 100). Once accepted into this program, the multilingual students can concurrently select general education courses such as math in a bilingual Spanish/ English format. The College chose Spanish for the cohort as over 15% percent of the student population at FCC is Hispanic/Latino, making Spanish the second most spoken language at FCC after English.

Most students in *English for Academic Purposes* courses have advanced English language skills, but struggle with some content learning in courses such as math, communication, or technology. Bilingual instruction in these content heavy courses can aid students in comprehending complex information, which in turn can promote academic success. In general, adult multilingual learners are self-directed with transferable skills and background knowledge that's accessed through their first language. In a bilingual class setting, students can capitalize on that knowledge and the combined instructions in English and Spanish facilitates the acquisition of language competencies for academic success. Using the bilingual teaching model of preview-teach-review, the course instructor uses Spanish when introducing an activity or lesson to help activate students background knowledge, then use English to teach the lesson, and finally use Spanish again to review what the students have learned. This teaching model allows students to capitalize on their own knowledge, promotes the understanding of key concepts, and encourages the development of biliteracy (Huerta-Macias, 2003)

Instructors teaching the Bilingual content attended evidence-based workshops on bilingual instruction and second language acquisition. They are all fluent bilingual speakers of Spanish and English and can provide complex instruction in the course contents in both languages. In addition to the bilingual courses they are taking, students have met with academic advisors who are also fluent in both languages, so they can navigate the college enrollment process more easily.

Additional support is provided through the Testing Center, as students are provided math placement tests and online math support in Spanish and English. Offering the option of studying for and taking the math placement test in Spanish allows students to use their existing knowledge of math in their first language to advance their placement. More resources are available to the students in the Tutoring Center, where they can ask for assistance in better understanding difficult concepts in both Spanish and English. Students in the Bilingual First Year program are receiving equitable access to the College resources and getting the support that they need to achieve success in their first year. The Program is mindful of all aspects of bilingual learning and considers the essential elements of support to provide students with a relevant and valuable learning experience. As an additional support and incentive, scholarships are offered to program participants through FCC's Foundation.

Success in the bilingual program will be measured through individual course success rates and student persistence and retention, compared to college benchmarks for all students and students starting in ESOL courses that did not participate in the program. Qualitative review of student evaluations, and an additional program specific student survey will be deployed at the end of the semester.

Support for Students' Access to Financial Aid

During the fall semesters, Frederick Community College (FCC) offers educational workshops to students and families about the types of financial aid, both federal and state, and helps them with creating FSA IDs and passwords so they can assess the U.S. Department of Education website to access the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and manage financial aid. In the spring semesters, FCC helps students and parents complete the FAFSA for the upcoming award year. These events are held either on campus or in collaboration with local high schools.

Nudging Theory suggests that behavioral nudges, such as personalized reminders, can significantly enhance FAFSA completion rates among high school students (Bird, Castleman, Goodman, & Lamberton, 2019). The evidence shows that timely and targeted communication, particularly during high school events, increases engagement and improves the completion of financial aid applications.

A summary of participant feedback from Fall 2023 revealed positive outcomes from these events. Of the respondents, forty-two (42) were "Very satisfied," and six (6) were "somewhat satisfied" with the information presented, indicating a favorable reception. All forty-eight (48) respondents agreed that the information was presented clearly, which aligns with the Nudging Theory's emphasis on effective communication.

Overall, the feedback indicates that these events successfully delivered clear and useful information, with minimal gaps in FAFSA-related communication, supporting Nudging Theory's principles in improving outcomes like FAFSA completion.

References

American Council on Education. (2019). *Investing in student mental health: Opportunities and benefits for college leadership*. Retrieved from https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Investing-in-Student-Mental-Health.pdf

Bird, K. A., Castleman, B. L., Goodman, J., & Lamberton, C. (2019). Nudging at scale: Experimental evidence from FAFSA completion campaigns. *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Retrieved from https://firstgen.naspa.org/scholarly-article/nudging-at-scale-experimental-evidence-from-fafsa-completion-campaigns

Huerta-Macias, A. G. (2003). Meeting the challenge of adult education: A bilingual approach to literacy and career development. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 47*(3), 218-226.

GARRETT COLLEGE'S EFFORTS TOWARDS MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION'S 55% COMPLETION GOAL

GARRETT GC COLLEGE
EXPERIENCE. EXPLORE. EXCEL.

June 21, 2024

Garrett College Office of Analytics, Institutional Research & Assessment (AIR & A)

Dr. Kelli Sisler, Director

GARRETT COLLEGE
687 Mosser Road,
McHenry, MD 21541

Garrett College

FY24 Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal

Garrett College (GC) is engaged in a number of strategies and practices that impact the College's and the State's 2025 completion goals. As directed in the June 10, 2024 memo from Dr. Rai, GC will focus the narrative on efforts to support the Moore-Miller Administration 2024 State Plan's goal "Setting up Maryland Students for Success." This report will provide information on new programs/strategies that we are focusing on to achieve the 55% completion goal. The Performance Accountability Report (PAR) data continues to support that the developmental non-completer cohort is as an area for improvement. In fall 2023, GC implemented corequisite courses with a supplemental and complementary remedial portion to provide support to those students with developmental needs.

GC has six institutional goals relating to its performance in the following keys areas: Accessibility, Student Satisfaction and Success, Educational Effectiveness, Workforce Development, Community Service, and Effective Use of Financial, Human, and Physical Resources. The institutional goals align with the Maryland Higher Education Commission's institutional performance accountability framework, and the performance measures associated with them are assessed annually. As such, they are relatively fixed and should not be confused with the College's strategic initiatives and goals, although the two are clearly related. Strategic goals of the College's approved FY2021-FY2025 Strategic Plan (SP) align with the 2022 State Plan for Higher Education, which is a revision to the 2017-2021 State Plan for Postsecondary Education: Student Success with Less Debt.

GOAL 1: Provide Garrett College students, credit and noncredit, with innovative, relevant curriculum delivered by dedicated faculty/instructors who remain current in their field of study.
GOAL 2: Implement innovative best practices, designed to increase enrollment, improve retention, and enable student success.
GOAL 3: Deliver and assess innovative market-driven programs and services to stakeholders, and the community at large, leveraging the assets of Garrett County.
GOAL 4: Ensure the sustainability of the College through innovations in managing human, fiscal, physical, and technological resources.

GC is currently in the initial phases of planning the FY2025-2030 Strategic Plan; however, the College's main mission remains constant to achieve student success by providing an accessible, quality and comprehensive educational experience in a supportive environment to a diverse student population in both traditional and non-traditional settings. We offer associate degrees and certificate programs as well as continuing education to meet the transfer, career, workforce development, and lifelong learning needs of our students and the community. We are committed to the ongoing development of engaging, innovative, and sustainable curricula, programs, and

initiatives that are responsive to a changing world. The College respects and cares for students as individuals and as members of diverse groups, and supports their aspirations for a better life.

With respect to initiatives that GC has in place or will be developing to support mental health, multilingual learners and or/or students' access to financial aid, the following will be discussed.

Mental Health Support
Garrett College provided limited on-campus counseling; however, continues to refer students to local Garrett County mental health resources when the need arises. Because of HIPAA, we are unable to track the students that actually pursue mental health counseling, but do receive a summary of the most common reasons students seek services. The College is trying to hire a part-time counselor to provide mental health services on-campus. This person will be equipped to assist with assessment and retention of students through counseling. The Dean of Student Affairs began interviewing counselors the week of June 10, 2024. Administration is also researching grants that may assist with this endeavor. Several faculty and staff have been trained as mental health first aid responders.

Implementation of a Corequisite Model
As noted earlier, the College implemented a corequisite model to both complement and supplement developmental education for students with developmental/remedial needs. This not only supports students mental health, but assists financially by helping the student earn college level credits while not going into debt taking multiple developmental courses. According to an article, "The Crucial Role of Corequisites in Higher Education: Breaking Barriers and Fostering Success,' support the development of a growth mindset, as well as other benefits of a corequisite courses, for students who face academic challenges which help dispel the stigma associated with not belonging while engaging with their peers in college-level course (Greenawalt, 2024). The limited data shows that there is an opportunity for the students to succeed by earning college-level credit. In both math and English, half of the students enrolled in the developmental portion passed; however, on one-third of the students passed the college-level math course and one-fifth of the students passed the college-level English course. Through assessment, the faculty are making changes in the fall to the corequisite model by incorporating changes recommended by the students, such as putting the supplemental remedial portion directly after the college-level course so they can get support with the current subject matter.

Analysis of the degree progress report's data for the MHEC Performance Accountability Review (PAR) is one of the main reasons GC transitioned to a corequisite model that offers supplemental and complementary developmental support with an integrated developmental support person participating in the course. Of the students in the entering fall 2019 cohort with at least one area of developmental need (PAR Indicator 15), 52.6% completed all recommended developmental course work after four years. The successful-persister rate after four years for developmental completers (Indicator 16b) is 78%, 5% below the benchmark of 83%, but an increase of 11.7% over fall 2018's cohort. Some of this may be attributed to the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The successful-persister rate for developmental non-completers PAR (Indicator 16c) was 4 students which decreased by 12.3% from fall 2018's cohort. This can be attributed to an increase in the number of students who transferred back to their local community college during spring 2020 to spring 2021 (during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic). A small change results

in a bigger percentage change for GC since our cohorts are smaller. No developmental non-completers graduated, whereas as 7 developmental completers graduated from the fall 2019 cohort. GC is hoping that the transition to the corequisite courses will result in more developmental completers of college-level courses thus increasing the number of students who complete with a degree. The cohort of African American first time full-time and part-time students who began fall 2019 was 54, but only 3 graduated; however, 19 transferred (half to a two-year college and the other half to a 4-year college primarily for athletics). Administration continually stresses the importance of academics and completing their degree to athletes, but most want the opportunity to continue to play sports.

Financial Aid Department and Garrett College Foundation
Garrett College's Financial Aid Department and the Garrett College Foundation have provided various resources and assistance to provide students' access to financial aid. The College's Financial Aid page (https://www.garrettcollege.edu/financial-aid.php) provides one on one assistance, workshops, tutorials, checklists, and a plethora of resources to assist students in accessing financial aid. The website also provides a link to Open Educational Resources, which will be discussed below. The financial aid director also has educational training for FAFSA at the local high schools with students and parents.

The Garrett College Foundations offers the 'Pay It Forward' Textbook Scholarship to assist students pursuing a certificate or degree program at Garrett College. The scholarship is used to purchase all of a student's books for one full academic year. Upon completion of the semester, students return the books, which will then be recycled for other students to use.

Gifts made each year to the Foundation support ongoing general educational costs and various academic, occupational, institutional, and athletic scholarships. Monies also support Students in Need Group (SING) emergency assistance fund for students in crisis.

Open Education Resources (OER)
Garrett College first began using Open Educational Resources and incorporating low-cost textbook initiatives in the fall of 2017. Previously 53% of GC courses do not require the purchase of a textbook. Fall 2024 is offering 80% of its courses with an OER. Prospective and current students are able to search for low-cost textbook/OER course offerings on the GC website (https://www.garrettcollege.edu/oers.php). This also lowers the stress for students who don't have the money to buy a book and fall back in the class. When OER's are utilized, students have all materials the first day of class thus removing a barrier for access.

Multilingual Learners
Garrett College's Continuing Education & Workforce Development started offering English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in 2016. The most recent ESL class started in January 2024 with 7 students. Currently, all students speak Spanish, but there is 1 new student starting soon who speaks French. Our ESL class is at a foundational level until the students acquire the skills to progress to an advanced level. They receive in class instruction but also computer-based training

through Burlington English. This online platform provides differentiated instruction so it meets each learner specifically at their skillset.

In credit classes, the College's Disability Support Services office provides students with appropriate accommodations such as an American Sign Language (ASL) translator/interpreter for deaf students.

Cultural Diversity Plan
The College's Equity Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Committee has made great strides on its goals and strategies addressing equity and inclusion to promote student success. In FY24, the College had representation on the County Commissioner's Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Committee, who was charged with making Garrett County a more welcoming and inclusive community. The College also hosted a community training and listening session in partnership with the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights and the Garrett County NAACP. The Library/Learning Commons expanded its resources in the "Embracing Diversity" special collections room, and the College participated in Garrett County's first Pride Festival. The College continues to expand its on-campus resources for students, which include mental health counseling and reproductive health services, in addition to its disability support services. With the increase in international student enrollment, the College has increased its focus in sharing those students' experiences with the community, which includes hosting its first "An Evening Abroad" community event, showcasing the international students' countries and cultures. FY25 goals and strategies have already been developed and implemented with the increased focus on supporting student needs and embracing our students' diverse backgrounds.

In conclusion, Garrett College is actively working on recruitment and retention initiatives to increase enrollment and opportunities to assist with student success support services as well as alleviate barriers to higher education. Unfortunately, GC did not receive comparable state funding as in prior years, so we have had to be very intentional of where to focus our resources and budget; however, student success and mental well-being remain a top priority of everyone at Garrett College.

Works Cited

Greenawalt, D. PhD. (2024, March 21). *The Crucial Role of Corequisites in Higher Education: Breaking Barriers and Fostering Success*.
https://www.higheredjobs.com/Articles/articleDisplay.cfm?ID=3826#:~:text=Corequisite%20models%20allow%20students%20to%20enroll%20directly%20in,and%20progress%20through%20their%20academic%20programs%20more%20efficiently.

Hagerstown Community College
Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress toward
the 55% Completion Goal 2024

HCC is fully committed to increasing educational attainment in the state and fully supports the 55 by 25 goal. The College's mission to provide accessible, high-quality education and workforce training aligns with MHEC's objectives.

HCC recognizes the importance of supporting student mental health, multilingual learners, and financial aid access.

The following are examples of three initiatives currently in place or under development:

Student Mental Health Initiative:

HCC lacks an on-campus mental health clinic. In an effort to address this, the College submitted a capital project proposal to build a Wellness Center aimed at meeting the diverse needs of its students. Unfortunately, the proposal was not approved by MHEC, preventing the College from fulfilling its plan.

Until recently, students in need of non-academic support were referred to the College's "Care Team," consisting of student services staff who also serve as academic advisors and case managers. Students would either self-report or be identified by faculty and staff when personal challenges were impacting their academic performance. However, without internal resources for mental health assistance, the College relied heavily on off-campus referrals. These external options often involved lengthy intake processes, insurance barriers, and long wait times, resulting in many students not receiving the help they needed, which negatively impacted their academic success.

With recent funding from the Maryland Behavioral Health Administration, HCC is piloting new strategies to offer more immediate mental health support. The College aims to provide students with quick access to online mental health resources. This grant-funded initiative will extend services to enrolled credit students as well as noncredit students in career and licensure workforce training programs.

HCC is partnering with TimelyCare to deliver on-demand telehealth behavioral health services and psychiatric services, along with 24/7 access to crisis support, stress management tools, and other online resources.

This project aims to improve students' access to mental health services, enhancing their academic performance, retention, and overall well-being. The pilot program will generate critical data to inform long-term planning for comprehensive wellness services at HCC and potentially serve as a model for other community colleges.

<u>Evidence-based Practices</u>:
There is widespread consensus that student mental health is deteriorating, a trend exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Surveys report record levels of anxiety and stress among students, with teenagers being particularly affected. As these students now enroll in colleges, they bring significant mental health challenges with them. A study by the National Education Association found that over half of all students met the criteria for at least one mental health disorder. Nearly one-third reported that depression affected their daily functioning, and 40% reported considering withdrawing from school due to mental stress. Mental health struggles are also linked with lower academic performance measures, including reductions in GPA.

With high levels of stress and depression affecting retention, academic success, and graduation rates, colleges – especially community colleges – have struggled to provide adequate resources and services to address the growing crisis.

In response, mental health case management programs have increasingly adopted evidence-based practices drawn from health communication research. These strategies aim to shift attitudes and behaviors by delivering targeted messages to specific audiences and using multiple communication channels to reach students effectively. These practices are embedded within the current initiative.

<u>Tracking the impact on retention and graduation</u>:
The evaluation of the pilot project will focus on two key academic measures: retention and academic performance. To gather data, various methods will be employed throughout the pilot. This data will help assess the effectiveness of the pilot and guide future improvements.

While there are some limitations to the evaluation, including the lack of baseline data on the prevalence of mental health issues among the current student population and the inability to collect long-term data due to the grant's short time frame, HCC will concentrate on several key areas:

- **Retention and Academic Performance:** The College will track spring-to-fall retention rates and academic performance of the general student population during the pilot. These data will be compared to pre-pilot figures to identify any improvements that can be attributed to the initiative.
- **Utilization Data:** HCC will collect utilization data to establish a baseline for future mental health service efforts.
- **Student Surveys:** End-of-semester surveys will measure students' awareness and use of both existing and grant-funded mental health resources, their confidence in accessing these services, and whether access to these resources is likely to affect their academic performance or retention. Feedback from the surveys will also be used to improve services and guide marketing strategies.
- **Faculty and Staff Feedback:** Faculty and staff will be surveyed to gather their insights on how the pilot has impacted student behavior in the classroom and on campus.

Key findings from the evaluation will be shared with campus stakeholders to support the long-term development of behavioral health resources at HCC.

Multilingual Learners Initiative

HCC recognizes the importance of providing access to education for all students, including those for whom English is not their first language. The College has experienced recent success in supporting multilingual learners when pursuing workforce training in programs like CNA, Phlebotomy, and CDL licensure, by offering supplemental language instruction alongside standard coursework. These supports help students have the language resources necessary to succeed both academically and professionally, opening up greater opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds. These services are especially critical for students from immigrant and refugee backgrounds, helping them and their families navigate the complexities of higher education.

HCC's approach tailors the language support to meet the needs of the students while aligning with the curriculum. This allows the students to strengthen their English skills while simultaneously learning the technical skills required for their careers. This integrated approach not only improves their language proficiency but also builds confidence in the workplace. By focusing on industries with strong demand, HCC is helping to bridge the gap between language barriers and workforce readiness, providing a pathway to stable employment and long-term success for non-native English speakers.

Evidence-based practices
Evidence-based practices strongly support HCC's approach to integrating language instruction with workforce training. Research shows that contextualized learning, where language instruction is tied directly to practical, career-related content, leads to higher levels of student engagement and success. This method allows students to acquire language skills in real-world scenarios, making the learning process more relevant and immediately applicable. Studies also demonstrate that learners in such programs exhibit improved retention rates and perform better on job-related tasks compared to those in traditional, standalone ESL courses.

Additionally, workforce programs that combine English language learning with vocational training have been shown to accelerate job placement and career advancement for non-native English speakers. Evidence suggests that providing simultaneous instruction in both language and technical skills helps students transition more smoothly into the workforce. This model, often referred to as integrated education and training (IET), has proven particularly effective in helping immigrant and refugee populations overcome barriers to employment, fostering both economic mobility and long-term career success.

Tracking the impact on retention and graduation
HCC monitors and evaluates the impact of its services to multilingual learners on key student success metrics. The College collects and reviews data related to enrollment, along with the academic performance and retention rates of these students, to gauge their effectiveness. The leaders involved in the English Language Learner program examine this data to understand how additional supports influence retention, graduation rates, and overall student satisfaction.

Financial Aid Access Initiative

HCC is committed to removing financial barriers that could prevent students from pursuing and completing their education. One of the key initiatives supporting this commitment is the provision of emergency assistance grants. These grants are designed to offer immediate financial relief to students experiencing unexpected hardships. By addressing these critical needs, HCC helps ensure that students can remain focused on their academic goals without the burden of short-term financial crises that might otherwise derail their educational journey.

Beyond emergency assistance, HCC offers a range of financial support to its students. The College provides targeted scholarships and grants to address various needs of specific student populations. These financial aid resources help cover not only tuition and fees but also essential expenses like textbooks and transportation. By collaborating with partners, HCC enhances its support network, ensuring students have the resources they need to success in their college education.

Evidence-Based Practices
HCC's approach to financial aid, particularly emergency assistance, is guided by evidence-based practices that have been proven to support student retention and success. Research has demonstrated that emergency aid is a critical factor in helping students persist in their studies and, ultimately, complete their degrees. Recognizing this, HCC has adopted a case management approach to administering emergency grants. This ensures that each student's unique situation is carefully assessed, and the financial support provided is both timely and appropriate to their needs. By connecting students with campus and community resources, HCC's case management process also helps address the broader spectrum of challenges students may face.

Tracking the impact on retention and graduation
HCC is committed to tracking and analyzing the impact of its financial aid programs on student success metrics, such as retention and graduation rates. Recently, data was presented to the HCC Foundation Board demonstrating the positive correlation between financial awards and student success and persistence. The data showed that students who received aid on average had a higher GPA and were more likely to stay enrolled and complete their programs compared to the institutional average.

This analysis informs ongoing efforts to refine and enhance HCC's financial aid strategies. By continuously monitoring the outcomes of its financial assistance initiatives, the college ensures that resources are allocated effectively and that students who are most at risk of leaving the college due to financial stress receive the key support they need to stay on track.

By implementing each of the initiatives described above, HCC demonstrates its commitment to providing a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students. These efforts are crucial for ensuring that students have the resources and support they need to succeed academically and achieve their career goals.

Harford Community College
2024 Best Practices Report

1. **Identify Initiatives**

HCC has identified an initiative related to each of the three areas of interest. They include:

    A. Student Mental Health - On-site Counseling
    B. Multilingual learners and/or – ESL Program
    C. Students access to financial aid - Financial Aid Events

2. **Of those initiatives, describe how and what evidence-based practices inform the initiative's efforts**

A. <u>On-Site Counseling</u>

In Spring 2018, in acknowledgement of mental health issues among its students, Harford Community College entered into an agreement with Behavioral Health Services for its Student Assistance Program. This program was primarily online with access to short-term virtual counseling. The SAP program also provided online library resources focusing on life issues (e.g. caregiving, financial literacy, etc.), legal issues, and a variety of well-being issues. However, this virtual assistance program did not have the impact as expected, with fewer than 50 students taking advantage of the services each semester. The contract was concluded in spring 2020.

Following the pandemic, there was a noticeable increase in mental health concerns expressed by students. In response to the ongoing concern, the College determined that an addendum to its contract with a psychotherapy association, who assists HCC in threat assessment and other psychological assessment, was needed. This collaboration extended to bringing on board an on-site counselor located specifically in the Student Center for easy access. This secluded location has contributed significantly to the services we provide to students for their mental wellbeing. Currently, we offer 12 hours of one-on-one counseling, stress reduction days and activities, connections to local mental health services, awareness campaigns during exam preparation, and direct interventions with students and Student Intervention Program (SIP) team. The counseling service is paid for with student fee monies.

This past academic year, the nursing department at HCC requested an expansion of counseling services as there were increased concerns brought forward by students to the nursing faculty. However, and with looking at the data from the past two years, it became clear that more students in general at HCC need more than what we have current capacity to provide. Unlike four-year institutions, which typically have a counseling center with full-time counselors,

community colleges are not in a comparable situation. HCC is one of the few community colleges in Maryland that offers any counseling services. Nevertheless, the HCC administration believe it is critical to increase services given the demand. For example, in Spring 2021, 10 students attended counseling. In Fall 2023, that number had more than tripled to 31. While this seems like a small number, thirty-one is the maximum caseload that our current counseling hours can handle, with up to five sessions provided for each student per semester. Given that 204 students required interventions in one year, a maximum of 62 students served per year is too low.

Based on the growing need, HCC applied for and was awarded a state grant program, Community College Grant Funding Opportunity to Support Behavioral Health Needs of the Campus Population. This grant will allow the College to do many things including but not limited to: increase the number of counseling hours/days on campus; introduce group therapy sessions options; differentiate counselors to meet the needs of a diverse student population; modernize existing counseling space using best practices for therapy spaces; and establish a second counseling space on campus in the Nursing and Allied Health Building, among other things.

Several best practices were considered when looking at the ways in which HCC needed to expand its services. Among them include but are not limited to recognizing that mental health services are meeting a basic need for students; considering the backgrounds of our diverse student population and the ways in which these diverse needs are met; destigmatizing mental health; expanding the culture of care; and incorporating this into a holistic support model for students.

B. ESL Program

In the Workforce and Continuing Education Division, Adult Development and Literacy Program follows the guidelines of the Maryland Department of Labor – Consolidated Adult Education and Family Literacy Grant. This grant provides funding to recruit, assess, implement multilevel curriculum, and create courses to meet the educational needs of adult students for GED and/or ESL advanced level attainment.

HCC tracks enrollment and revenue/expense reports for Workforce and Continuing Education. In FY 24, Adult Literacy enrolled 325 English as Second Language Students compared to FY 23 of 321 students. The Adult Education and Family Literacy grant does not generate revenue with exception of GED courses; income is from FTE. The combined ABE/ESL Earned FTE for FY 24 is $271,781 versus $247,242 in FY 23. The FTE are reported to MHEC each year and calculated to provide MHEC ESOL funding to the Adult Literacy program. In FY 25 the program will add two ESL Family Literacy courses and one Advanced ESL class in fall and spring semesters.

During FY 24 the Adult Development and Literacy Program served student speaking 29 different languages. The top five languages are Spanish, Arabic, French, Ukrainian and Haitian/Creole French. Spanish constitute 49.1% of Adult Basic Education Students and 56.7% of English as a Second Language students. This is data Adult Literacy tracks each year to determine translation of enrollment, course rubric and program guideline forms.

To improve the initial and ongoing communication with multilingual adult learners, the program employed the use of ILA – Instant Language Assistant by Translate Live to conduct real time language interpretation. These four devices are used at the Workforce and Continuing Education Registration area, ESL pre-orientation session, ESL intake/advising session, ESL lower level class and future ESL Orientation. The purpose of the ILA is to improve communication, inform student of important information in their primary language and invite opportunity for students to engage in other courses outside of Adult Literacy or participate in college events.

C. Financial Aid Events

HCC has implemented new informational and activity events including FAFSA assistance events. This included a FAFSA completion event, FAFSA Friday's, Award Offer Events, and sessions about the MD promise scholarship. These events have resulted in increased event attendance, increased applications, and, ultimately, increased funding for students.

3. **Describe how the institution is tracking the impact of those initiatives on retention and completion (and any other relevant outcomes) and a brief description of relevant analyses**

A. On Site Counseling

The institution plans to better track whether students who receive such services are retained and complete their educational goals (e.g. graduation). Presently, the College only compiles the number of students who use the on-site counseling and attendance at related wellness events. HCC is currently developing a data warehouse that will allow for easier tracking of students who receive services.

B. ESL Program

The program's goal is to increase pre-test to post-test scores when testing students during the last week of class. Move students from Educational Functional Gains to Measurable Skills Gains by the third semester (each semester is nine-weeks) with the new CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) Reading and Writing for ESL. Adult Literacy monitors student attendance, course completion, test scores and retention in LACES (Literacy Pro Student Management System).

The Maryland Department of Labor receives quarterly, mid-year and year end reports from Adult Literacy Program reports regarding pre-and post-test rates, students with Educational Functional Gains (increase of scores within an educational level) and Measurable Skill Gains (increase of score moving student to higher educational level). In FY 24, 136 ESL students, 30.2%, achieved Measurable Skills Gains, this is slightly higher than the state's projection of 29.7%. Of the Sixty-five students who completed pre-and post-test, 41 (63%) received an Educational Functional Gain, which is 17% higher than FY 23.

HCC has been working to strengthen the connection between non-credit and credit education. Students who complete the ESL program (and other HCC programs such as Adult Basic Education) are encouraged and supported to transition to working on a credit credential.

C. Financial Aid Events

HCC tracks event attendance and statistics regarding financial aid awards. Despite delays with the 2024-2025 FAFSA, we are 132 FAFSAs ahead of 23-24 as of the same date thanks to FAFSA events. Some statistics related to financial aid events include:

FAFSA Completion Events:

a. FAFSA Assistance (Completion) event attendance increased by 36%

b. # FAFSA Applications increased 1% 23-24

c. Pell Grant paid for 23-24 increased 5%

d. Federal Work Study spending increased by 13%

MD Promise Info Sessions:

a. College Promise Info Session Attendance increased by 700% (10 to 89 students)

b. New & Continuing students have already accepted almost half of our allocated amount for the 2024-2025 year.

Comments on Degree Progress Goals

HCC has met the goals outlined in the progress toward 55%. In each of the last four fiscal years HCC has exceeded the goal by at least 100 degrees or certificates awarded. For the most recently completed fiscal year, FY24, HCC exceeded the goal by 219 awards which is 27% more than targeted in the best practices report. During the three fiscal years prior to 2024 (2023, 2022, and 2021) HCC exceeded the goal by 13%, 18% and 19%, respectively. This is the product of numerous initiatives including One Step Away (OSA), retention scholarships, summer momentum scholarships, debt forgiveness scholarships for students close to graduating who have account balances limiting their ability to enroll, and other retention improving efforts.

<div align="center">**2024 Howard Community College Best Practices Report**

Removing Barriers for Students to Access Financial Aid</div>

Satisfactory Academic Progress and R2T4 back on track funding program
To maintain eligibility for federal and state financial aid, students must be meeting satisfactory academic progress. Howard Community College (HCC) recognizes the challenges that most community college students face while pursuing their program of study. We have developed a funding source that provides grants to students who lose their federal or state eligibility. Financial Aid Services in partnership with Completion Services work with students to educate them about the additional support and resources available to assist them with successfully completing their courses. Students enter into an agreement with Completion Services and receive additional support during the semester. In turn, HCC will cover the semester charges.

Based on our annual financial aid analysis, and the number of students who inquire about returning to college, college debt caused by return to title IV calculation and loss of title IV funds due to not meeting satisfactory academic progress caused severe barriers to students who want to complete their program. We saw a need to provide a service for this group of students by providing them with an opportunity to continue on in their studies.

Removed application requirement for general foundation scholarship funds.
Many of the institutional and foundation scholarships have general requirements for eligibility. Based on annual analysis, the college had thousands of dollars remaining and hundreds of students who were eligible but did not submit an application. By removing the requirement of submitting an application, we are able to provide access to funds for a wider range of students. Students who meet the basic eligibility requirements are auto awarded by our system.

<div align="center">**Support for Multilingual Learners**</div>

Program Title: *Academia de Padres con Ambiciones*
Padres con Ambiciones *(Parents of Ambition)*

It has long been self-reported and documented that first-generation students are more likely than their non-first-generation peers to experience feelings of loneliness, isolation and confusion regarding their college application, payment, onboarding and overall success journey. One of the most prominent factors associated with this lack of understanding in navigating the process and cultural expectations of higher education is conceived from student's lack of a successful parent/guardian or peer in the home to help guide them through this difficult transitional period within their lives. The Lumina foundation also mentions that first generation Latino and Hispanic students' challenges are compounded with issues of language, residency, competing personal priorities and family and dependent care needs. With these known challenges which impact students throughout their K-12 and higher education journey, Howard Community College's Ambiciones program partnered with the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS)'s Hispanic Achievement Program to develop an innovative approach to curtailing what we believe are among the most pervasive challenges to students' success. The two entities worked together to

manage the challenge at home by offering an informative development opportunity for the parents of first-generation college students who were matriculating from the K-12 system to HCC.

During the 2023-2024 academic year, the program and college offered a series of five sessions, available both virtually and in person, to parents of students in grades 8-12. These parents were selected by Hispanic Liaisons representatives from their respective HCPSS schools. The overarching goal of the *Padres con Ambiciones* academy is to empower parents with the knowledge and resources necessary to support their children's academic journey, particularly as they prepare for college. Additionally, this initiative aims to create a supportive network among parents within each school community. As an added biproduct of the program, parents began to see themselves as scholars and began seeking opportunities for educational advancement. This allowed the program managers to develop a parent enrollment pipeline which supported not only resources for students, but also opportunities for parents to complete GED, certificate and degree programs.

Session Topics for the cohort included:
1. **Campus Visits and Networking at HCC:**
    Parents will be encouraged to attend the Ambiciones Open House (Fall or Spring) to ask pre-developed questions and gather information that will support their students in making informed decisions about their education.
2. **Hispanic Achievement Program:**
    This session will introduce a student success model designed to equip parents with resources to aid their students and strengthen the broader Hispanic community.
3. **Financial Success for Students and Families:**
    Representatives from HCC's Office of Financial Aid will present strategies for managing finances, with a focus on FAFSA, MSFAA, and other financial resources available to help students attend HCC.
4. **Choosing the Right Careers:**
    Faculty members will join via Zoom to discuss various programs, including ESL, Continuing Education, and Apprenticeship programs. This session is designed to help parents explore educational and career opportunities for their children and themselves.
5. **Working with the Community:**
    This session will address school community issues that impact Latino students and how parents can identify and leverage available assistance. Additionally, the "Project La Familia" segment will allow parents from each school to present a project that will assist, support, and empower their children to pursue higher education at HCC.

Stated Outcomes:
1. Provide all recipients with the information and agency necessary to understand the college enrollment, onboarding and success process.
2. The creation of a cohort of parents from across the county who may serve as resource agents to other parents within their communities.
3. Increase the successful enrollment, onboarding and completion of involved students and family members.

4. Create an enrollment pipeline for parents looking to continue or further their education at the GED, certificate or degree completion level.

Program performance outcomes:

Item	Numeric Value	Year/Cohort
Cohort Applicants	76	2024 Cohort 1
Participants	30	2024 Cohort 1
Successful program completers	30	2024 Cohort 1
Successful college enrollment of program participants	7	2024 Cohort 1

Student Mental Health Support meets the mental health needs of HCC students by reestablishing counseling center service delivery model.

HCC recognized the importance of providing holistic support services to students, which includes expanding mental health services for students. During the 2023-2024 academic year, the college identified several strategic priorities focused on improving student access to mental health and counseling support services.

A. Developed a counselor training program to increase the number of counseling center staff for servicing students.
    a. With an increased demand for counseling, the training program will increase the number of available counselors thereby increasing student access to services.
        i. Partnership with universities/colleges for recruitment of graduate students
        ii. Develop a practicum/internship job description.
B. Adjusted the traditional clinical service delivery model to provide client triage, initial assessment, client assignment, psychotherapy and crisis response based on today's demand for mental health services.
C. More effectively and consistently apply collaborative care (single session) and short-term therapy model through partnerships with external organizations (i.e., BHS, Howard County, etc.).
D. Expanded access to services by adding evening hours (5:00pm to 8:00pm).
E. Provide access to ongoing remote services for students needing a remote option due to health, safety, location, or other relevant factors.

HCC set objectives to prioritize outreach and community engagement.

Objective: Increase student and community engagement in mental health programs.
    a) Develop a Mental Health speaker series rotation to educate students, faculty and staff on mental health topics.
    b) Newsletter: quarterly newsletter to disseminate information to the campus community as well as provide helpful tips for students, faculty, and staff.
    c) Counseling Center staff provide class presentations on mental health topics; quarterly lunch and learn series for students, faculty, and staff.
    d) Establish direct liaisons to student organizations to decrease stigma and increase participation in HCC mental health programs and services.

Objective: Improve access to mental health resources for students from historically marginalized groups.

        a) Let's Talk™: In partnership with Step Up! Let's Talk™ works to break down the stigma associated with going to a counselor by offering providing drop-in consultation with a counselor. Located in various locations on campus, Let's Talk™ affords students who may not come to the counseling center access to a counselor in a non-clinical setting.

Evidence based practices that inform the initiatives.

Data driven decision making

o   We utilize our data such as the cohort default rate, financial need assessments, and completion rates to drive how we plan our awarding strategies to ensure maximum impact on the populations who need aid the most.

Program Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

o   We review our outcomes for each initiative annually to assess the effectiveness of the strategy and initiative. This allows us to adjust processes or reallocate funds to other initiatives that may be more effective, if needed.

Behavioral economics

o   By removing the barrier of multiple financial applications, we have been able to remove and/or reduce the barrier to financial assistance brought about by procrastination, complexity, and sometimes intimidation. All of which our students may encounter due to feelings of overwhelm.

Student Feedback and Surveys

o   We provide an automated survey to solicit feedback from students who have received financial aid to help understand their experiences and challenges.

Tracking and monitoring program outcomes

Goals and benchmarks have been identified for each of the initiatives identified. These initiatives are also included in the annual plans for the respective divisions (Financial Aid, Advising & Retention and Student Development & Support).

Data collection and integration
o   We utilize our SIS to collect and manage data on student demographics, enrollment status, financial aid received, satisfactory academic progress measures, and retention completion rates.

Monitoring and analytics
o   Measure key indicators such as first-year retention rates and completion rates. Compare these metrics before and after implementing new initiatives to measure their effectiveness.

Initiatives that Support Students' Mental Health

Montgomery College is deeply committed to supporting students and addressing significant barriers to college completion, recognizing that mental health is crucial to student academic success and overall well-being. Our students, many of whom come from traditionally marginalized backgrounds, face substantial challenges including financial stress, demanding work schedules, and family obligations. These factors, combined with the pressures of being first-generation college students or navigating language barriers, make mental health and wellness critical to their journey toward earning a college credential.

To meet these needs, Montgomery College provides a broad array of mental health and wellness services aimed at holistic student support. The College focuses primarily on preventive care and early intervention through various activities and educational programs. These interventions are aimed at recognizing mental health concerns before they become chronic and severe. There is increasing agreement that mental health conditions are often preceded by poverty and basic needs insecurity, and these conditions can worsen mental health issues. The Student Wellness Center plays a crucial role in enhancing students' overall well-being through a range of programs addressing both physical and mental health needs. For example, during academic year 2023-2024, over 1,200 unique students accessed the daily food pantries, more than 400 utilized the food lockers, and weekly Mobile Markets saw over 3,708 student visits. Additionally, 733 students participated in mental health educational programming, including community resource fairs and stress management workshops. These efforts highlight the center's effectiveness in meeting the essential needs of the student community.

The Social Resource Program (SRP), funded by the U.S. Department of Education, offers case management and direct services to help students meet their basic needs. The program demonstrates positive impacts on retention and completion rates. In academic year 2023-2024, students receiving SRP support had an 80% retention rate from the fall to spring semester, and a 19% completion rate for those receiving services that same year. The College will continue to monitor data annually for students referred to the Student Wellness Center for services, building on the model provided through the SRP.

Services such as Counseling and Advising, Disability Support Services, and the Behavioral Intervention Team provide referrals to both campus and community resources, to help connect students with the mental health care they need. Since peer and social support can strengthen mental health, the College offers a wide array of programs that are geared toward providing meaningful, long-lasting connections. Our mentoring programs, including Combat2College, Advancing Latino Male Achievement (ALMA), Men Empowering Network (M.E.N.), and Sister 2 Sister, offer targeted support for underrepresented students. The Peer2Peer program also provides peer-led groups and workshops focusing on mental health, academic success, and social issues. These mentoring programs collect retention and completion data, which will be combined into one annual report.

The College's strategic plan prioritizes enhancing mental health awareness and is actively seeking ways to better track the outcomes of its mental health programs. Mental Health First Aid training is provided to students, faculty, and staff to improve their ability to recognize mental health conditions and respond effectively. Additionally, in collaboration with Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington, the College will introduce a mobile healthcare unit offering primary care

and health screenings for students starting in FY2025. These strategies are expected to address students' wellness and well-being, ultimately supporting improved retention and completion rates.

Initiatives Improving Students' Access to Financial Aid

The evidence indicating an initiative to expand First Time Ever in College (FTEIC) students' access to financial aid would have a positive effect on retention and student success was a March 2023 study conducted by the College. The study evaluated the impact receipt of financial aid had on fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention, as well as grade point average (GPA), within three academic year cohorts of FTEIC students entering in the fall semester.

The College's study, "FTEIC Retention into Spring: A Spotlight on Financial Aid" indicated that receipt of financial aid had a significant, positive effect on retention and first semester GPAs of at least 2.0. The study reviewed over 10,000 students in cohorts spanning three academic years. Of that group, 5,695 received some form of financial aid. The dollar amount of aid students received was not as significant in retention and GPA as the fact that these students received primarily need-based grant aid. The three major sources of financial aid cited in the study were the federal Pell Grant, MC institutional grant funds, and Maryland State grants.

Montgomery College has a long-established financial aid outreach program for both new and continuing students. The College partners with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to provide workshops for parents and one-on-one financial aid application assistance during the school day with students. There are also presentations to dual enrollment students and their parents and general financial aid presentations to middle schools. College recruiters have basic training in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the MHEC One-App. Similar training is provided to the coaches embedded in MCPS high schools to assist students in the Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success (ACES) partnership.

The 2024-2025 financial aid process was challenging due to the redesign and late release of the FAFSA. The financial aid outreach team worked with its partners in the Office of Community Engagement, the TRiO Educational Opportunity Center, Raptor Central one-stop, and Recruiting to increase the number and timeline of financial aid application-related events compared to the previous three years. Over 100 financial aid application-related events were offered from October 2023 through August 2024 (and will continue to do be held into the fall 2024 semester and beyond). One of the financial aid workshops was presented to high school counselors and conducted jointly by College staff and representatives of MHEC's Office of Student Financial Aid.

In order to track the continuing impact of our outreach programs on FTEIC student success, MC will expand the original March 2023 study to determine the effect receiving financial aid has on retention and GPA for the FTEIC cohorts entering in fall 2023, 2024, and 2025. Reviewing the outcomes of these cohorts will provide an opportunity to include evaluation of the new decentralized MD Promise Scholarship Program, which allows community colleges to award funds directly to students. State aid programs were among the top three sources of financial aid with an influence on student success at the College.

Support for Multilingual Learners

Montgomery College has developed a specialized intervention initiative to help MCPS Emerging Multilingual Learners (EML) students prepare for college-level classes. ELAI990 is an Advanced Integrated English Language skills course that enhances students' academic English proficiency and familiarizes them with college-level coursework and expectations. All five students who participated in this pilot intervention in Summer 2024 earned a passing grade in the class and thus are eligible to participate in college-level classes at MC.

Our intervention plan is threefold: culturally relevant pedagogy, scaffolding and differentiation, and data-informed instruction. The initiative is designed based on the principles of culturally relevant pedagogy, which emphasizes the importance of recognizing students' cultural backgrounds as assets in the learning process. Research shows that students who see their culture reflected in the curriculum are more engaged and perform better academically. In addition, we use scaffolding techniques and differentiated instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners. Evidence suggests scaffolding helps students build on their existing knowledge and skills, making complex content more accessible. And finally, we use formative assessments and feedback to continuously adapt our teaching strategies to the needs of multilingual learners. This evidence-based practice allows for real-time adjustments that can enhance learning outcomes.

The College will track the impact of this initiative on retention and completion by comparing the retention and completion rates of multilingual learners participating in the intervention compared to those who do not participate. This data helps us assess the effectiveness of this initiative in supporting student success. We will also conduct pre- and post-intervention assessments of language proficiency to measure the progress of multilingual learners in their academic English skills. Improvement in these assessments indicates the effectiveness of our instructional strategies. The College will monitor the educational performance of multilingual learners in college-level courses after participating in the intervention classes. This data helps us evaluate whether the support provided translates into improved academic outcomes.

Dual Language Courses and Academic Support for Students

Dual language courses provide an opportunity for students to learn academic material in their native language. The College is focused on offering courses in English and Spanish including Principles of Biology 1, Foundations of Education, Introduction to Early Childhood Education, Latin American History, and Calculus 1. This is in addition to our full immersion world language classes which are taught in the specific language of that particular course.

The College also utilizes non-native English speakers in the Learning Centers, where tutors/peers who speak more than 25 different languages and are available are paired with students upon request. In addition, the College offers nearly 30 courses in which students can receive support in a second language from faculty outside the classroom including Women in World History (French), Introduction to Philosophy (Lithuanian), American Government (Farsi) to name a few.   The College has also expanded Spanish- and Amharic-language marketing and news outreach, launching the #YouBelongHere campaign, and maintaining the College website with student-focused webpages in the seven most common languages in Montgomery County —Amharic, Chinese, English, French, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Staff members from the Office of Communications and the Office of Community Engagement serve on the College's Language Advisory Group, and partner to translate essential employee memos and trainings

into Spanish. The Community Engagement team continues to provide multilingual outreach services to underserved and underrepresented communities at community centers, nonprofit partners, public events, and virtually. In FY23, the Community Engagement team served 3,275 prospective students at 96 events, held over 4,000 one-on-one consultations, and conducted 45 workshops for 1,200 students and prospective students.

These interventions related to offering dual language courses as well as academic supports for specific courses in other languages, as well as communicating to our communities in their native language are all developed on the premise that students who feel like they belong at an institution perform better academically. Representation is meaningful and our diverse students see and hear positive representations, via individuals and curricula, at the College and this is critical to developing that sense of belonging and ultimately student success.

Students who take a dual language course are tracked in the same manner as any student is tracked at MC in terms of retention and completion. We are working on a process to track students who meet with a faculty member for academic assistance in their native language, or if they choose a specific tutor at a learning center because of the language support they offer.

Prince George's Community College
2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress
toward the 55% Completion Goal

Prince George's Community College (PGCC) is engaged in a number of strategic projects that are aimed at enhancing student success and moving the College closer to the State's degree completion goal. PGCC has made significant strides to provide more resources for student success in strengthening support for student basic needs and mental health services and access to financial resources. During our on-site accreditation visit in March 2024, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education evaluation team noted that our students stay on campus more than other community colleges because they are engaged and supported. The College believes that this is not just the result of any one initiative but the combination of these efforts to support student success and our retention goals.

Initiatives to Support Student Success and Well-Being

Prince George's Community College has implemented several initiatives to support students' well-being, address the needs of multilingual learners, and enhance access to financial aid.

1. **OWL Market (Food Pantry)**: The OWL Market was instituted to alleviate financial stress by providing free access to essential food items. This resource helps students focus on their academic responsibilities without the distraction of food insecurity.

   Since opening in 2021, the Owl Market food pantry has served over 3000 PGCC students in need. The OWL Market is staffed by employees who volunteer an hour of their time every week. PGCC students can receive up to 15 free grocery items per day. To address issues of equity and inclusion, no limit is placed on the number of days per week a student may visit the market. Additionally, careful consideration is given to promoting diversity through the thoughtful procurement of ethnic food items (i.e., enchilada sauce, Masa corn flour, coconut milk). In 2023-2024, the expansion of the Owl Market food pantry program expanded to be able to introduce fresh produce through a partnership with the Ujima Collective, a black farmers' coalition. This alliance has allowed the Owl Market to provide healthier options to PGCC students in need.

2. **Wellness Ambassadors**: Wellness Ambassador positions have been created where student leaders are trained to support their peers' mental and emotional well-being. These ambassadors act as a bridge between students and mental health resources, promoting wellness activities and providing peer support.

3. **Coordinated Care Model**: This model offers emergency financial support to students facing unexpected financial challenges. By coordinating resources between the college's Wellness and Mental Health Center and Student Financial Aid, this model ensures students can promptly access the help they need. The intended outcome is to intentionally connect students to financial and supportive resources to undergird their holistic needs while enrolled at the College.
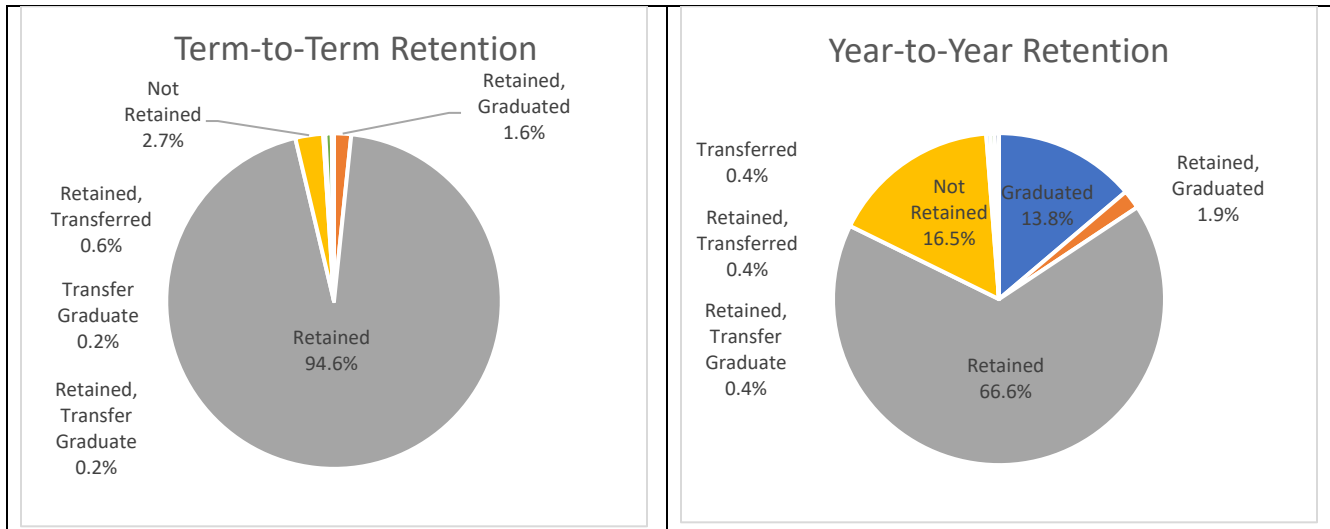
Evidence-Based Practices Informing Initiatives

1. The OWL Market follows best practices from food security programs in higher education, focusing on accessibility, anonymity, and dignity in food distribution. Research shows that addressing basic needs like food insecurity can significantly improve student retention and academic performance.

2. The Wellness Ambassadors program is informed by peer support models, which have been shown to reduce stigma around mental health issues and increase help-seeking behavior. Training includes evidence-based techniques in mental health, first aid, active listening, and crisis intervention.

3. The Coordinated Care Model is based on the concept of wraparound services, which emphasize holistic support for students. This approach is backed by evidence suggesting that integrated services can improve student outcomes, particularly retention and completion rates. The College believes that each student's matriculation is marked by academic success made possible by intentional and targeted support of each of the Eight Dimensions of Wellness (emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, spiritual) as well as the Social Determinants of Health.

Tracking Impact on Retention and Completion

Prince George's Community College is actively tracking the impact of these initiatives through several measures.

1. The Owl Market's usage rates and student feedback are monitored and correlated with retention and academic performance data. General demographics were captured in the data including race and ethnicity, gender, part-time and full- time status. Students visited the owl market on average 2.8 times during the fall term. The term-to-term retention reported 94.6% of Owl Market frequenters remained at the college and only 2.7% of these students were not retained. For year-to-year retention, 66.6% of students were retained, 15.7% graduated, and the remaining roughly 17% of students were not retained.

Term-to-Term Retention

- Not Retained 2.7%
- Retained, Graduated 1.6%
- Retained, Transferred 0.6%
- Transfer Graduate 0.2%
- Retained, Transfer Graduate 0.2%
- Retained 94.6%

Year-to-Year Retention

- Transferred 0.4%
- Not Retained 16.5%
- Graduated 13.8%
- Retained, Graduated 1.9%
- Retained, Transferred 0.4%
- Retained, Transfer Graduate 0.4%
- Retained 66.6%

Note: This is not a cohort-based model.

2. The Wellness Ambassadors program's effectiveness is tracked by surveying student satisfaction, monitoring the number of referrals to counseling services, and assessing the overall mental health climate on campus through annual wellness surveys. This program was developed in 2023-2024, and fully launched in 2024-2025. We will have impact data to report in 2025-2026.

3. For the Coordinated Care Model, the college analyzes the number and types of emergency financial aid requests, the demographics of students served, and the impact on students' ability to remain in college. Success data is pending; however, preliminary data from the Spring 2024 semester shows that 186 students were assisted. Of these students, 51 were financially and academically eligible to return in the Fall 2024 semester; and 16 graduated in May 2024.

According to the CCSSE, administered in 2022, survey responses indicate that students felt the college emphasized the importance of support services they needed to succeed, 95.4%; Cope with non-academic responsibilities, 66.3%; And provide financial support needed to afford their education, 82.8%. By addressing mental, physical, and emotional health, these initiatives contribute to the overall well-being of PGCC students, thereby helping them to succeed academically and equipping them with lifelong skills to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. These efforts to sustain our students have contributed to PGCC's increased 150% completion rate from 17% to 25%, and transfer rate from 15% to 16%. (IPEDS) And increased the retention rate from 53.7% to 57%. (Performance Accountability Report)

For the past few years to increase students' access to financial aid, there has been intentional collaboration with the Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) to offer multi-format outreach/workshops to encourage students to complete the FAFSA by the March 1st priority deadline for most state aid consideration. The same is done with C.O.A.S.T. Advisors. Evidence of the continued need for this effort can be seen in our CCSSE results where 60.9% of the survey participants received some form of financial aid advising during the academic year. Ninety-two percent (92.2%) of the recipients were at least somewhat satisfied with the service. And 87.9% of those respondents described financial aid advising as an important service for the college. This understanding of the student experiences tracks with our initiative to address this matter head on with our incoming students.

There has not been a significant increase in the percentage of students filing by March 1st. In FY23, 6,315 (42.5%) students received financial aid, a significant decrease in the number of students that received aid from FY22, 9,710 (65.7%), despite having enrolled more students (*annual unduplicated headcount increased by 1,815 from the FY22 to FY23).* Suspending the expectation that the increased number of students would also be an increased number of those receiving student financial aid. This data indicates the need for these wraparound services that promote financial aid literacy and opportunity. Based on the increased engagement with the PGCPS team and C.O.A.S.T Advisors, it is expected that the 2024-2025 cycle would start to reflect better outcomes.

Review of Degree Targets

Prince George's Community College has exceeded our target of 12,861 total completers during the 2022-23 academic year. As of AY23 PGCC is at 13,941 completers. The college has exceeded each annual target by a minimum of 63 completers and as many as 479 completers. Even with the 2% annual growth in place PGCC will exceed pending years targets.

Wor-Wic Community College
2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal

Wor-Wic Community College (Wor-Wic) is engaged in several strategies and practices that impact state and institutional 2025 degree completion goals. As directed in the June 10 memo from Secretary Rai, the following report will identify the initiatives that Wor-Wic has in place or will be developing to support student mental health, multilingual learners, and/or students' access to financial aid.

Student Mental Health Support Initiatives

Across the nation, college students are experiencing a growing mental health crisis. Studies have found that 26% of Americans 18 and older living with a mental health disorder. On college campuses, the number is even higher, with roughly 34% experiencing anxiety and 41% experiencing depression. Wor-Wic has a Licensed Certified Social Worker-Clinical (LCSW-C) on staff (mental health counselor) to provide triage mental health support to students. The counselor is available to students while they are on campus to provide in-person support for stress, depression, time management, anxiety, domestic violence and other issues relating to their emotional or academic success. Also, for urgent matters not crisis-related, students can access a call or text system that goes directly to the mental health counselor. Wor-Wic has contracted with BetterMynd mental health app to provide therapy for students for students that do not have insurance, are underinsured, are unable to have transportation for mental health appointments or are unable to secure a local mental health option. The college mental health counselor provides awareness events that address many aspects of mental health needs displayed by the student population. Additionally, Wor-Wic has a Healthy Minds Collective Club for student participation to provide a social club for students to engage in positive mental health activities. Each semester the college hosts the Mind, Body & Soul Health Fair that features numerous mental health providers from the community for students to become aware of their services.

Wor-Wic's holistic approach to mental health services is consistent with the recommendations established by the American Council on Education (ACE) in collaboration with The Hope Center and The Healthy Minds Network. Wor-Wic's credit student satisfaction survey includes questions used to assess student satisfaction with counseling services and awareness of events and outreach efforts facilitated by the mental health services office. Wor-Wic also participates in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) which includes a section for support for learners and a question regarding student perceptions of how much the college emphasized helping the student cope with their non-academic responsibilities. Aggregate information regarding utilization of BetterMynd is available on demand to the mental health counselor. Institutional measures regarding retention and completion are continuously monitored.

Multilingual Learner Support Initiatives

Wor-Wic's Adult Education Program offers free ESL (English Speaking and Language) classes to community members on a first-come, first-served basis. An online application form is utilized to collect information from interested students with application translation guides available in three additional languages (Haitian-Creole, Spanish, and Portuguese). Students are evaluated with CASAS STEPS testing to determine instructional levels. Students at beginning

levels are offered in-person ESL classes to improve basic skills, while intermediate and advanced level students are offered hybrid classes that include access to Burlington English distance learning program. Additionally, students are advised of pathways to transition into high school diploma options and/or other higher education and workforce training opportunities.

Since September 2022, Wor-Wic has an account with Language Line Services to provide telephonic interpretation services. In that time, over 473 minutes of telephone interpretation services have been rendered in three different languages (Haitian-Creole, Spanish, and French). To extend translation services to include more conversational translation, Wor-Wic's Student Affairs staff recently engaged in a trial of Pocketalk, a handheld voice/text translator which supports 85 languages and can translate images from its built-in camera in 56 languages. Students who submit an admission application to the college are also supported by an enrollment checklist document in English, Haitian-Creole, and Spanish.

Wor-Wic's credit student satisfaction survey assesses student perceptions of how welcome they feel on the college campus. Institutional measures regarding retention and completion are continuously monitored.

Students' Access to Financial Aid

Financial Aid Application Assistance

Students who complete the FAFSA are more likely to enroll in higher education, persist in their coursework, and obtain a degree. To assist students with the process, Wor-Wic implemented two strategies. The first strategy increases the number of FAFSA completion events, which is in alignment with the MD Blueprint goals. Since FY 2022, Wor-Wic's financial aid office has increased the number of financial aid outreach events provided to its tri-county service area by 44%. The second strategy utilizes targeted outreach via text, email, and phone calls to assist students with taking the steps necessary to complete the financial aid application process. These efforts have successfully increased the number of students with a financial aid offer despite a decrease in FAFSA completions (which can be attributed to a decrease in enrollment and issues related to FAFSA simplification). Since FY 2022, the number of students with a financial aid offer by September 1 of the academic year has increased by 10.7%. Wor-Wic's credit student satisfaction survey assesses student perceptions of how satisfied they are with financial aid services and the helpfulness of financial aid staff. Institutional measures regarding retention and completion are continuously monitored.

Student Success Funds

Research has shown that student persistence and college completion are strongly connected to and determined by whether a student's basic needs are being met. In a Wor-Wic survey of non-returning students, of those responding students who did not meet their educational goal(s) 29% reported financial reasons (e.g., can no longer afford to attend, financial aid expired). Wor-Wic currently has two student success funds. The emergency assistance fund is meant to meet a specific short-term need and can be awarded for things like childcare, food, housing, utilities, medical expenses, transportation, textbooks, and interview clothing. In FY 2024 the emergency assistance fund provided $51,000 dollars to 58 students. Of the students awarded 43% are registered in the fall 2024 term and 17% graduated. The Adult Learners fund

provides financial assistance and academic support to adult students who are also parents. In FY 2024 the program provided $50,000 to 29 students. Of the participants 41% are registered in the fall 2024 term and 52% graduated. Wor-Wic's credit student satisfaction survey assesses student perceptions of how satisfied they are with financial aid services and the helpfulness of financial aid staff. Institutional measures regarding retention and completion are continuously monitored.

Appendix A

Degree Target Commentary

       The initiatives in the areas of supporting student mental health, multilingual learners, and/or students' access to financial aid are believed to be critical in meeting our 2025 degree target. In FY 2024, Wor-Wic awarded 284 degrees which is below the target of 428. Our enrollment has decreased since 2018 as has our number of full-time students, both of which have impacted our ability to meet the degree target established by MHEC.

Bowie State University
2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress Toward the 55% Completion Goal
Prepared for the Maryland Higher Education Commission

The following *Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress Toward the 55% Completion Goal* was prepared at the request of the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). This document contains initiatives that Bowie State University is undertaking to support student mental health, multilingual learners, and students' access to financial aid. A description, evidence-based best practices, and tracking impact on retention and completion is provided for each initiative. Comments are also provided on the MHEC degree target for Bowie State University.

Initiatives that Support Student Mental Health, Multilingual Learners, and Access to Financial Aid

Student Mental Health –

- **Therapy Assistance Online** (TAO) is a mental health platform that provides psychoeducation, mental health resources, and support for students enrolled at the university. Therapists developed TAO to offer evidence-based resources aligned with the population health model to educate and optimize mental health. Specifically, this population health model focuses on targeted interventions tailored to college student mental health and provides interactive educational tools to help students navigate feelings of stress, worry, social anxiety, and anger management. This tool is provided to foster life skills of well-being and resilience and improve student mental health. Tracking and progress are obtained through individual and collective student TAO accounts.

- The **Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms** (CCAPS) is a mental health screening designed for college students/athletes and meets the 2024 NCAA Best Practice #2 requirements. CCAPS results reflect the level of distress in eight areas of concern: Depression, Generalized Anxiety, Social Anxiety, Academic Distress, Eating Concerns, Frustration, Family Distress, Alcohol Use, and "Thoughts of Ending My Life." Screening for mental health symptoms and disorders is one crucial way to identify students who may benefit from therapeutic support. Best practices promote using an empirically validated screening tool to evaluate all students for psychological distress at least once annually. Pre- and post-reports are used to track student mental health outcomes. CCAP tracking is part of the Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH), which collects data through routine clinical practice from college and university counseling centers and is a multidisciplinary, member-driven Practice-Research-Network (PRN) focused on providing accurate and up-to-date information on the mental health of today's college students. BSU Counseling Services became a member on July 1, 2024. CCMH connects practice, research, and technology to benefit students, mental health providers, administrators, researchers, and the public.

- **Programming to support neurodivergent college students** includes support groups focusing on social skills training and academic support, a sensory-friendly space and environment, peer support, and training for faculty and staff in collaboration with disability support services. The inclusive and supportive group environment recognizes and values the diversity of neurodivergent students. Training for faculty and staff increases awareness of this student population and provides strategies for interacting with and promoting student

Bowie State University
2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress Toward the 55% Completion Goal
Prepared for the Maryland Higher Education Commission

success for this population. Post-student satisfaction surveys, workshops, and program evaluations will be used to assess outcomes.

- **De-Stress Fest** is a weeklong series of mental health programs, workshops, and activities. De-Stress Fest events include mindfulness training, calming rooms, meditation, art therapy, and a mental health symposium. Meditation and mindfulness activities are proven tools used to reduce levels of stress and anxiety significantly. Workshop evaluations are used to assess outcomes.

- **Peer Counseling - Undergraduate Student Practicum** - Undergraduate senior psychology students enrolled in a three-credit practicum course work with incoming freshmen to provide psychosocial interviews to assess how well students transition during their first year. Research has shown the benefits of peer support and mental health. Psychology seniors engage with first-year students to build relationships and cultivate a sense of belonging. Seniors further develop counseling skills through this practicum experience. Practicum evaluations (midterm and final) and student satisfaction surveys are used to assess outcomes.

Multilingual Learners –

- **Focused writing and research support** - To meet the needs of the international student community at Bowie State University, the Graduate Resource Center (GRC) has partnered with the International Student Office to provide academic writing support that meets the specific needs of English-Language Learners (ELLs). This initiative provides focused writing and research support for coursework, conference papers and presentations, journal publications, theses, and dissertations for this student population. Through Title III grant funding, the GRC has hired an academic editor with a graduate degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), experience as an HBCU academic writing instructor, and experience as a tutor for international ELLs in graduate schools in the UK and the US. This initiative follows evidence-based practices by providing: 1) differentiated language proficiency support that emphasizes individual needs and meets the learning goals of graduate programs; 2) a graduate-school-wide editing system that involves students and faculty, provides TESOL consultation support for graduate instructors with ELL-focused scaffolding materials; and 3) editing practices designed to support academic writing learning through individualized feedback, resources, and technology. The tracking of key performance indicators for this initiative is measured through student surveys and faculty feedback consultations. The ongoing success of this initiative has led to plans to scale available resources as a model for other institutions.

Access to Financial Aid

- Bowie State University's Financial Aid Office targets all students and families with its annual **FASFA Completion Initiative.** This initiative includes webinars and face-to-face sessions, the content of which is built based on NASFAA best practices and US Department of Education, Federal Student Aid guidance. Email and text campaigns supplement outreach efforts. Since January 2024, the Financial Aid Office has hosted four webinars, four large-scale in-person sessions, 22 email/text campaigns, and one-on-one assistance as requested. FAFSA completion is an early indicator of postsecondary enrollment. Bowie State's

Bowie State University
2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress Toward the 55% Completion Goal
Prepared for the Maryland Higher Education Commission

Enrollment Management Division uses FAFSA completion to customize outreach campaigns for new and returning students.

- Bowie State implemented the **ScholarshipUniverse platform** to manage applications for institutional private donor and merit scholarships. Since December 2023, the platform has provided uniform access for students to apply to and be considered for internal private donor and merit scholarships, allowing all awards for the academic year to be made by May 1st before the start of the academic year. Understanding the increased financial need across our student body, this platform also reviews thousands of external national scholarships. It provides students with a 'click and apply' process for applying to external/third-party scholarships that match critical qualifying criteria. The system will not allow students to apply for a scholarship for which they are not eligible for consideration, thereby reducing student anxiety and misunderstanding and ensuring that they know well in advance the financial delta between awarded aid and their expected charges.

Bowie State University – Degree Targets

Previous reports describe that past enrollment levels and degree trends provide a positive outlook for BSU's contribution to the completion agenda. Since 2011, Bowie State University has awarded 11,024 degrees, 1,187 more than MHEC's projections.

The growth in efficiency can be linked to increasing the number and throughput of new freshmen and transfer student cohorts. The sustained focus on retention and progression through various University programs and individual attention has contributed to the increasing number of graduates.

The goals and objectives outlined in Bowie State University's *2019-2024 Strategic Plan* build on its historical mission and strengths. The five goals focus on academic and co-curricular excellence, student success, educational and administrative innovation, a campus culture of diversity, inclusion and civic engagement, and long-term institutional viability. Many of the objectives of this plan support long-term growth in retention and graduation rates for first-time freshmen, new transfer, and graduate students. Institutional effectiveness indicators track retention and graduation rates for each of these groups.

In conclusion, Bowie State University has committed resources and staff to contribute to the State's 55% completion goal. These strategies address challenges related to affordability, academic advising/student support services, and academic transformation.

Coppin State University

2024 Best Practices and Annual Progress to the Maryland 55% Completion Goal Report

Coppin State University is engaged in several activities to make strategic progress toward the State's Degree completion goals. This report will speak to the specific activities outline in the Moore-Miller Administration's "Setting Up Maryland Students for Success" and address each item specifically.

Initiatives to Support Mental Health

Coppin State University's Center for Counseling and Accessibility provides support for students through individual and group counseling, residential and campus life wellness programs, Mental Health and First Aid training for faculty and staff, and a variety of personal and emotional support related events and activities. Coppin State University has increased its capacity to help students navigate challenges that may lead to attrition through hiring three additional staff members, two of whom are mental health counselors, and one is an accessibility counselor.

Initiatives Regarding Student's Access to Financial Aid

Over 75% of Coppin State University students are Pell Eligible, a common marker for coming from a lower income background. Due to this demographic of students, access to aid is vital to empowering students' persistence and competition at Coppin.

First, Coppin State University engages in several efforts to promote the timely competition of the FASFA for incoming, prospective students and for continuing students. This includes email and social media campaigns as well as events on campus and at area High Schools with a relationship to Coppin.

Second, Coppin is strategic in its allocation of institutional aid to support student success. Coppin utilizes institutional funds and state allocations to support merit scholarships, need-based grants, and scholarships to incoming students based on need and merit. In addition, Coppin has utilized funding from private donations, HBCU Lawsuit Settlements, and institutional funds to address gap or hardship funding or last-dollar money to empower student persistence.

The use of gap funding to address gaps in student financing is a best-practice in the strategic use of financial aid to support student persistence toward completion. An analysis by Nguyen, Kramer, and Evans (2019) found the gains to be between two and three

percentage points and that even a $1,000 grant can increase attainment by 1.5 to 2 percent[1].

Other Initiatives Underway

Coppin State University has launched the Eagle Achievement Center as a one-stop shop for wrap-around support. The EAC houses New Student Orientation, advising, academic outreach, mentoring, tutoring, First-Year Experience, Second-Year Experience, and Career and Professional Services. The EAC works to holistically develop students and be proactive using predictive analytics to intervene and assist students needing additional support to succeed. The EAC is grounded in researched best practices, such as the benefits of holistic support (Robinson, 2015), peer academic coaching (Bettinger & Baker, 2014), and addressing basic needs, such as food insecurity (Weaver, Vaughn, et al., 2020). [2]

Coppin State University was the beneficiary of a private donation to expand peer mentoring to all first-year incoming students. In addition, a grant through the USM system has enabled the addition of transfer mentors to improve student success. Mentors allow the addition of a resource for advice, counsel, and referral to resources on campus.

Tracking and Reporting

Coppin State University is able to track students who take advantage of some of the mentioned initiatives and compare outcomes related to persistence, GPA, and, ultimately, graduation. This will occur with those given hardship funding, participation in the EAC's programs, and mentorship participation.   As these initiatives are new, they are not yet provided in this report, but they will be reported in subsequent years. The institution's current retention and graduation rates are included on the tale on the following page.

While Coppin still has the opportunity and need to improve completion rates, progress in recent years in retention for the newest cohorts can be built upon to continue increases in the graduation rates.

---

[1] Nguyen, T.D., Kramer, J.W., and Evans, B.J. (2019). The effects of grant aid on student persistence and degree attainment: A systematic review and meta-analysis of the causal evidence. *Review of Educational Research,* 89(6).

[2] Bettinger, E.P. & Baker, R.B. (2014). The effects of student coaching: An evaluation of a randomized experience in student advising. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 36(1), 3-19.
Braxton, J.M., Hirschy, A.S. & McClendon, S.A. (2004). Understanding and reducing college student departure. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 30(3), 16. San Franscisco: Jossey-Bass.

Institutional Comments on Degree Targets Established by MHEC

The degree targets established have not been attained by the university in recent years. However, CSU, for the third year in a row, has grown its incoming freshman class and transfer students. Currently residence hall capacity is approximately 600 students. The institution had to initiate leasing agreements with area agencies to accommodate the growing class of students. As students are retained and complete over the next three-to-four cohorts, we expect that the completion rates will closely align with the targets established by the Commission.

Undergraduates at Coppin State University
PRELIMINARY, UNOFFICIAL 2024 Retention and Graduation Rates as of 09/20/2024
ALL First-Time, Full-Time, Degree-Seeking Freshman Entering in the Fall Semester

| Cohort Year | Cohort Size | Retention Rates | | | | | | Graduation Rates | | | | | | Enrolled |
		2nd Year	(N)	3rd Year	(N)	4th Year	(N)	4-Years or Less	(N)	5-Years or Less	(N)	6-Years or Less	(N)	7th Year
2013	353	68.8%	(243)	45.6%	(161)	38.8%	(137)	12.2%	(43)	20.4%	(72)	26.1%	(92)	5.4%
2014	267	69.3%	(185)	47.9%	(128)	43.1%	(115)	12.0%	(32)	26.6%	(71)	29.6%	(79)	4.5%
2015	242	62.8%	(152)	45.5%	(110)	39.7%	(96)	14.0%	(34)	22.3%	(54)	26.4%	(64)	2.9%
2016	383	66.3%	(254)	45.2%	(173)	37.6%	(144)	9.4%	(36)	18.0%	(69)	23.8%	(91)	4.4%
2017	383	63.2%	(242)	47.3%	(181)	39.2%	(150)	9.7%	(37)	20.4%	(78)	25.8%	(99)	5.5%
2018	389	69.9%	(272)	50.6%	(197)	38.0%	(148)	10.5%	(41)	21.3%	(83)	26.2%	(102)	2.8%
2019	428	64.7%	(277)	44.4%	(190)	34.6%	(148)	7.7%	(33)	17.5%	(75)	.	.	.
2020	291	57.0%	(166)	41.2%	(120)	30.6%	(89)	11.3%	(33)	.	.	.	.	.
2021	172	61.6%	(106)	42.4%	(73)	30.2%	(52)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2022	332	73.5%	(244)	50.9%	(169)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2023	370	66.2%	(245)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2024	467	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Maryland Higher Education Commission - 2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal

1)   Identify at least three initiatives the institution has in place or will be developing to support (a) student mental health, (b) multilingual learners and/or (c) students' access to financial aid.

Student Mental Health: As mental health has been front and center for institutions of higher education across the country, FSU focuses on best practices related to creating an inclusive environment for students in need of services. We have a unique relationship with the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) of Western Maryland to provide on-campus counseling services on a full-time basis, including 24-7 on-call services for our student population. This third-party agreement includes a full-time director/clinician, four full-time licensed clinicians, a half-time psychiatrist, and a full-time administrative assistant. Additionally, our affiliation with UPMC provides a broader referral network of specialists and seamless access to emergency petitions, hospitalizations, and aftercare. Along with various clinical services, this relationship provides campus outreach on a variety of topics in collaboration with faculty and other student service areas with a focus on overall student health and retention.

Multilingual Learners: Frostburg State University's faculty and the Student Accessibility Services Office work together to provide innovative resources that support the academic experience of multilingual students. Supportive resources range from text-to-speech technology that can translate course work into a student's native language to assistive note-taking software that provide translated text in real time.

Student Access to Financial Aid: Over the course of the last fiscal year, the FSU Financial Aid Office has hosted, co-hosted, and participated in twenty-one campus and virtual student events. Such events ranged from large visit days to small virtual question and answer sessions. A variety of settings and formats presented students and families with many opportunities to be introduced to important financial aid guidance. The exposure and availability of information about sources of aid included information about state grants.

2)   Of those initiatives, describe how and what evidence-based practices inform the initiatives' efforts.

Student Mental Health: Our agreement with UPMC allows for our accreditation from the International Association of Counseling Services, Inc. (IACS), while advancing best

practice connections through the Center for Collegiate Mental Health and the Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors. Additionally, our strategic goals for the Student Counseling Center align with the professional standards put forth by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, while the clinical director and clinicians meet the licensing standards stipulated by the Health Occupation Articles of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

Multilingual Learners: Evidence-based practices form the foundation for these initiatives, which include cognitive research on native-language support as a benefit to improving comprehension and retaining academic material. Studies have evidenced that in their native language, students understand the content deeper, and therefore confidence and participation grow. Also, with Frostburg's partnership, accessibility tools will be culturally responsive, instituting best practices in supporting linguistically diverse learners.

Besides these technological tools, Frostburg State University Tutoring Center is working towards offering tutoring targeted to meet the needs of its multilingual students. It pulls in evidence-based practices that place an emphasis on language scaffolding and academic skills development to ensure students get specific help to aid in coursework understanding in a second language. Research has shown that structured tutoring interventions-particularly those with strategies aimed at language learning-create significant improvements in the academic outcomes of multilingual students. This type of tutoring also helps students to be successful in the classroom by focusing both on language skills and course content.

Student Access to Financial Aid: Each year the FSU Financial Aid Office assesses the strengths and weaknesses of our previous year's presentations and participation. For example, we have found that the classic in-person FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) events have had extremely poor participation. This trend started even prior to COVID. FSU Financial Aid collaborated with Admissions and Allegany Public Schools to have a joint virtual session with other county colleges that was well attended. The flexibility, convenience, and recordability of virtual events has been a game-changer. Admissions has also allowed us to get involved with texting events for new incoming students.

3)   Describe how the institution is tracking the impact of those initiatives on retention and completion (and any other relevant outcomes) and a brief description of relevant analyses.

Student Mental Health: To evaluate our level of effectiveness related to retention and completion, we anonymize the population by Student ID and conduct comparative analysis with the student population with the caveat that this population of students may have confounding variables that are related to the need for mental health services. Additionally, we continuously evaluate service satisfaction via student survey, assessing these data monthly and annually, and consistently find satisfaction in the 90th percentile.

Multilingual Learners: The institution is committed to tracking the outcomes of these initiatives in terms of their impacts on student retention, academic success, and completion. Accessibility and Learning Office has and will continue to measure the efficacy of these tools through an analysis of data including class completion and retention. The Accessibility and Learning Office uses data analytics, direct student feedback, and academic progress reports to measure the demonstrated gains in academic skills, content understanding, and student success. Preliminary data indicate that students who use these technologies and tutoring services show higher retention rates and stronger performance in their courses, suggesting that these support systems have a positive impact on overall student success.

Student Access to Financial Aid: The Financial Aid Office began last year tracking the quantity, types, and number of attendees (when available) for events. The hope is that after a few years of tracking, the office will be able to strategically time and format event participation to maximize impact. With the Department of Education struggles and delays, it has made comparing the current year to past cycles virtually impossible.

In addition, each institution is invited to review and comment on the degree targets MHEC has established for the institution, as indicated in the 2023 report that can be found here:
https://mhec.maryland.gov/publications/Documents/Dashboards/p%20195_196%20Report%20on%20Best%20Practices%20and%20Progress%20Toward%2055%25%20Goal.pdf

.

Institutional narrative reports should not exceed four printed pages or approximately 1,500 words. Reports are due no later than Friday September 20, 2024.

2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal Report
Morgan State University

As outlined below, Morgan State University has numerous initiatives in place to support student mental health and students' access to financial aid. At this time, there are no initiatives specifically geared to multilingual learners. However, there are some initiatives in the planning stages from the Department of English and Language Arts and International Studies.

Student Mental Health

Counseling Services
Morgan has increased the number of Counselors on campus and recently opened a state of the art 7,400 square foot Counseling Center facility that features a relaxation room and meeting rooms to support individual counseling and support group meetings. In addition, a satellite Counseling office was strategically designed in a new 670 bed residential facility to expand outreach to our residential students, and 6 residential halls have been equipped with wellness rooms that provide students privacy for online counseling sessions and opportunities for meditation, and/or physical fitness activities.

Morgan State has also expanded student access to mental health services through Online Teletherapy services offered by U-Will, a third-party vendor, that is accessible after hours and on weekends

Mental Health Literacy Awareness
To enhance mental health literacy and destigmatize access to mental health services, Morgan has expanded the use of Mental Health First Aid Training for faculty, staff, and students. Currently, 20 faculty and staff have been trained to facilitate Mental Health First Aid Training (MHFA) on campus. The goal is to train 1000 faculty, staff, and students to become knowledgeable about mental health first aid as a resource on our campus. Currently, we have provided training for 275 faculty, staff, and students.

Expansion of Case Management Services
The Case Manager helps students succeed by supporting their personal growth, health and wellbeing, and academic achievement. The Case Manager works directly with students to provide support, guidance, resources, and referrals related to academic success, mental and physical health, personal and family emergencies, financial issues, or other concerns, for the benefit of the whole student. Students are connected with a range of resources including the Food Resource Center, University Counseling Center, University Health Center, advising, tutoring, and financial aid on-campus. The Case

Manager also connects students to a range of social services off campus including rental assistance, eviction protection, shelters and other agencies. The goal is to help students reach high levels of wellness/wellbeing, be able to self-manage and self-advocate and function well.

Over the past 3 years we have experienced a significant increase in the number of referrals to our Case Manager for assistance. Students are being referred to the case manager by faculty, staff, and parents:

2020 -2021 Referrals	2021-2022 Referrals	2023-2024 Referrals
11 Students	109 Students	170 Students

Current plans are underway to add an additional Case Manager to support this work.

Community Partnerships

Over the past 3 years Morgan has also partnered with national and regional organizations such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and MANUAL (a resource and engagement strategy for men on college campuses) to normalize mental health literacy and awareness on campus.

Students' Access to Financial Aid

With close to 60% of our students being Pell-eligible, Morgan State University puts significant emphasis on assisting students to access financial aid. The Office of Financial Aid offers in-person and virtual workshops and one-on-one counseling, as well as online resources to help students complete the FAFSA. The Office engages in extensive social media and email campaigns, and partners with offices including Residence Life and Housing, Admissions, and Student Success and Retention, to nudge students to complete the FAFSA to ensure that they can access all aid for which they may be eligible. Our Bear Essentials One-Stop Student Services area serves as another critical resource in helping students navigate the financial aid process. For our entering freshmen, Bear Essentials and Financial Aid meet with each student while they are on campus for summer orientation to assist them with any financial aid matters and to ensure that they understand their options for paying their bills.

One of our more recent initiatives in this area is the hiring of a Scholarship Coordinator to help our students match and apply for external funding sources. From 2022-2023 to

2023-2024, the number of students receiving external scholarships increased from 565 students receiving $2.6M to 965 students receiving $4.1M.

Another highly effective financial aid initiative has been our implementation of financial aid optimization. The historic enrollment increases that we have seen over the past four years, including a roughly 50% increase in in-state freshmen from fall 2019 to fall 2024, correlate with this implementation. With concerns about the high cost of higher education, heightened price sensitivity, and reluctance to take out large loans to pay for college, our data-based approach to awarding aid to incoming students has increased our competitiveness and attractiveness to students.

Students also have access to a scholarship portal, Academic Works, that allows them to be reviewed for institutional and Morgan State University Foundation grants and scholarships through one central application. 1,530 students were awarded more than $6M in institutional aid and 2,560 students were awarded MSU Foundation scholarships through this portal.

Additionally, the University offers the Growing the Future Opportunity Fund, which provides emergency assistance to help students overcome unexpected financial challenges that could impede their academic progress. Since 2020, we have assisted 721 students with $415,889.96 via this fund (not including HEERF funding that supplemented the fund during the pandemic).

Each of these approaches to supporting students' access to financial aid is grounded in best practices for student success. They are student-centered, providing regular and clear communication across multiple media and providing individualized support to each student. They are data-informed and leverage technology to increase efficiency and accessibility. As a result of these initiatives, coupled with the multitude of other student success initiatives, Morgan has been able to achieve historic enrollment of close to 11,000 this year, and historic retention rates (13 consecutive years above 70% first to second-year retention rate) and historic graduation rates (six-year graduation rate above 40% for six consecutive years).

Salisbury University

2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress Toward the 55% Completion Goal

September 20, 2024

Comments on Salisbury University's performance on degree targets established by the MHEC

The number of undergraduate degrees awarded last year by Salisbury University (1,468) was less than targeted by MHEC (2192) for AY23-24. This negative difference reflects the pressures of the pandemic on undergraduate enrollment that the University has experienced. Given the decreases in new student enrollment seen during the pandemic, 18% decline in undergraduate enrollment since fall 2019, our sophomore, junior, and senior classes for the past three years have been smaller than normal. Undergraduate degree counts declined 8.5% this year. We anticipate the effects of these smaller incoming classes will continue to impact our degree counts through 2025. By targeting larger first-time student classes, we hope to slowly grow our junior and senior cohorts which will in turn, increase the number of degrees granted. For fall 2024, we saw a 3.4% increase in our first-time student cohort.

Although the number of undergraduate degrees awarded did not meet the target this year, the University graduated approximately 23% of undergraduate students during AY23-24. As undergraduate enrollment has decreased over the past four years, SU degree targets have not been modified. Adjustments to the cumulative 2024-25-degree target have not been made based on the actual number of degrees being granted each year. The final degree goal (AY24-25) is based on a 2% incremental increase in degrees each year, despite an 18% decline in enrollment over the last five years. Ultimately, without adjustments to SU's 2024-25 cumulative degree target based on enrollment declines, the gap between SU's degrees granted and degree target will continue to grow. Currently, we are 6% below MHEC cumulative degree goal (27,020 vs 28,726).

**Cumulative Undergraduate Degree Target vs. Actual:
Salisbury University
AY2009-10 through AY2023-24**

Legend:
- MHEC UG Degree Targets
- SU UG Actual Degrees
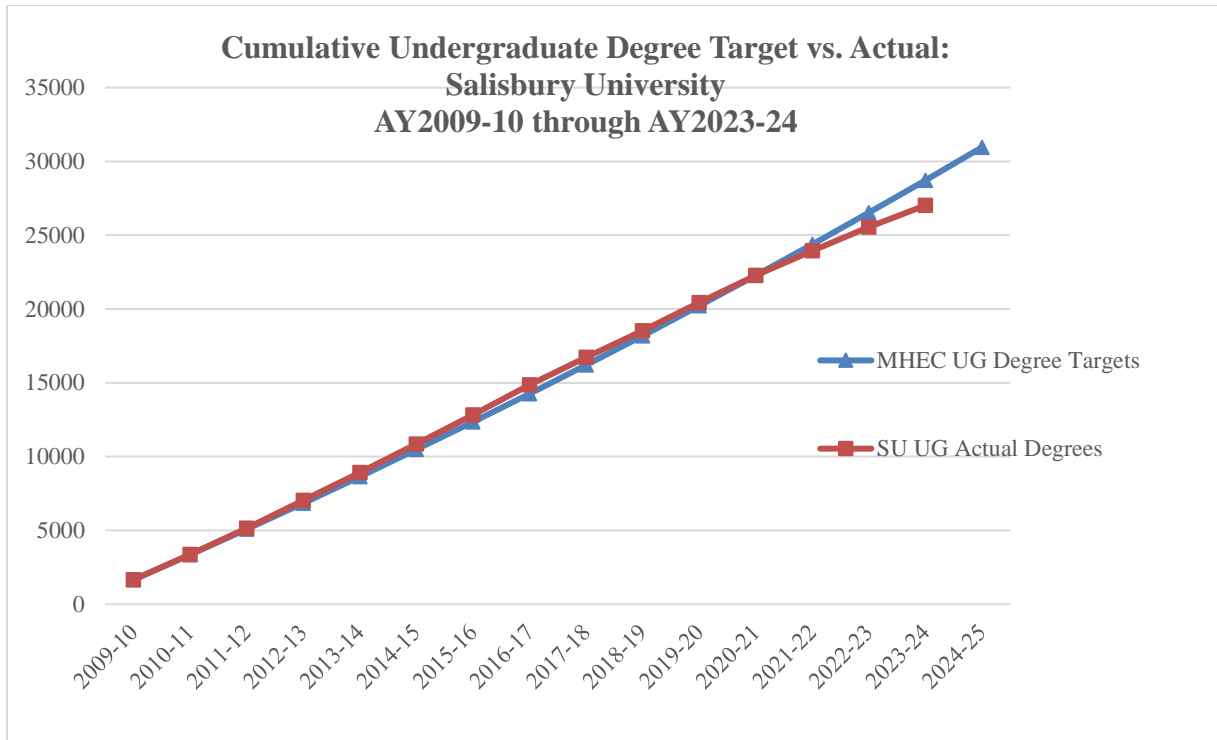
Initiatives Salisbury University has in place or will be developing to support (a) student mental health, (b) multilingual learners and/or (c) students' access to financial aid

1. Student Mental Health

The Counseling Center has increased student access to appointments with clinicians by offering same-day/next-day appointments and walk-in appointments for initial intakes. Salisbury University is committed to providing even more availability for on-campus care for our students and the Counseling Center currently interviewing for another clinical staff position. Additionally, in an effort to provide access to care 24 hours a day, students have access to contracted 24/7 tele-mental health care through TimelyCare. Student feedback and national data support increased access to counseling to quickly identify problems and reduce the escalation of concerns.

The Director of the Counseling Center met with Academic Affairs staff and faculty interested in tracking student attendance at the Counseling Center to examine retention and student success. The Counseling Center remains committed to maintaining the high level of confidentiality with student records and that creates challenges when utilizing any other student success platforms used across campus, like EAB's Navigate. Certain information cannot be shared, such as which students attend counseling sessions or their presenting concerns. The Counseling Center

utilizes an internal survey for students, and the data shows that a high percentage of students believe counseling has helped them stay enrolled and supports their success in and out of the classroom.

2. Back to Flying Scholarship Plan

In 2023, Salisbury University launched the new "Back to Flying" scholarship focused on encouraging students who were placed on academic probation for the first time to earn a spot on the Dean's List in their subsequent SU semester. The goal is to entice probation students with a monetary incentive to rebound from the prior semester academically. The incentive is a one-time scholarship of $1,000 to be applied to the semester following the earned Dean's List distinction. The scholarship is publicized in the initial probation notification, at the start of the following semester, prior to mid-semester grades, and leading up to finals.

The program's success is measured by looking at the persistence rate of students on academic probation before and after the scholarship program was launched. The program will run for two years to determine the impact on persistence with these cohorts. As of August 2024, a total of 30 students have been awarded the scholarship, with eight students receiving the award most recently at the end of spring 2024.

The program also aims to encourage persistence regardless of a student achieving Dean's List. In the spring 2022 semester, there were 148 students on probation for the first time. Of that group, 97 students returned for classes in the fall 2022 semester, representing a 65% persistence rate. One year later for the spring 2023 semester, there were 154 students placed on probation for the first time. Of that cohort, 111 students returned for the fall 2023 semester, representing a 72.1% persistence rate, well above the targeted 5% increased persistence goal that was listed in the program proposal.

3. FAFSA Completion Efforts

Salisbury University launched several initiatives aimed at increasing the FAFSA completion rate for new and returning students for the fall 2024 semester. Supported by the ECMC Foundation and the University System of Maryland, SU was awarded an allocation of $23,460 in funds to use towards raising the percentage of students filing the FAFSA. These efforts follow the impacts felt nationwide by the FAFSA Simplification Act.

SU invited students who had yet to complete the FAFSA to two on-campus workshops at the start of the fall 2024 semester where staff were present to help students complete outstanding forms. Additionally, the funds supported social

media outreach through targeted campaigns of students and their families who had yet to submit a FAFSA resulting in 719,940 impressions across all platforms.

The collective efforts contributed towards seeing 700 more FAFSA applications submitted between July 15 and September 20, 2024. National survey data shows that financial aid and affordability consistently rank as one of the top factors that influence a student's college decision and impacts persistence rates to graduation. Approximately 92% of students at Salisbury University receive institutional, federal, or state aid. We understand that the FAFSA Simplification Act created a burden on families for the 2024-2025 semester through filing complications. As a result of this difficulty, regular communication and in-person outreach is an essential action by our Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships to supporting student success, persistence, and ultimately graduation rates at Salisbury University.

Annual Report on Best Practices & Progress Toward the 55% Completion Goal

St. Mary's College of Maryland – 2024

St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) appreciates the opportunity to update the Maryland Higher Education Commission on our most successful initiatives that assist in reaching the State's 55% college degree attainment goal by 2025. Per guidance from the Commission, this year's report specifically focuses on the College's institutional efforts to support the Moore-Miller Administration's 2024 State Plan Goal of "Setting up Maryland Students for Success" with respect to students' mental health, support for multilingual learners, and financial aid.

Effective Initiatives:

1. Supporting Students' Mental Health

St. Mary's College of Maryland recognizes that high-quality, holistic healthcare services are critical for students' successful, on-time completion of their degree. In order to promote continuity of care and foster trust among students, the College has recruited top talent to fill counseling and health services positions and to expand programming opportunities on campus. These new staff have actively sought to work collaboratively with our students to identify and fill service gaps since the onset of the pandemic, including the provision of psychiatric medication management appointments and mental health counseling sessions through secure video platforms. Outside of Counseling & Psychological Services operating hours, students also have access to Protocall – an inclusive, 24/7 counseling service that provides real-time, professional support over a toll-free hotline. Wellness Center staff also provide training and consulting services for faculty, staff, and student groups interested in learning about and contributing to positive mental health outcomes. Additionally, since 2022 the College has partnered with the JED Foundation – a nonprofit that promotes mental and emotional health, as well as substance abuse and suicide prevention programs – to ensure effective design, outreach, and delivery of health and wellness initiatives on campus. This year's initiatives include the second annual "LiveWell" Day, which offers research-supported wellness programming, as well as training for both Resident Assistants and Peer Health Educators to encourage on-campus "connectedness," especially for students struggling with feelings of isolation on campus. Further, to improve "connectedness" between the campus and surrounding community, the College has acquired a motor coach to provide means for student transportation to Lexington Park, California, and Leonardtown in St. Mary's County, as well as to larger population centers in the state such as Baltimore and the DC suburbs.

2. Supporting Multilingual Learners

The College's support for multilingual learners is reflected in both our international language instruction and the primary role of culture in coursework at all levels of the curriculum. This focus enables our students to not only continue developing their own language abilities, but also their knowledge base of global cultures (including their own in the case of African French speakers or Spanish speakers from European, Central American, or South American countries. These culture-first approaches also enable students to develop critical thinking skills beyond those offered in a typical language classroom. The most recent initiative developed in this space surrounds the development of leadership opportunities for multilingual students to serve as student liaisons. For example, in recent screenings of films from South American directors, SMCM students offered simultaneous interpretation of dialogue between the characters, film-makers, and the audience. Additionally, the College's Writing and Speaking Center has hired bilingual and heritage speakers of non-English languages to support peer-to-peer academic tutoring opportunities. The same is true for Peer Health Educators,who are trained and certified through the NASPA BACCHUS initiative to support wellness and mental health programming.

3. Support Students through Financial Aid

As a public institution committed to access, affordability, and diversity, St. Mary's College of Maryland remains laser focused on cost – a key concern for our students. Through a combination of institutional efforts and increased state support, in-state tuition for 2024-2025 was frozen for the fifth consecutive year at $12,116. This amount is nearly the same as in-state tuition for the 2011-2012 academic year ($12,005), and significantly lower on an inflation adjusted basis. Additionally, the College maintains its commitment to a robust financial aid program – especially for first-generation or low-income students. In 2022, SMCM launched the Baltimore City Scholars program to recognize and support high-achieving students from Baltimore. Funded through a combination of College and private funds, the Baltimore City Scholarship program offers eligible students the equivalent of a full-tuition scholarship, including merit and need-based funding, as part of their financial aid award. This builds upon previous efforts through the Landers Scholars Program, which provides fully-funded four-year scholarships (including tuition, fees, room, and board), mentoring, and community service opportunities for low-income, first-generation students. Additionally, the Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) offers several public financial aid informational sessions in libraries and high schools across the state to provide convenient access to financial aid counselors for students and their families. One-on-one sessions are also provided to assist students in understanding and navigating financial aid options, and informational publications are provided to all admitted students to help families better understand financial aid nomenclature.

Evidence-based Practices:

1. Supporting Students' Mental Health

As part of the College's strategic planning efforts, the Divisions of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Enrollment Management are committed to providing institutional support for students and their mental health that are personalized, flexible, equitable, inclusive, and evidence-based. These initiatives are consolidated under Pillar II of our most recent strategic plan – "Empower all students for success" – and include peer-developed and peer-facilitated campaigns; workshops and wellness events focused on conflict resolution, mindfulness, stress management, and communication; and the elimination of barriers which may discourage or prevent students from taking full advantage of both on- and off-campus resources, among others. Additionally, the College's partnership with the JED Foundation enables SMCM to leverage their Comprehensive Approach model, which is adapted from a highly-successful U.S. Air Force model to match the needs and nuances of campus communities.

2. Supporting Multilingual Learners

Prior to their arrival on campus, all incoming students are required to take an international language placement test that identifies proficiency and enables them to enroll in an adequately challenging course. For students with a heritage background in one or more languages, the College's International Languages and Cultures faculty schedule a one-on-one evaluation to determine whether a student's fluency meets SMCM's learning objectives. Informed by the identification of a consistent increase in the number of heritage Spanish speakers among our multilingual students, SMCM faculty have devised curricula that value spoken fluency while also providing context to hone written communication skills. These faculty include a recently hired visiting assistant professor specializing in American Spanish and Hispanophone culture, and new curricula are directly aligned with research demonstrating the importance of connecting heritage speakers with the ability to further improve their language skills in a classroom setting.

3. Supporting Students through Financial Aid

The level of debt accumulated during the course of a student's time at college can significantly impact whether they pursue fields of study they are more passionate about compared to fields associated with higher income. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent among students interested in the arts and humanities, students from historically underrepresented cohorts, as well as students interested in pursuing a "public interest" career (these include the education, government, and non-profit sectors, among others). Loan forgiveness programs at the state or federal level may counterbalance this influence through support for certain qualifying individuals, but SMCM maintains its commitment to a robust financial aid program in order to reduce the cost of a college education in the first place. Specifically, the College's financial aid program includes both merit and need-based scholarships which strive to meet as large a percentage of student need as possible – especially for first-generation or low-income students.

Assessing Impacts:

1. Supporting Students' Mental Health

With respect to wellness campaigns and programming, the College has identified several metrics to monitor and define "success." These include the regularity and frequency of programming, attendance, and participant satisfaction as measured by survey data (such as the Healthy Minds Survey or surveys developed in partnership with the JED Foundation and College staff). The qualitative data captured as part of these surveys is especially crucial to the assessment and continual improvement of programming, as it enables students to report their perspective of the most effective or useful programming. As outlined in the College's current strategic plan, we expect these initiatives to improve retention by 2% per year in order to return to pre-pandemic retention levels.

2. Supporting Multilingual Learners

The pedagogical approach described above was recently developed and implemented. As this is a new initiative, we are still designing tracking and assessment methods. We intend to assess the impact of this initiative on student persistence, and on students' likelihood of taking (and succeeding in) additional courses in the heritage language. As part of this initiative is also to help heritage language speakers find a "home" at SMCM, we will also assess their feelings of inclusion and belongingness through survey data.

3. Supporting Students through Financial Aid

All students receiving need-based aid are monitored for persistence and progress toward degree completion. Data is available publicly on the [Office of Institutional Research and Planning website](#). More specifically, students in the Landers Scholars program are tracked annually to monitor persistence and completion. Over the past four years, Landers Scholars have achieved a 94% first-to-second year retention rate (15 of 16 students returning), compared to 83% among the general student population, and 100% of the first cohort (4 students entering in Fall 2020) successfully graduated in four years. As the Baltimore City Scholars program continues to be fully implemented, those students will be similarly tracked. Finally, loan debt at graduation is monitored for all students; for the past several years, median loan debt of SMCM graduates has been lower than the statewide median (most recent numbers: $21,000 for SMCM graduates versus the statewide median of $23,250), and loan default rates are consistently substantially lower for SMCM graduates than the national average.

Towson University
Progress Toward the State's 2025 Completion Goal
September 2024

Towson University (TU) is pleased to report on our progress and initiatives that support Maryland's 55% Completion Goal. TU has conferred 64,701 bachelor's degrees since the baseline academic year, outpacing the interim benchmark of 62,687 degrees by 3.2% or 2,014 degrees. TU remains on pace to exceed the target of 67,567 bachelor's degrees by academic year 2025.

Cumulative Target and Actual Bachelor's Degrees Conferred: Towson University, AY 2010 through AY 2023
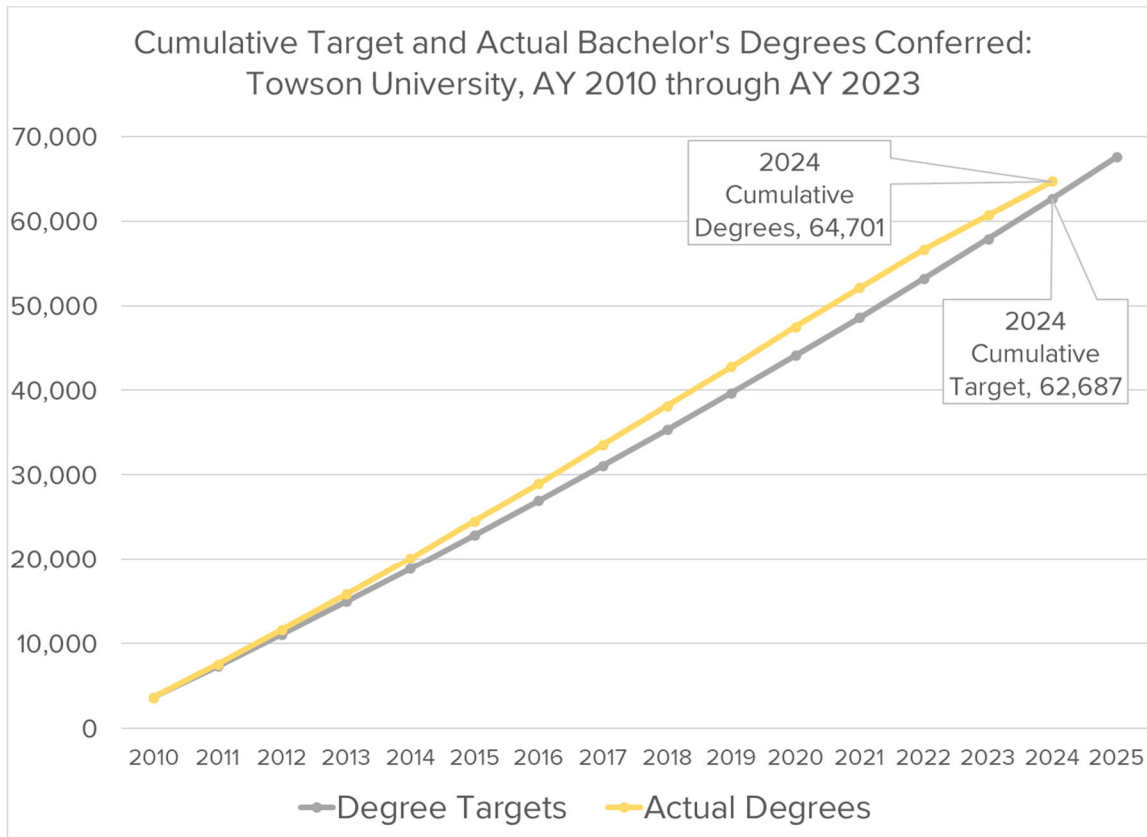
Furthermore, TU's degree recipients increasingly represent the state's diverse population. Since the baseline year, the share of TU degrees conferred to students from historically underserved racial and ethnic groups has more than tripled, increasing from 16% in AY 2010 to 50% in AY 2024. Correspondingly, the share of TU degrees conferred to Black or African American students has increased by 16 percentage points, from 10% in AY 2010 to 26% in AY 2024.

Additionally, TU's efforts to make education more accessible have resulted in more degrees conferred to students with significant financial need. During AY 2010, about 25% of TU's bachelor's recipients had received a federal Pell grant during their time at TU. During AY 2024, these students represented 42% of TU's graduating class.

Bachelor's Degrees Earned by Students from Under-Served Races and Ethnicities, Black or African American Students, and Pell Recipients
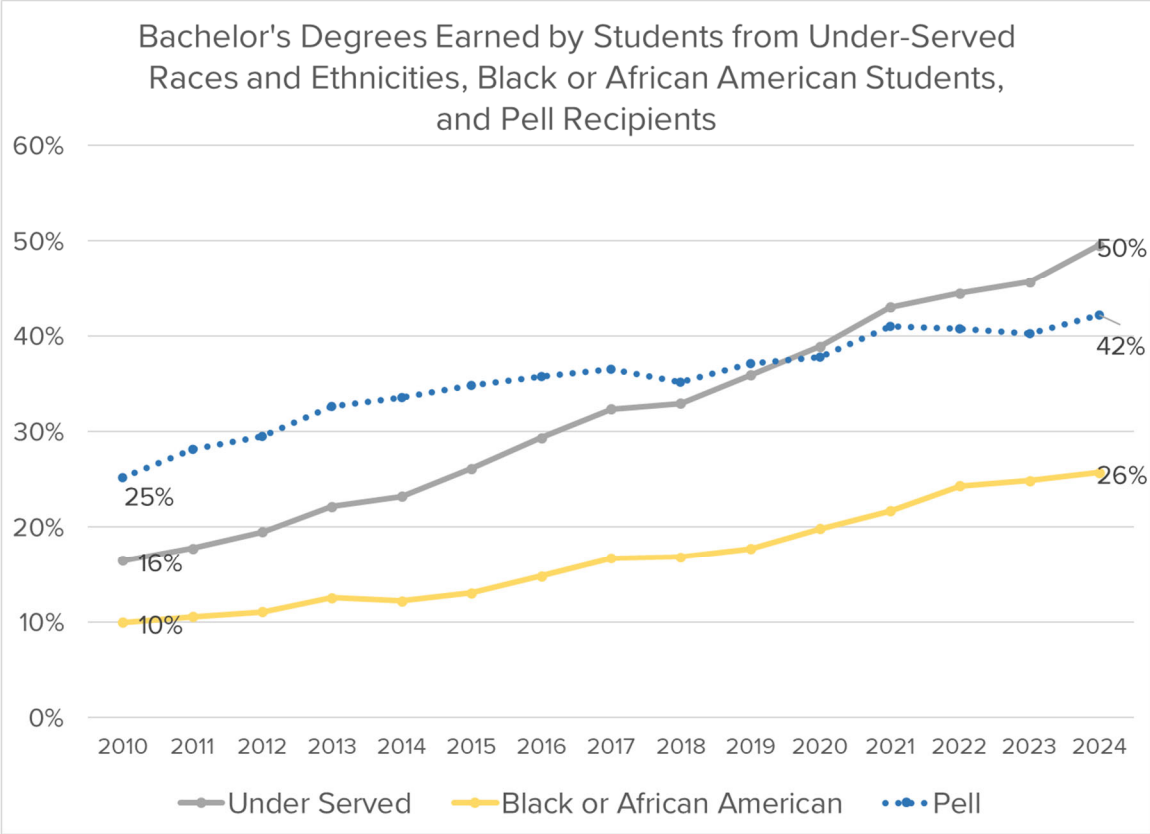
Institutional Responses to MHEC's Prompts

The Maryland Higher Education Commission asked institutions to respond to these three prompts, which focus on institutional efforts to support the Moore-Miller Administration 2024

State Plan's Goal "Setting up Maryland Students for Success."
Therefore, institutions should report on the following (respond to all three prompts):
1) Identify at least three initiatives the institution has in place or will be developing to support (a)student mental health, (b) multilingual learners and/or (c) students' access to financial aid, and,
2) Of those initiatives, describe how and what evidence-based practices inform the initiatives' efforts.
3) Describe how the institution is tracking the impact of those initiatives on retention and completion (and any other relevant outcomes) and a brief description of relevant analyses.

Examples of Efforts to Support Student Mental Health

The university **Counseling Center** (TUCC) provides students with private, confidential same-day appointments for immediate assistance and guidance on accessing both internal and campus-wide resources for continued support. Additionally, TUCC also offers peer support, support and therapy groups, ongoing individual counseling, referral services, and after-hours crisis assistance.

Best practices in counseling center work come from a variety of national resources including American Psychological Association, International Accreditation of Counseling Services, American College Health Association, AUCCCD, Association for the Coordination of Counseling Center Clinical Services, The Association for University and College Counseling Center Outreach, and JED Foundation.

The Division of Student Affairs collects annual reports from the Counseling Center to track interactions with students and impact of mental health services at an aggregate level. The Counseling Center internally tracks all interactions with students and includes confidential information such as session notes. In Fall 2023, 63% of students reported experiencing academic distress at entry to TUCC. Of those who considered withdrawing, 68% reported that TUCC experiences helped "at least a moderate amount" in the decision to stay and 40% reported that TUCC experiences helped "a lot or a great deal" in the decision to stay.

In 2023-2024 academic year, **Psychiatry Services** were transferred from the Counseling Center to the Health Center to create a collaborative care model integrated within primary care. The psychiatry team works collaboratively with TUCC, the Health Center primary care team and includes psychiatry consultants, a psychiatric nurse practitioner, and a Behavioral Health Care Manager.

The Collaborative Care Model is an evidence-based model of integrating mental health within primary care and has been shown in randomized controlled trials to improve access to care and cost-effectiveness. Studies have also shown improved patient outcomes and improved patient and provider satisfaction. This model is supported by the American Psychiatric Association and the National Institutes of Health.

Members of TU's campus community made 772 visits for psychiatric services in 2023-2024.

Student Outreach and Support (SOS) often serves as the first line of intervention for students in mental health distress. They provide coordination of care, on- and off-campus referrals and interventions, and assist students in crisis during and after an experience or life event.
SOS aligns practices with national standards for non-clinical case management from Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, Higher Education Case Managers Association, and National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment.

In 2023-2024 academic year, SOS received 3,409 forms reporting concern about 2,401 unique students, an increase of 55% from the previous year's reports and an increase of 40% for the number of unique students. SOS connected directly with 79% of students and sent resources to try to connect with the remaining 21% of students. SOS held meetings with 1,470 students. SOS also tracks their proactive efforts on recognizing students in distress and had 82 events with over 5,200 students, faculty, and staff in the past year.

Example of Efforts to Support Multilingual Learners
TU's College of Health Professions (CHP) is partnering with the Division of Enrollment

Management to create stronger pipelines for Hispanic Latino/Latina Marylanders to gain the education and training needed to become healthcare providers, patient caregivers, and healthcare administrators through the Salud Scholar's Program. A comprehensive recruitment effort focuses on engaging high-achieving Hispanic/Latinx students in Maryland. Initiatives include:

- Targeting 30 high schools with high Hispanic/Latinx populations and participating in Hispanic-serving college fairs.
- Offering monthly information sessions and workshops in Spanish, covering topics like admissions, essay writing, applications, and financial aid.
- Partnering with 5-10 community-based organizations serving Hispanic/Latinx communities to provide resources, presentations, and campus visits.
- Developing Spanish-language marketing materials, a recruitment website, and personalized outreach (email, text, calls) for prospective students.
- Hosting summer programs and yield receptions for admitted students to enhance their connection to TU.

Maryland faces an urgent need to increase Hispanic/Latinx representation in healthcare. While 18.5% of Maryland's high school students identify as Hispanic/Latinx, only 29% go on to college, and just 9.4% of healthcare practitioners identify as Hispanic/Latinx. This underrepresentation highlights the need to build robust educational pipelines for Hispanic/Latinx students in healthcare professions.

Towson University (TU) is committed to supporting multilingual learners through initiatives like the **Salud Scholars** program, which provides mentorship, academic guidance, and professional development to Hispanic/Latinx students pursuing careers in healthcare. This program ensures students receive language and cultural support, fostering their academic and professional success in a healthcare environment that increasingly requires bilingual professionals.

All efforts, including Salud Scholars and the Hispanic & Latinx Recruitment Plan, will be continually assessed to ensure their effectiveness. Data on student enrollment, retention, and success will be collected to evaluate program impact, guide adjustments, and inform future recruitment and support strategies.

Example of Efforts to Support Students' Access to Financial Aid
TU's strategic plan, *TU 2020-2030 Strategic Plan: Leadership for the Public Good*, includes the goals to **educate** and **include**. At the intersection of these goals, sit our efforts to enroll and support students with high levels of financial need. Correspondingly, we dedicate over 60% of our undergraduate institutional aid budget toward need-based grants for FAFSA applicants with high financial need. For 2023-2024, we paid more than $20.4 million in need-based grants and over $12.3 million in non-need-based scholarships, and some of those scholarships went to students who also had high financial need. Our award criteria for these awards are based on previous analysis of how to direct these grant fund to students with higher remaining financial need based on their cost of attendance and their other aid.

Because students do not always understand their need and the available resources, we engage in numerous campaigns to encourage students to complete their FAFSAs so that they can receive all of the available financial resources that can support their TU education. In addition to promoting this information on our website, we also conduct calling and emailing campaigns to connect with students who may be eligible to receive financial support.

Our work in this area builds upon the volumes of empirical literature which show that students with high financial need benefit from increased financial support. In addition to being more likely to maintain their enrollment and graduate, evidence shows that they have lower levels of financial stress, lower debt, and improved academic performance.

We assess this work in numerous ways that measure students' access, academic performance, retention, and completion. These assessments include our strategic plan targets, state reports on the strategic use of financial aid, state and federal reports on the outcomes of students who receive financial aid, and internal reports and dashboards.

University of Baltimore

Fall 2024 Update to the Maryland Higher Education Commission Best
Practices and Annual Progress Toward the 55% Completion Goal
September 20, 2024

Guided by our strategic plan and aligned with university and college retention and student success plans, the University of Baltimore (UBalt) continues to make strides in student success and degree completion. We carefully track retention, graduation, attrition, and student success rates. We use evidence to guide our initiatives and direct and indirect measures to chart our progress. Over the past several years, UBalt has implemented many new initiatives while enhancing others in order to strengthen our focus on student success, student experience, and degree completion. Presented below are UBalt's responses to the following three prompts:

1) Identify at least three initiatives the institution has in place or will be developing to support (a) student mental health, (b) multilingual learners and/or (c) students' access to financial aid, and,
2) Of those initiatives, describe how and what evidence-based practices inform the initiatives' efforts.
3) Describe how the institution is tracking the impact of those initiatives on retention and completion (and any other relevant outcomes) and a brief description of relevant analyses.

<u>Student Mental Health:</u>

- **Enhanced Mental Health and Wellness Resources:** Our Student Assistance Program (SAP) is designed to provide students with an easily accessible, safe and confidential means to assist with issues that may interfere with school, work or family responsibilities 24/7 365 days a year. UBalt's Clinical Case Manager provides on-campus threat monitoring, assessment and response when needed and serves as the on-campus triage resource. Due to an increase in referrals and usage, in spring of 2023 the University approved an additional full-time Case Manager for Student Health position who focuses on supporting case management services as well as developing a more robust set of health-related programming and initiatives. Lastly, additional focus has been placed on ensuring community members are aware of the mental health resources including an embedded link in the campus LMS, visible signage at all major entry points on campus and making the SAP promotional image the background on all campus computers. End of semester usage rates; SAP satisfaction surveys; and real-time student feedback are used to assess current services and determine future ones.

- **Enhanced Implementation of Mental Health First Aid**: The Office of Student Support continues to partner with the Office of Human Resources and the Center for Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Technology to offer up to 60 staff and faculty the opportunity to complete this annual training. Student-focused training continues to be offered as well. Mental Health First Aid has been identified as a national best practice and was implemented at UBalt due to the demonstrated need to provide professional development opportunities to as many faculty, staff, and students as possible. Attendance records and post-experience assessments continue to be evaluated.

- **Enhanced Messaging Regarding the Basic Needs Virtual Resource Center:** The focus of the Basic Needs Virtual Resource Center is to provide students a one-stop virtual support hub for basic and emergency needs. Important resources such as the Campus Pantry, Career Closet, Student Emergency Assistance Fund, and the Student Assistance Program are featured. Additionally, a Basic Needs Advisory Council has been established to ensure greater communication and research sharing amongst the individual offices that play a role in supporting students' basic needs. Amongst the topics currently being discussed by this group are cross training and a more streamlined intake process to

better connect students with the web of resources available to them.

- **Continued Integration Between the UBalt CARE Team and Early Alert:** The CARE Team is UBalt's cross-divisional team that focuses on students of concern. The important and sensitive work of this group has been aligned to the University's Early Alert system which is now part of all undergraduate courses. This integration allows for a more holistic approach to working with students who find themselves in difficult personal and academic situations. This collaboration has continued with the leadership of the two areas meeting periodically throughout the semester to discuss if there were students who would benefit from additional outreach and collaborating on trainings for the campus community about referrals. Continuous assessment of case counts and types to meet the needs of our community.

- **Development of Trauma Informed Training**: Based on UBalt student feedback, data from Compass Case Management, the Student Assistant Program as well as a city-wide focus on trauma's impact in Baltimore, the Office of Student Support has developed trainings for the campus community focused on understanding and identifying trauma. The sessions included an introduction to key concepts as well as case studies that allow participants to strategize and consider the wide-ranging impacts of trauma and how to provide support and structure that is trauma informed. Attendance/usage rates and post-training assessments will be tracked.

- **Implementation of the You@College Portal**: Based upon ongoing feedback and data reflecting that online resources provided as a part of the Student Assistance Program did not feel entirely focused on a college student perspective, a new online platform is being implemented as part of the Student Assistance Program. You@College aims to provide a comprehensive mental health platform that can provide support aimed to support wellbeing, retention and student success as well as degree completion.

- **Bee Well Initiative:** Following review of data from Compass Case Management as well as the Student Assistance Program, the Bee Well Initiative was launched as part of an AmeriCorps Vista Project. The initiative aims to help provide greater opportunities for education and support around wellness including a focus on mental health and physical wellness. Offerings have included the implementation and training of Peer Health Educators, hosting student organizations focused on student mental health as well as collaborative events including vaccine clinics, Narcan training, recent legal changes around cannabis usage and a host of other wellness focused programing and education. Attendance/usage rates and post-training assessments will be tracked.

- **Joined the Maryland Collaborative**: Following several years of research and identifying that the University did not have sufficient data or information about its student drug and alcohol usage, the decision was made to join the Maryland Collaborative. The Maryland Collaborative seeks to reduce excessive college drinking and resulting social and economic costs by raising awareness of college student drinking as a statewide public health problem and by helping college communities implement effective policies and practices to reduce the problem. The University community is excited to learn more about these practices and to better be able to serve and address the challenges of addiction on college campuses including its overlap with mental health challenges. The Collaborative administers yearly surveys and the first one UBalt will potentially be part of is next calendar year.

Multilingual Learners:

- The University offers its services and supports to all students regardless of primary language or background. Specific services offer options for students to choose their preferred language such as the Student Assistance Program. Usage/attendance rates and post-experience assessments will be tracked.

- The Office of Diversity and International Services (DIS) routinely offers programing that highlights the experiences of our multilingual learners. Such programming includes our Holidays Around the World, International Women's Day, and Hispanic Heritage Month. Programs and events throughout the year not only highlight our students' experiences but also provide opportunities for sharing and reflection. Usage/attendance rates and post-experience assessments will be tracked.

- Through DIS programming, we equip our students with the holistic and global leadership skills they need to create equitable cultural and social spaces. Such spaces include: Latina/o/e/X student community space, international student community space, and the Asian American and Pacific Islander student community forum. Usage/attendance rates and post-experience assessments will be tracked.

Students' Access to Financial Aid:

- **Launched Blackbaud Award Management System**: UBalt's Office of Financial Aid (OFA) launched the online Blackbaud Award Management system to improve access to UB Foundation Scholarships, to streamline the awarding process, and to increase the number of recipients. The historical awarding data showed the need for increased awareness of the availability of funds and the need for an easy application process. The Assistant Director of Scholarships analyzes UBalt Foundation Scholarships that allows OFA leadership to monitor the scholarship awarding process and adjust as appropriate.

- **Revamped Financial Aid Workshops:** The Office of Financial Aid revamped financial aid workshops for prospective students to provide custom topics throughout the financial aid cycle to improve knowledge of financial aid options and processes. The previous workshops provided prospective students with traditional financial aid information. The questions asked during these workshops helped the financial aid team to develop new topics for improved workshop sessions. OFA monitors the attendance of financial aid workshops to gauge students' interest in financial aid topics. The monitoring of received tickets in the TeamDynamix system and feedback from students provides the financial aid team with recommendations for future workshop topics.

- **Planned Financial Aid Awareness Week:** OFA planned a Financial Aid Awareness Week for the 2024-2025 year to help students navigate the new FAFSA process and learn about financial aid options. The new FAFSA application was rolled out for 2024-2025 year. Based on our majority Pell grant eligible and first-generation student population, the University determined there was a strong need for more financial aid education outside of general information sessions and guidelines for completing the FAFSA. The Office of Financial Aid anticipates this new initiative will decrease student balance holds and result in better understanding of an overall view of financial aid. The financial aid team will monitor the attendance during the sessions of the awareness week and send a survey to participants. Monitoring of re-enrollment and FAFSA submissions will be tracked.

- **Developed New Need-Based Aid Strategies:** The Office of Financial Aid developed a new need-based aid strategy to support recruitment and retention for undergraduate students. The current trends in higher education helped with the development of new strategies. The detailed analysis of the new awarding strategy will be conducted post-census.

- **Formed the Financial Empowerment Workgroup:** The Student Success Council formed a Financial

Empowerment Workgroup that has been charged with defining what financial empowerment is at the University of Baltimore given our various constituency groups. This group is actively working to identify and propose financial literacy/empowerment best practices for implementation at UBalt. One-time funding via our larger PBI grant will be used to enhance this much-needed function at UBalt. Usage of software and supports along with post-experience assessments plan to be evaluated.

- **Expanded Use of Open Educational Resources (OER):** In 2023, The University received a $10,000 Hewlett Foundation grant through The Driving OER Sustainability for Student Success (DOERS3) Collaborative that focuses on supporting student success by promoting free, and customizable OER. The grant focuses on implementing OER to achieve equity and student success. Additionally, the university continues to utilize funds provided by the Predominately Black Institution (PBI) grant to decrease textbook costs for students by increasing the number of courses with free or low-cost text options. In 2024, UBalt hired a new Associate Director for Digital Initiatives and Resources to provide support and oversight of OER initiatives. As Associate Director, the position will also seek input from the Student Government Association (SGA) to improve OER delivery and educate the student population on the definition of OER. In addition to meeting with the UBalt SGA, the associate director, along with an OER subgroup, will continue to focus on engaging faculty in creating OER texts and posting open-sourced text on reserve at no cost or low cost (low cost is considered any text under $40.00). These efforts compliment the OFA initiatives to lower the overall cost of attendance.

Sept. 20, 2024

Re: 2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal

Background about the University of Maryland, Baltimore
Founded in 1807, the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) is a thriving academic center comprised of a 65-acre research and technology complex that encompasses 57 buildings in West Baltimore near the Inner Harbor. It is the founding institution of the University System of Maryland and brings 214 years of historic achievement to its mission of improving the human condition. UMB remains Maryland's only public academic health, human services, and law center and enrolls over 6,000 students each year throughout their six nationally ranked professional schools and an interdisciplinary graduate school. Combined, these schools offer 97 doctoral, master's, baccalaureate, and certificate programs and confer most of the professional practice doctoral degrees awarded in Maryland.

UMB's Annual Progress Toward 55% Completion Goal
UMB is comprised of 85% graduate and professional students with the remaining undergraduate students including nursing, dental hygiene, and medical and research technology. Over the last ten years, UMB averages a 91.1% graduation rate (150%) for undergraduate students and between 84.1% to 98% depending on discipline for professional and graduate students. To report on MHEC's enrollment targets of 2% growth, in FY24 UMB enrolled 6,667 students exceeding MHEC's goal of 6,110 students.

Guided by our strategic plan and aligned with university retention and student success plans, UMB is engaged in a number of strategic projects that are aimed at enhancing student success and moving the university closer to the State's degree completion goal. The universities' proactive approach to adapting and refining these initiatives demonstrates its commitment to advancing student success and degree completion and to support (a) student mental health, (b) multilingual learners and/or (c) students' access to financial aid.

1. **Student Mental Health**
   Description: The University of Maryland, Baltimore Student Counseling Center (SCC) has implemented several initiatives to improve wraparound mental health services to support students and their success. Incoming and returning students receive an email at the beginning of the academic year describing SCC services and how to access these resources. The informational email is a best practice recommendation from the Education Advisory Board (EAB) Mental Health Collective. The SCC provides both in-person and telehealth counseling and psychiatry services to students (must be located in the state of Maryland to receive telehealth). The expansion of services to include telehealth appointments during the COVID-19 pandemic increased utilization of SCC services for students who previously had barriers to attending in-person services. Approximately 60% of SCC appointments are provided via telehealth. During the 2023-2024 academic year, the no-show rate for appointments was 3.1%, lower than the no-show rate before telehealth services were offered (2018-2019, no show rate was 5.1%).

   If students need mental health treatment outside the SCC's Scope of Services, the SCC has Referral Assistance Services dedicated to contacting students to ensure they are connected to care and identifying community providers. Additionally, the SCC contracts with a third-party vendor, Protocall, to provide crisis phone support services outside of SCC business hours. This service provides students with rapid access to trained crisis counselors on evenings, weekends, and

holidays. A report from each call is provided to the SCC to follow up with students as needed. To improve support for student mental health in the UMB community, the SCC started offering Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training in Spring 2024. As of August 2024, 22 participants were trained and 49 UMB faculty, staff, and students are registered for upcoming trainings through December 2024. Mental Health First Aid training has been shown to increase knowledge about mental health, reduce stigma around mental health symptoms, and improve confidence in providing MHFA (Healthy Minds Network, 2013).

- *How and what evidence-based practices inform the initiatives' efforts:* Telehealth has been shown to increase access to mental health treatment for medical and health professional students (Nobleza, Hagenbaugh, Blue, Stepchin, Vergare, & Pohl, 2019). Research supports multimodal approaches including gatekeeper training, such as MHFA, and after-hours crisis services as increasing help-seeking behaviors among young adults and students' likelihood of completing college (The Jed Foundation, The Healthy Minds Network Research Brief, 2013). Additionally, services to help students connect with community mental health treatment have been shown to improve student retention (Investing in Student Mental Health, the American Council on Education, 2019).

- *How the institution is tracking the impact of those initiatives on retention and completion (and any other relevant outcomes) and a brief description of relevant analyses*: The SCC collects annual data about students' experiences with SCC services. For the 2023-2024 academic year, 75% of respondents reported that "My academic performance would have suffered more if I had not received services through the SCC." For the 2022-2023 academic year, 86% of respondents agreed with this statement. Additionally, the Student Counseling Center utilizes a measure of students' symptoms (Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms – CCAPS) including academic distress, which has been shown to negatively correlate with retention. During the 2023-2024 year, 88% of counseling center clients reported reduced academic distress after receiving services at the SCC. Due to confidentiality laws and International Association of Counseling Services (IACS) standards, mental health records of students are separate from students' academic records, so the Student Counseling Center is unable to track students who take a LOA, withdraw from, or return to UMB.

2. **Multilingual Learners**
   Description: UMB has the following initiatives in place for multilingual learner student success including:
   a. The UMB Writing Center and the School of Nursing Student Success Center at Shady Grove both have staff members with expertise in working with multilingual learners and can tailor their individual consultations with students to address specific needs that are common with multilingual learners.
   b. The School of Social Work has purchased Grammarly-Premium for their PhD students, many of whom are multilingual learners. This is to provide support to students given that these students take courses that require considerable amounts of writing and must complete dissertations.
   c. The UMB Writing Center has developed a comprehensive curriculum for writing consultants that includes content on evidence-based practices for working with multilingual writers.

- *How and what evidence-based practices inform the initiatives' efforts:*

The UMB Writing Center's required professional development for peer writing consultants (PWCs) is based on guidelines issued by the Conference of College Composition & Communication, the world's largest professional organization for researching and teaching composition, from writing to new media.

In addition, the UMB Writing Center piloted the implementation of an online English language learning platform called Voxy with a cohort of multilingual learners in 2018. Voxy offers individually customized lessons using authentic (i.e., not written for English language learners) texts based on their proficiency, ongoing assessment of learner needs, and career interests. For example, Voxy offers lessons with nursing-specific vocabulary, or can create tailored lessons for students to learn discipline-specific forms of English (e.g., microbiology, economics, etc.)

Faria et al (2019) found that students that had access to Voxy in addition to English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses had a statistically significant increase in their English language proficiency compared to a cohort of multilingual students that enrolled in an EAP course alone. While UMB's cohort is much smaller than the sample in this study, we likewise saw increases in English language proficiency for users that engaged with the platform the number of hours recommended by Voxy.

How the institution is tracking the impact of those initiatives on retention and completion (and any other relevant outcomes) and a brief description of relevant analyses: A new English language learner/multilingual learner workgroup has been formed due to feedback from partners within multiple schools. Support for multilingual learners was also a priority area identified during a Middle States Accreditation town hall meeting. The workgroup includes faculty and staff representatives from the UMB Office of International Services, the UMB Writing Center, and the Schools of Nursing, Social Work and Medicine. The goal of the workgroup taskforce is to review and identify gaps in existing data regarding multilingual learners on the campus, survey students and faculty regarding services for multilingual learners and produce a report with recommendations about how to advance supports for multilingual learners on the campus. At present, there are limited analyses to track retention and completion for multilingual students including the impact of single student success interventions designed for a small cohort of multilingual students. Members of the workgroup will also review academic literature to align recommendations with evidence-based practices. The group aims to produce the report by February 2025 to request funding for new initiatives related to this issue for the upcoming fiscal year. The report will be submitted to UMB Student Affairs and the Office of the Provost.

3. **FAFSA Outreach Activities**
   Description: The University Student Financial Aid office works with all UMB schools and programs to raise awareness of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The office provides updates on the availability of the form and the types of aid students may be eligible to receive upon completing it. The team participates in both in-person and virtual sessions during the fall and spring semesters and takes part in the campus Open House, which gives prospective students access to information about all UMB programs.

   During Financial Aid Awareness Month, the team sets up tables in the SMC Campus Center to offer information on financial aid and encourage students to complete the FAFSA. Additional outreach is provided to students in the School of Nursing BSN program and the School of Dentistry BS-Dental Hygiene program, as these are eligible for the federal Pell Grant and

potentially the federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG), a campus-based program.

These outreach efforts and individual interactions with current and prospective students help ensure that students receive their financial aid offers in a timely manner.

- *How and what evidence-based practices inform the initiatives' efforts:* UMB has a goal to decrease student loan borrowing. With our undergraduate population, we can achieve this goal by encouraging our undergraduate degree completion students who are Pell grant eligible to complete the FAFSA. As we increase our federal Pell grant recipients, we also increase the probability of receiving an increase in our federal share of the Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) Funds. Pell grant recipients are eligible to receive up to $4,000 in the FSEOG funds which provides in some cases a total grant of $11,000 in federal funds.

- *How the institution is tracking the impact of those initiatives on retention and completion (and any other relevant outcomes) and a brief description of relevant analyses:* UMB FINAID has not conducted analyses on student retention, however, we do have data on how the initiative has increased of FSEOG funding:

Award Year	FSEOG Funding Amount	Federal Pell Recipient	Federal Pell Awarded
2021-2022	$ 52,696	314	$ 1,180,846.30
2022-2023	$ 53,448	297	$ 1,270,214.19
2023-2024	$ 63,715	366	$ 1,610,804.67

References

American Council on Education. (2019). *Investing in student mental health: Opportunities and benefits for college leadership*. https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Investing-in-Student-Mental-Health.pdf

Faria, A.-M., Bergey, R., Simpson Baird, A. & Lishinski, A. (2019). *Using Technology to Support English Language Learners in Higher Education.* Washington, D.C. American Institutes for Research, https://www.air.org/resource/report/using-technology-support-english-language-learners-higher-education-study-voxys.

Nobleza, D., Hagenbaugh, J., Blue, S., Stepchin, A., Vergare, M., & Pohl, C. A. (2019). The use of telehealth by medical and other health professional students at a college counseling center. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy, 33*(4), 275–289. https://doi.org/10.1080/87568225.2018.1491362

The Jed Foundation. (n.d.). *The Healthy Minds Network Research Brief.* https://jedfoundation.org/mental-health-services/

UMBC Response to JCR 55% Completion Goal Report
September 2024

UMBC is pleased to share initiatives—in place or about to be launched—to support students' access to financial aid and care for their mental health that, in turn, impacts persistence to a bachelor's degree. Included is a description of evidence-based practices informing the initiatives and related analysis.

Students' Access to Financial Aid

For context, in FY 2023, UMBC increased its overall institutional aid (including merit and need) by $2.4 M (33.8%) over FY 2022. $2.3M of that increase was allocated to Maryland residents, representing a 37% increase in aid to Maryland students, while only $109K was allocated to out-of-state students, representing an 11.9 % increase in need-based aid allocation to these students.

During this time, enrollment of new first-time, first-year (FTFY) Maryland students increased from 1,854 in Fall 2021 to 1,933 in Fall 2022, representing a 4.3% increase. Retention rates of FTFY in-state residential students exceed those of non-residential students (fall 2022 cohort: In-state = 88% v. Out-of-state = 82%).

UMBC awards just under $1M annually in financial aid to transfer students. In FY 2023, UMBC increased its institutional aid (including need and merit) to support community college transfer students by $38,642 (from $956,127 FY22 to $994,369 FY23) representing a 4.0% increase.

Most of the transfer merit awards are benefits of pathway programs such as the Transfer Student Alliance (TSA) Partnership and the Degrees to Succeed Pathway designed to incentivize the associate's degree and to provide community college students the opportunity to engage with the UMBC community prior to transfer through joint programming and advising—all aimed at increasing student success upon transfer.

USM Financial Aid Dashboard - Institutional Aid - Aid Awarded by Aid Type – UMBC
https://www.usmd.edu/IRIS/Dashboard/Strategic-Use-of-Inst-Aid/?view=dashboard-aid-awarded-and-counts

New initiatives are underway to enhance communication between financial aid counselors and all students as well as develop UMBC's organizational intelligence regarding the critical linkages among student success, finances, and mental health to inform the planning, implementation, and deployment of initiatives.

Initiative: Display of Students' Financial Aid Counselors in their *my*UMBC Profile

Starting June 2024, students have their assigned financial aid counselor's name and contact information prominently displayed on their *my*UMBC "Financial Aid" profile card along with their academic advisor and academic advocate. Adding the financial aid counselor to the student's "care team" ensures students: 1) know who their assigned financial aid counselor is and can easily contact them with questions or for assistance and 2) develop a relationship with their assigned financial aid counselor so that the counselor can better understand their needs and support them. Within a few short months, 2,547 undergraduate students have clicked on their financial aid profile (4,781 clicks). And the Office of Financial Aid realized a 128 percentage-point increase in the number of direct contacts with counselors. The inspiration to add a financial aid profile to students' *my*UMBC profile came from our Academic Success Center's Academic Advocacy Team that initiated adding the academic advisor and academic advocate to the *my*UMBC profile

over two years ago. In many ways, we have cultivated a virtual "one-stop shop" so that students have key people and offices at their fingertips.

<u>Initiative</u>: Launch of the Student Financial Wellness Survey

In collaboration with TRELLIS, UMBC will launch its first annual Student Financial Wellness Survey (SFWS) to all undergraduate and graduate students this fall 2024. The survey will provide useful insight regarding the critical linkages among student success, finances and mental health. Leading institutions are using SFWS results to drive institutional change, strengthen student enrollment efforts, and improve student satisfaction. The SFWS allows schools to benchmark key student financial wellness indicators with peer institutions, helping UMBC identify programmatic gaps and highlight institutional strengths. The SFWS informs efforts such as financial education programming, emergency aid administration, and resource referrals to public assistance programs, food pantries, and student wellness officials.

Mental Health Initiatives and Supports

The Division of Student Affairs' work exemplifies its mission in fostering a supportive, inclusive, and engaged campus community where every student can achieve their full potential. *Care and well-being* are one of the Division's six commitments.

The Retriever Integrated Health (RIH) department is central to supporting the care and well-being of students. RIH brings together university health services and the counseling center offices to work in a collaborative, holistic approach to support student well-being and success. RIH is an interdisciplinary team that includes administrative staff members and a variety of healthcare professionals, representing disciplines of acupuncture, dietetics, health education, massage, nursing, medicine, psychiatry, psychology, counseling, and social work.

Included in the portfolio of our Dean of Students is *Retriever Care,* a small, interdisciplinary consultation group that assists faculty, staff, and students with situations and behaviors that are concerning, disruptive, threatening, and/or endangering to self or others. Reports and consultations with the team are private while keeping the dignity of the person and behaviors discussed central to the team's assessment process. Interventions provide support and assistance while being mindful of the safety and security of the campus community. The team provides information, recommendations, and referrals to those dealing with concerning behavior.

<u>Initiative</u>: RIH implemented new marketing strategies resulting in more than doubled student enrollment in *Togetherall*.

Togetherall is a free, online peer-to-peer community support platform, offering a safe and anonymous place to support undergraduate and graduate student mental health. Monitored by licensed clinicians, students engage in conversations and learn strategies to manage mental health. Since its rollout in in spring 2011, RIH increased the amount of marketing strategies leading to a greater number of students engaging with the platform (see Table 1.).

Initiative: RIH continues to do more outreach to increase student participation in group therapy by expanding to various affinity groups. Spring 2024 group therapy offerings included:

- *Reflecting Retrievers: Undergraduate Student Process Group* designed for undergraduate students to find a sense of connection with others;
- *Graduate Student Support Group* specifically addressing the loneliness and anxiety faced in graduate and Ph.D. programs;
- *Support Group for International Students* focused on acculturation, homesickness, and academic challenges;
- *Transitions: A Support Group for Graduating Students* designed for students preparing to graduate from UMBC and the anxiety, sadness, and joy that experience fosters;
- *Skills Training in the Application of Interpersonal Regulation (STAIR)* a group that helps persons who struggle with relationship dynamics and emotion regulation;
- *Support Group for Men* designed to provide a safe space for students to discuss the unique challenges of navigating the norms and expectations of being perceived as male;
- *Dungeons and Dragons Therapy Group* designed specifically for queer, questioning, or allied college students blending therapeutic engagement and imaginative role play to create a place for self-exploration and community building; and
- *RA Support Group* designed for Residence Life RAs on a drop-in basis where RAs can get support on handling difficult student situations on their floor from a licensed mental health professional and other RAs.

Initiative: RIH provided prompt mental health care with a positive impact.

The department keeps track of the number of unique clients and total appointments of those seeking individual counseling, group counseling, and psychiatry services on an annual basis to understand who is using RIH counseling services and where more outreach can occur (see Table 2.). Additionally, RIH tracks demographic characteristics of clients including gender identity, academic level, ethnicity, international versus domestic students, and academic program. During FY24, the department had 3,680 appointments for individual counseling therapy sessions, 340 psychiatry service appointments, and 113 students taking part in counseling group therapy sessions.

On average, during FY24, students waited just four days for mental health care (including weekends), and there was no waitlist for services (same day crisis visits were always available during regular business hours). This was possible through their new implementation of *Protocall*, an after-hours crisis counseling line, for students. Students calling RIH after hours have the option to talk the after-hours crisis line staffed by *Protocall*, the nurse line staffed by *Fonemed*, or to leave a voicemail message.

In FY24, UMBC students receiving treatment showed greater improvement than the national average across all subscales according to the Center for Collegiate Mental Health's Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms (CCAPS) Instrument National Comparison (see Figure 1.).

Initiative: RIH and the Division of Student Affairs provided non-clinical psychoeducation training and workshops for members of the campus community.

In 2023-2024, RIH hosted 47 workshops for the UMBC community, including the launch of *Question, Persuade, Refer* (QPR). QPR is an option for students, faculty, and staff members to learn how to respond to students in distress. There were 10 QPR sessions with 135 participants.

Mental Health First Aid, another evidence-based training, is a 1-day skills-based training course designed to teach participants how to recognize signs of a mental health or substance use disorders, identify community resources, and link people in crisis to the proper resources. Program evidence shows that participants feel more comfortable managing a crisis and that the training builds mental health literacy—helping the UMBC community identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health challenges.

Initiative: *Retriever Care* staff provided quick and consistent consultation and intervention support.

Retriever Care keeps comprehensive data on the types of cases and concerns brought forward. In addition to the types of concern, Retriever Care tracks information on the amount and types of cases per month, as well as demographic information including concerns by age, race, ethnicity, gender, and class standing.

Initiative: Retriever Essentials

The foundational elements of what is, now, Retriever Essentials began in 2016. It has developed into a multifaceted approach to address food and health essentials insecurity. Food insecurity not only affects students' ability to afford a college education, but also their health and well-being—both crucial to students' persistence to a bachelor's degree. Currently, there are five programs that constituting this broader initiative: (1) Essential Space (a free store with perishable/non-perishable food, toiletries and baby items), (2) Free Corner Stores (placed across campus providing students an easy and discrete way to access pre-packed food bags), (3) Save-A-Swipe (allows students to donate meals from their meal plan to other students; and (4) Free Food Pop-up Markets (UMBC community members can stock up on dry goods and recovered produce). During the winter, there is a Winter Coat Closet where winter clothes are available from community donations. Finally, Retriever Essentials connects students to other resources including: (1) the 2-1-1- Maryland United Way Helpline (community resources and referrals on a variety of health and human service issues), (2) the Maryland Health Connections (Maryland's official health insurance market), (3) the WIC Program (it provides supplemental foods, nutrition education and referrals to health care, at no cost, to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are determined to be at nutritional risk), and (4) the Maryland Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Waiver (its goals it to provide financial assistance to unaccompanied homeless youth).

Programs, metrics, and partners can be accessed at the latest published annual report https://retrieveressentials.umbc.edu/annual-report/

Finally, an essential community partner regarding the care of the whole student is the **Office of Student Disability Services (SDS)**. Often, students who seek accommodations from SDS have mental health diagnoses or mental health challenges impacting their ability to fully actualize their academic success. SDS works closely with the Academic Success Center; Student Affairs' offices and services that support student health, well-being, and community connection; and the Office of Equity and Civil Rights and Title IX support to triage cases to provide a holistic approach to student care and success.

Appendix A: Tables and Figures

Table 1. *Togetherall* Registrations (FY21 – FY24)

	4/21-6/21	7/21-6/22	7/22-6/23	7/23-6/24
Togetherall Registrations	44	88	100	266
# of posts/ comments by UMBC students	38	41	151	216
# of comments received by UMBC students	40	52	138	138
Self-assessments completed	17	67	36	85
Self-help tools, articles, courses used	17	47	25	33

Table 2. Retriever Integrated Health: Top 10 Concerns (FY24)

Category	# of Concerns	# of Unique Clients
Stress	133	102
Relationship issue	105	72
Anxiety and fear (general)	98	76
Anxiety about social functioning	75	56
Academic problem	71	52
Family issues	57	42
Depression	55	35
Anxiety about performance (e.g., test/speech)	48	37
Dyssomnia (sleep problems)	48	28
Paying attention/focusing	36	23

Table 3. Retriever Care: Types of Cases and Concerns (FY20 – FY24)

Concern Type	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Academic Problems	30	29	24	51	41
Assault	1	1	9	9	4
Code Violation	0	0	0	0	0
Controlling/Abusive Relationship	1	1	2	18	34
Disruptive Person/Aggressive Outbursts	16	2	16	15	9
Distressed/ Emotional/ Social Adjustment	65	42	83	102	121
Fascination/ Possession of Weapons	0	1	0	1	0
Harassment/ Intimidation/ Bullying	6	6	13	16	10
Hazing/ Organizational	0	0	0	0	0
Homicidal Ideation	0	0	0	0	1
Legal Matter	2	0	2	10	6
Other	18	9	32	19	19
Property Destruction	0	0	1	0	0
Sexual Misconduct/ Relationship Violence	25	10	14	23	9
Stalking	3	0	4	1	8
Substance Use/Abuse	9	2	11	14	6
Suicidal Ideation	17	11	32	38	58
Violence/Fascination with Violence/ Threat of Harm	4	3	7	16	9
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0
Total	197	117	250	333	335

Figure 1. Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms (CCAPS) Instrument:
UMBC and National Comparison

	CCAPS National Comparison — Pre-Post Change						v 07/2022

University of Maryland, Baltimore County — Based on 379 unique local clients above the low cut, with at least 2 CCAPS Administrations from 7/1/2023 to 6/30/2024. Clients in the local sample have an average of 5.1 administrations; clients in the national sample have an average of 4.5 administrations.

Note: This report only includes clients with at least 2 CCAPS Administrations and is most useful when the CCAPS is administered at every session. The number of CCAPS administrations may or may not reflect the number of appointments depending on your CCAPS administration schedule.

National Pre- to Post-Treatment Change

Pre ■ Post ■ — National Comparison

	Depression	Generalized Anxiety	Social Anxiety	Academic Distress	Eating Concerns	Frustration / Anger	Alcohol Use	Distress Index
Local Pre, Post	1.96, 1.40	2.29, 1.72	2.42, 2.01	2.38, 1.84	1.86, 1.31	1.68, 0.91	1.25, 0.56	2.09, 1.53
Local Change	-0.56	-0.57	-0.41	-0.54	-0.55	-0.77	-0.69	-0.55
National Pre, Post	2.11, 1.55	2.42, 1.94	2.48, 2.16	2.43, 2.07	2.08, 1.59	1.65, 1.05	1.54, 0.96	2.15, 1.71
National Change	-0.56	-0.49	-0.32	-0.36	-0.49	-0.60	-0.58	-0.45

For example, at pre-treatment, local clients reported an average score on the Depression subscale of 1.96. At post-treatment, they reported an average score on the Depression subscale of 1.40, reflecting a decrease of 0.56 over the course of treatment.

Out of 379 total clients, 29% (n = 110) reported at least some SI at pre-treatment. Of those, 71% (n = 78) decreased their SI score at post treatment.	Out of 379 total clients, 9% (n = 34) reported at least some THO at pre-treatment. Of those, 91% (n = 31) decreased their THO score at post treatment.

Appendix B: MHEC Degree Target Commentary

UMBC's bachelor's degree production increased steadily since FY 2010, when the targets were established. With the exception of FY 2011, and more recently in FY 2022 and 2023, annual degrees awarded exceeded the yearly targets, rising from 148 more degrees in FY 2012 to a high of 372 more degrees in FY 2017.

UMBC surpassed its 2025 target of 35,694 degrees in FY 2023 with 35,832 degrees awarded. In part, the rise in degree production is attributable to consistent improvement in the four-year graduation rates of full-time first-time fall cohorts (fall 2013: 41.9% to fall 2017: 48.1%). We expect degree production to pick back up as some of our largest cohorts of new students progress towards completion in the upcoming years.

Report on Best Practices and Progress Toward 55% Degree Completion
University of Maryland College Park
September 20, 2024

The University of Maryland, College Park (UMD) prides itself on its strong graduation rates, as evidenced in its IPEDS Outcome Measures - the overall six-year graduation rate for all entering cohorts (first-time and transfer, full and part time) is 84%. With well over 23,000 Maryland residents enrolled in undergraduate programs each of the past four years, three-quarters of our undergraduate population are in-state students.

The University has made a priority of improving supports for students' mental health and on increasing institutional aid to Pell eligible students. As such, UMD has chosen to highlight initiatives in two of the three areas of interest to MHEC: student mental health and students' access to financial aid.

Initiatives related to student mental health

Informed by findings from the Mental Health Taskforce, UMD launched a new mental health website, which provides a single site that lists mental health and well-being resources available to the community. UMD has already made significant investments in improving mental health for our campus community, including hiring 48% more clinical staff in 3 years.

Specifically, the University has created:

1. Information on all wellness resources on the Mental Health website, including recreational activities, meditation sessions, nutrition tips, stress management workshops, and ways to connect with other students.

2. An eight-person Initial Access Team to provide for quicker and more efficient access to care, which has:
   ● Introduced new clinical interventions, such as single-session therapy to address demand for non-crisis immediate support.
   ● Significantly reduced wait times to brief assessment.
   ● Doubled the number of weekly initial assessments.

3. New procedures for transport and care of students experiencing mental health emergencies.
   ● All transports occur in a nondescript mental health transport van (police cars were used previously).
   ● Police care are only used if the student is non-compliant or aggressive.
   ● All transports occur without handcuffs (handcuffs were previously used to ensure patient and officer safety).
   ● Handcuffs are only used if the student is non-compliant or aggressive.

- A dedicated post- higher level of care case management system is used to care and support students as they return to the campus following participation in higher levels of psychiatric care such as in-patient hospitalization.

4. A co-response team called the Mental Health Emergency Assessment and Response Team where mental health clinicians respond to mental health emergencies along with the police.

5. A dedicated suicide prevention program geared towards equipping staff and faculty with the skills and knowledge they need to assist students in distress. That training is called T.E.R.P.S for Terps.

Initiatives related to students' access to financial aid.

UMD strives to keep high-quality education affordable for Maryland residents. Compared with FY23, our FY24 need-based financial aid budget increased by 34%, from $36.3 million to $48.5 million. UMD continues to prioritize funding for low-income students in its fundraising efforts. The Office of Student Financial Aid increased first-generation college student outreach to encourage completion of federal and state financial aid requirements. Sixty-five percent of undergraduates who apply for financial aid receive some form of assistance and only 33% of first-time students graduate with student loan debt.

We highlight here three specific programs tailored to low-income Maryland students.

1. In FY23, UMD launched the Terrapin Commitment program, the largest single-year investment in need-based scholarships in our history. This program is designed to reduce the gap between low-income Maryland resident students' total financial aid offer and the actual cost of their education. During FY24, close to 3,900 low-income Maryland resident students received $21 million in Terrapin Commitment funding.

2. The C.D. Mote, Jr. Incentive Awards Program (IAP) is designed to recognize and promote scholarship, leadership, and community responsibility among students from select high schools in Maryland and to make it financially possible for these students to enroll at UMD. Since 2001, the program has identified students who have demonstrated uncommon persistence, ingenuity, and maturity by maintaining good academic performance in the face of challenging circumstances. Selected students form cohorts and benefit from full scholarships and extensive wraparound programming to ensure they achieve their academic, personal, and professional goals. The program has sustained growth, providing funding for low-income students from Baltimore City, Prince George's County, Charles County, and Montgomery County high schools, serving 94 students in FY24.

3. The Maryland Promise Program (MPP), a campus-wide need-based scholarship program, provides educational and financial opportunities and academic support to undergraduate students from the state of Maryland and Washington, DC, exhibiting strong academic and

leadership potential. The MPP fund is expected to grow to a $100 million endowment, providing about $4 million annually in need-based scholarship support. The program will support over 200 students in Fall 2024 and, once fully funded, will support 200–250 students.

UMD continues to prioritize need-based financial aid to support our students with the greatest need. Our internally developed financial aid awarding policy offers need-based aid only to Maryland residents in order to prioritize our state's most promising and deserving students. This has the added benefit of allowing us to impact a large group in more meaningful ways. However, UMD's annual institutional financial aid budget, one of the lowest among our Big Ten Conference peers, has been a barrier to yielding and retaining new and returning undergraduates. Even with the recently implemented Maryland Promise Program, which will result in a $100 million endowment for need-based scholarships, FY24's largest single year need-based financial aid budget increase, up to $20 million from the Terrapin Commitment program, low-income UMD students still have a substantial amount of remaining unmet financial need. This impacts our ability to enroll and retain low-income Maryland residents, particularly those who are Pell eligible. Securing additional funding for low income Maryland residents, particularly those who are Pell eligible, remains an institutional priority.

Evidence Based Practice

As the University Mental Health Task Force developed recommendations and initiatives, it looked not only at campus trends and evidence, but was also informed by national trends in the field of collegiate mental health, which have emerged over the last decade. Trends documented in the annual reports published by the Center for Collegiate Mental Health include: 1) increased severity of mental health concerns; 2) increased demand for mental health services; 3) more self-threat indicators (students coming to college with prior exposure to suicide); and 4) greater demand for access to immediate care services that are not solely crisis focused. The Task Force included faculty and staff recognized for their expertise in the field of wellness and mental health, and drew on that expertise to develop their recommendations.

There is ample literature documenting the benefits of providing need-based aid to students, including its benefits on persistence and degree completion (for example Castleman, Benjamin L. and Bridget Terry Long. 2016. "Looking Beyond Enrollment: The Causal Effect of Need-Based Grants on College Access, Persistence, and Graduation." Journal of Labor Economics 34(4): 1023-1073.) When designing the Terrapin Commitment program, UMD intentionally focused on what it could do to meet the cost of education for Maryland's lowest income students, expecting that doing so would both attract more Pell eligible students and increase the graduation rate of students receiving Pell grants, which tends to be just under 5 percentage points lower than the graduation rate for non-recipients.

Impact of Initiatives on Retention and Completion

The University has only recently launched its mental health initiatives and thus does not have enough data to evaluate their outcomes. Even with work done prior to these initiatives, it is

difficult (or even impossible) to directly attribute changes in retention and graduation rates to the work done around mental health. Records of the use of these services are often protected with strict rules around privacy and appropriate use. Additionally, our students have a variety of ways in which they access support for mental health and wellness, so even if we were able to identify the students using the services, identifying comparison groups would not be possible. As our newest mental health initiatives and programs mature we will be monitoring their success, but those measures may be more process related than outcome related.

With regard to the initiatives related to meeting the financial needs of students, UMD regularly tracks the retention and graduation rates of Pell students for IPEDS and internally. As Terrapin Commitment was launched in FY23, its first cohorts of admitted students came in the Fall 2022 entering class. We expect that it will take several years before we will be able to draw conclusions about how the retention and completion rates are impacted by the Terrapin Commitment program. Similarly, the Maryland Promise Program is still too new to assess its impact. The Incentive Awards Program (IAP) is reviewed annually using statistically generated comparison groups. Looking at the average of the five most recent cohorts, IAP students earn more credits than their peers, are retained at higher rates, and graduate at higher rates.

Initiatives The University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) Has in Place or Will Be Developing to Support Student in Mental Health

Mental health problems commonly emerge between the ages of 16 and 24, with a staggering 75% of individuals experiencing their first mental health crisis during this critical developmental period (Mental Health Act of 2021). For students entering higher education, early identification of mental health concerns is essential. A 2021 report from SAMHSA revealed that one in three young adults aged 18 to 25 faced a mental, behavioral, or emotional health issue in the past year. Anxiety and depression are particularly prevalent, affecting one in four college students (NCHA, 2021; AUCCD Director's Survey, 2018). Additionally, suicide ranks as the third leading cause of death for individuals aged 15 to 24 (SAVE, 2021). Alarmingly, the same research found that 75% of Black students reported keeping their struggles and feelings about their college experience to themselves. These statistics highlight the urgent need for comprehensive mental health support and resources within UMES and other higher education institutions to address the challenges faced by students.

Healthy Hawks TeleHealth Initiative is a round-the-clock mental health and crisis support line, offering continuous access to wellness services 24/7, 365 days a year. As an extension of the Office of Counseling Services, this program provides UMES students with free mental health resources, whether they are on campus, studying from home, or abroad. The initiative is designed to support students wherever they are in their personal journey, addressing the growing concerns around mental health in college, as students face increasing stress from academic demands, social expectations, and the transition into adulthood.

Evidence-based practices that inform the initiatives' efforts
The 2022 Annual Center for Collegiate Mental Health Report revealed that first-year students with a history of mental health challenges and high academic distress were more likely to drop out of college. Over half (51%) of the 1,000 undergraduate students surveyed reported a decline in their mental health during their time in college. Further research confirmed high rates of mental health conditions among students. However, the report also emphasized that students who saw improvements in their mental health were 51% less likely to withdraw, highlighting the crucial role of counseling support in improving retention rates.

Decreased academic performance, lack of motivation, and insufficient social support are key factors that contribute to college students either dropping out or extending the time it takes to complete their degrees. Additionally, untreated mental health issues can further

deteriorate overall well-being, making it increasingly difficult for students to remain engaged and focused on their academic responsibilities.

How UMES tracks the impact on retention and completion

UMES' Healthy Hawks Telehealth Initiative tracks a variety of retention and completion metrics to evaluate the program's effectiveness in supporting student mental health. Retention metrics include session attendance, monitoring how many students attend versus cancel or miss appointments, as well as long-term engagement, tracking how frequently students return for sessions over time. Longitudinal tracking enables the platform to observe individual usage patterns across semesters or academic years. Appointment completion metrics include the percentage of appointments students complete, treatment plan adherence, and rates of feedback collection through satisfaction surveys and health assessments.

Early intervention through referral of potentially high-risk students increased utilization of counseling services from 901 hours of direct individual counseling during the 2020-2021 academic year to over 1,500 hours during the 2023-2024 academic year. UMES's 5th and 6th-year graduation rates have also increased over the last two years.

Initiatives The University of Maryland Eastern Shore(UMES) Has in Place or Will Be Developing to Support Student's Access to Financial Aid

1.FAFSA Tuesdays Communication Initiative: The Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA) launched a weekly email series called FAFSA Tuesdays, offering helpful tips and updates on changes to the FAFSA process for the 2024-2025 academic year. This initiative aimed to keep students, parents, and campus partners informed about the major updates to the FAFSA form, which represents the most significant revision in over 40 years.

Evidence-based practices that inform the initiatives' efforts

The "FAFSA Tuesdays" initiative exemplifies evidence-based practices that enhance student awareness and engagement with financial aid processes. Research shows that frequent, timely communication can significantly improve student completion rates by alleviating uncertainty and providing clear guidance through complex procedures (Gonzalez, 2019). By sending weekly emails with valuable tips and updates about the substantial changes to the FAFSA for the 2024-2025 academic year—marking the most significant overhaul in over 40 years—the Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA) at UMES ensures that students, parents, and campus partners are well-informed. This proactive approach not only clarifies the financial aid process but also fosters a supportive environment, encouraging students to confidently navigate their options, ultimately contributing to higher completion rates and overall academic success.

Division of Enrollment Management and Student Experience

Supporting Evidence

Research from the National College Access Network (NCAN) and other educational institutions indicates that regular updates and proactive communication can significantly enhance FAFSA completion rates. For instance, email campaigns and reminders have been shown to increase student engagement and prompt action. UMES 5th and 6th year graduation rates have also increased respectively over the last year.

2. High School and College Student Outreach: UMES financial aid staff conducted targeted FAFSA outreach at high schools in Dorchester, Wicomico, and Somerset counties. Additionally, the Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA) organized outreach days for both new and returning UMES students, providing families with personalized assistance from trained staff members while working on the FAFSA for the 2024-2025 academic year.

To further support students who had not yet completed their FAFSA applications, UMES hosted FAFSA Nights on campus, aimed at enrolled students with pending submissions. The OSFA employed a multifaceted approach, utilizing individualized emails, text messages, and phone calls to encourage students to complete their applications.

Evidence-based practices that inform the initiatives' efforts

The high school outreach initiative implemented by UMES financial aid staff demonstrates the success of targeted outreach and individualized support in increasing FAFSA completion rates. By providing personalized, face-to-face assistance at high schools, UMES effectively meets the unique needs of families navigating the FAFSA process. Research by Berkner and Chavez (2019) indicates that direct support and personalized interactions can significantly enhance FAFSA completion rates. This initiative not only simplifies the application process for students and their families but also improves their understanding of financial aid options, ultimately empowering more students to confidently pursue higher education. Additionally, hosting targeted events and providing personalized follow-ups exemplify the approach of intensive, focused support, as research shows that such interventions can effectively address barriers to FAFSA completion.

Supporting Evidence

Educational research from organizations like the U.S. Department of Education and the College Board consistently demonstrates the effectiveness of targeted, intensive support. Interventions such as FAFSA completion events and direct outreach initiatives improve completion rates, especially when students and families receive personalized, one-on-one assistance to address their concerns. Over the past four years, over 80% of UMES students have completed a FASFA form. UMES' application rate increased with our financial aid outreach efforts; more than 3,000 prospective new students selected UMES

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
EASTERN SHORE

Division of Enrollment Management and Student Experience

to review and package their financial aid. Over 87% of UMES undergraduate students have completed their FAFSA forms.

University of Maryland Global Campus

University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC) presents the following responses to the prompts for the *2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal*.

Initiative #1

UMGC has developed a suite of resources to support the mental health of our students. Those resources are listed on our website at https://www.umgc.edu/wellness and include:

- UMGC Wellness Line: Students can call this line if they need help determining the best wellness support program for them or if they need urgent assistance.
- Togetherall: This is a peer-to-peer mental health and wellness support platform that provides anonymous, no-cost, 24/7 access to a global member-based community of peers. Togetherall is monitored by trained and licensed clinicians for students experiencing a severe mental health crisis.
- Welltrack Connect: This is an online curated directory of more than 10,000 therapists, prescribers, and group practices specializing in working with students.
- Active Minds: This is a student advocacy organization that aims to increase the awareness of mental health and reduce the stigma of mental illness within the UMGC community.

Front-line staff members are trained to share these resources with students, and students are also provided information about them via email, a virtual orientation, an online student portal, and the virtual classroom.

These resources were informed by the following evidence-based practices:

- Mental Health Literacy Education: Educating students about mental health, including recognizing symptoms of common mental health issues and understanding coping strategies, has been shown to improve attitudes and help-seeking behaviors.
- Mindfulness and Stress-Reduction techniques: Mindfulness practices like meditation, breathing exercises, and body awareness can reduce stress and anxiety among students. These practices have been associated with better emotional regulation, focus, and overall mental health. Students are given guidance on these practices within the various wellness resources provided at UMGC.
- School-based Mental Health Services: Providing direct mental health services within schools, such as counseling, therapy, and peer support groups, increases access to care.
- Collaborative and Inclusive School Cultures: A school environment that fosters collaboration among students, staff, and faculty and promotes inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging.
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support: This approach categorizes student needs into tiers based on the intensity of support required. It integrates mental health services at

different levels, ranging from universal preventive strategies for all students to targeted interventions for those at higher risk.

UMGC is tracking the impact of these initiatives and, so far, has determined that, as of Spring 2024, Togetherall is:

- reaching 500+ underserved students (66% identified as BIPOC and 7% identified as trans or non-binary),
- reaching those not seeking other support (61% were not seeking any formal mental health support and 15% reported no support at all), and
- reaching at-risk individuals (16% considered self-harm or suicide within the past 6 months).

Initiative #2

UMGC has increased its academic support services for multilingual learners by:

- Revising academic student services websites based on student feedback to improve the student experience by simplifying navigation and making it easier for students to find relevant resources (e.g., consolidating Writing Center information with subject tutoring and updating the Tutor.com page).
- Introducing English language learning tutoring support services through Tutor.com to better assist non-native English-speaking students.

These resources were informed by research that shows that integrated support services, such as academic advising, counseling, and language support, can improve the academic outcomes for English Language learners. Institutions that offer comprehensive support systems, including access to writing centers and language labs, see better outcomes for these students.

UMGC is tracking the effectiveness of these measures by measuring web traffic and making updates based on the findings. There has also been an overhaul of the tutor.com landing page for UMGC, providing students with clear and direct information on how to find support resources.

The Student Communications team has also piloted a new style of email to better inform students on the student resources available to them at UMGC. Students are sent customized resource emails based on their student profile, including their need for additional tutoring support, which has resulted in an increase in click-through rates and visits to the resource pages.

Initiative #3

UMGC has also enhanced its other support services for multilingual learners by:

- Updating the list of multilingual staff at UMGC who can assist multilingual learners. Resources are currently available for speakers of Spanish, French, Creole, German, Gujarati, Hindi, and Portuguese. The following units have at least one multilingual staff member: Admissions, Advising/Success Coaches, Career Services, Financial Aid, Financial Solutions, Tutoring, and Stateside Military Operations.
- Implementing a One-Pager resource for staff and faculty working with multilingual learners, available through the university's intranet site. This resource was created by the UMGC Latino Student Support Group.

These resources are based on research that shows that creating a supportive and welcoming campus environment can positively impact the overall academic experience and retention rates for English Language learners. UMGC wants these students to be aware that there is a network of support with staff members who can speak to them in their native languages and provide clear direction on the resources available to them.

UMGC will be tracking these updated support resources by tracking overall usage of the multilingual staff and continuing to monitor faculty's usage of these resources to guide students when they are having trouble in their coursework (i.e. page visits, discussion with the staff listed on our research page).

Maryland Higher Education Commission Report – Fall 2024
Goucher College's Initiatives to Support Student Success

Goucher College has many programs and initiatives in place to support student success and help students achieve the goal of on-time graduation. Last year, we reported on our success advising model, academic standing protocols, our LAUNCH Scholars program for first-generation and Pell-eligible students, our Learning-to-Learn course for students experiencing academic difficulties, our outreach protocols for students who are not doing well academically, our system for following up on students who do not register on time, and our Goucher Prison Education Partnership. These initiatives, along with others, have enabled Goucher to realize a 2% increase (from 77% to 79%) in first-to-second year retention for the fall 23 cohort of first-time, full-time students. This fall, we will launch a campus-wide Student Success Task Force that will create an institutional roadmap for improving student success through a data-informed approach.

In this report, we will elaborate, as requested, on initiatives in mental health, multilingual learners, and students' access to financial aid.

Mental Health

The Student Counseling Center primarily offers short-term individual psychotherapy to undergraduate students at Goucher College. In efforts to increase access to mental health support and treatment, the Student Counseling Center offers 24/7 phone support (contracted through ProtoCall), medical transportation to off-campus appointments, referral support, and a resource library on a variety of mental health and self-help topics that may be used as an adjunct or separately from psychotherapy.

The Student Counseling Center tries to recruit multilingual clinical trainees to provide psychotherapy services. During the 24-25 Academic Year, students may receive therapy in English, Spanish, French, and Arabic.

Student Counseling Center Clinicians utilize psychotherapy interventions based on empirical-informed practices of cognitive-behavioral, acceptance and commitment, dialectical behavioral, relational-cultural, psychodynamic, and positive psychology therapies. Staff maintain their knowledge of evidence-based practices that inform individual psychotherapy and additional services and outreach events through professional development opportunities (Sheppard Pratt, PESI, AUCCCD).

To determine the effectiveness of psychotherapy, counseling center staff monitor pre and post therapy College Counseling Assessment of Psychological Symptoms (CCAPS) of each individual client. Satisfaction surveys are provided to current therapy clients once per semester. One question from this survey specifically asks about the impact of counseling

services on ability to meet day-to-day responsibilities as a student. The Student Counseling Center additionally gathers information of the percentage of a graduating class that received services through the college.

In Spring 2024, staff of the student counseling center conducted a mandatory mental health workshop with faculty and staff. The workshop reviewed signs of student mental distress, a toolkit for responding to students, and a review of the mental health resources available to students. The workshop included interactive elements that asked faculty and staff how they might respond in different scenarios.

Multilingual Learners

Goucher has a small number of multilingual learners. During the 23-24 academic year, Goucher had a total of 47 international students in our undergraduate population. Many of these are native English speakers and/or attended secondary schools where English is the primary language of instruction; those for whom this is not the case must provide proof of English proficiency with recommended tests scores of TOEFL (80ibt), IELTS (6.5), PTE (53), or Duolingo (105). We also recognize that some of our American citizen and permanent resident students may have grown up in a home where English is not the first language; however, we do not have data on these numbers.

Given Goucher's focus on international education, we take seriously our commitment to multilingual learners, even if their number is small. To that end, we support multilingual learners through the provision of academic accommodations (i.e., extra time on tests, notetakers in class, etc.) to those who request it. We also provide training to Writing Center peer tutors on working with this population. One initiative of note is the professional development provided to Goucher faculty by the director of the writing center (who is, herself, a non-native English speaker) and director for international student support. This team of professionals provided a pedagogical workshop on supporting international students and second language learners. The content of this workshop was based in best practices for teaching this population. In this session, they identified common misconceptions about teaching non-native speakers while working to better understand different language structures. In addition, they provided some data about the international students' demographics at Goucher and introduced some of the academic and emotional concerns of this student population. Best practices in responding to their writing and accommodating them academically, while considering how to implement strategies that identify global patterns (big picture) in learning, were presented. Attendees left with a better understanding of strategies aimed at teaching students who are non-native speakers of English. We have limited analyses of the impact of this initiative.

Students' Access to Financial Aid

Part 1: Our Overall Approach

To enhance students' access to state financial aid and foster their overall success, our institution has implemented a proactive approach to communication with students and rigorous reporting practices. Our dedicated financial aid counselors offer tailored, one-on-one assistance to ensure students fully understand their financial aid options and requirements. We send regular notifications to students regarding state processing timelines, FAFSA filing deadlines, and changes in financial aid regulations. This proactive approach helps students stay informed, reducing the risk of missed deadlines and incomplete applications. We ensure compliance with state regulations through rigorous reporting practices, including routine submission of Financial Aid Information System (FAIS) reports and other state-required reports, which supports the continuous improvement of our financial aid programs and maintains transparency. Additionally, our institution benefits from the involvement of our Associate Director of Student Financial Services on a state committee dedicated to addressing financial aid challenges. By collaborating with state officials, we aim to contribute to tangible improvements, such as enhanced student access to their financial aid status and a more user-friendly system. Our institution also supports Pell-eligible students through the Maryland Scholars Program, which offers additional financial support, and the LAUNCH Scholars Program, which provides comprehensive resources including financial coaching and career development to first-generation and Pell-eligible students.

Our financial aid initiatives are informed by evidence-based practices that aim to improve student outcomes. The one-on-one support provided by financial aid counselors is based on research demonstrating that personalized assistance enhances students' understanding of financial aid options and increases application completion rates. This approach effectively addresses common barriers to financial aid access.
The proactive communication strategy is informed by best practices in student engagement, which show that timely and clear communication improves students' ability to meet deadlines and reduces stress related to financial aid. This method helps ensure that students are well-informed and can navigate the financial aid process more effectively.

Our reporting practices align with state and federal regulations, supporting transparency and compliance. Evidence indicates that adhering to these regulations helps identify areas for program improvement and maintain effective financial aid administration.

To evaluate the effectiveness of our financial aid initiatives, we track key metrics such as FAFSA completion rates, award acceptance rates, and adherence to state processing timelines. We analyze these metrics to assess their correlation with student retention and graduation rates. The feedback from the Associate Director's involvement in the state committee plays a critical role in this evaluation process. By providing input on financial aid challenges and collaborating on state-level policy adjustments, we create a feedback loop that informs both state and institutional improvements on behalf of students. For instance, the recent state rollout of the FAFSA simplification process faced challenges, including

legislative changes and technical issues, which affected students' ability to receive awards. Currently, 17 students eligible for Guaranteed Access Grants (GAG) are awaiting their awards due to these issues at our small college. Despite the state's current funding limitations, which have created barriers for students needing aid, we remain hopeful that ongoing reviews will address these challenges. We expect the outcomes of these reviews will improve the administration of GAG and Educational Assistance Grants (EAG), enhancing the financial aid system for future academic years.

Part 2: A specific initiative: Re-enrolling students with billing holds

This summer (2024), we began a new initiative to identify students who had not enrolled for the fall, strictly due to financial reasons. The project's goal was to assist those students who wanted to re-enroll in a way that benefited both the students and the institution. The project also assisted us in achieving the college's retention and graduation rate goals.

We offered funds as a one-time re-enrollment grant to 21 students who met our agreed-upon criteria. Three students chose not to accept the funds, so they could take a leave of absence from the college (one to join the Air Force Reserves and two others to work full-time for a period so that they could pay future tuition bills). We dispersed funds to 18 students totaling $54,879. All 18 students re-enrolled in Fall 2024.

Report to the Maryland Higher Education Commission

Hood College

Submitted on September 17, 2024

Hood College supports the State of Maryland's 55% Completion Goal by 2025. To this end, we are submitting our annual report which will provide evidence of how our institution supports student success by strengthening resources to support student mental health and improving access to financial aid.

<u>Resources/Strategies to Support Students' Mental Health</u>

1: QPR Training

In 2021, the CDC reported that suicide was one of the leading causes of death for children (age 10-14), teens (age 15-19) and young adults (age 20-24). The spring 2024 National College Health Assessment (NCHA) reports that of the 79,000 sample of undergraduate students, 38% screened positive for suicidal thoughts or behaviors and 2.4% had attempted suicide in the past 12 months. One way that Hood College is working to address this public health concern is by training students, faculty, and staff to recognize the warning signs of suicide and to help individuals get connected to mental health services and other supports.

In the fall 2023 semester, Hood began a partnership with EveryMind, a community organization serving the greater metro DC region through community education, advocacy, and direct mental health services. EveryMind provided two QPR gatekeeper trainings in academic year 2023-2024 to students, faculty & staff. QPR is an evidence-based suicide prevention training that provides information on how to recognize the warning signs of suicide, how to offer hope, and how to refer individuals to life saving resources and supports. Some of the learning objectives for the training are to increase knowledge of suicide and suicide prevention, increase self-efficacy to intervene and support someone who may be having suicidal thoughts, and to increase skills such as active listening, making referrals and asking clarifying questions. A study conducted by evaluated QPR's effectiveness when presented to resident advisors (RAs). The study found that QPR training increased RA's knowledge of resources and their intention to intervene with suicidal students.

Student leaders, faculty advisors, athletic coaches. and support staff were invited to participate in these training sessions. In AY23-24, 43 community members participated in QPR gatekeeper training on-campus. In the pre-training survey, only 42% of participants reported a high level of understanding on how to help someone who may be thinking about suicide. After the training, 82% of participants reported a high level of understanding. Additionally in the post course survey, 100% of participants answered "yes" that if they suspect someone is at risk for suicide, they feel likely to ask them if they are thinking of suicide.

Due to the positive impact of the QPR program, additional trainings have been planned for the 2024-25 academic year. Hood College is working to increase the number of QPR gatekeepers on-campus to increase the likelihood of early intervention and referral if someone if having suicidal thoughts.

2: Mental Health Screenings

Hood College has two mental health services available to undergraduate and graduate students. Hood College Counseling Services (HCCS) is the official college counseling center and is staffed by two licensed counselors that provide individual and group sessions to students in addition to outreach and education. The NeighborHood Counseling Training Center (NCTC) is directed by a licensed clinician, but individual and group services are provided by Master's level counseling interns from Hood College's Clinical Mental Health Counseling graduate program. Both services are located on-campus and provide confidential mental health support free of charge to students. While these entities are separate and distinct, there is extensive collaboration between the offices. One example of collaboration is the mental health screenings that are hosted by these two offices every semester.

The purpose of these screenings is to identify students at risk of developing mental health concerns and to identify those who have undetected mental health struggles and connect them to mental health services on-campus. According to the Healthy Minds Study of over 300,000 college students, 60% met the criteria for a mental health condition. Screenings are scheduled over several days and precede midterms, typically a stressful season for students. Screenings are placed with intent in high traffic areas including the student campus center and dining hall. They are also set up in academic buildings around busy class times when graduate and undergraduate students are on-campus and are offered virtually (to students in the state of Maryland). During screenings, Master's level counseling students have a table with stickers, freebies, and information and ask students if they would like to take a brief mental health screening. Students complete an anonymous, online survey which incorporates validated screening tools including GAD-7 and PHQ-9. The counseling interns then review the screening with the student. If a student screens high for depression or anxiety, they are referred to HCCS or NCTC for a consultation appointment. If a student screens high for suicidality, a licensed clinician (present to supervise the interns) talks with the student of concern about a safety plan and gets them connected to a same-day or next-day consultation appointment.

In academic year 2023-2024, we conducted 167 screenings with undergrad and graduate students-- 64 in the fall semester and 103 in the spring semester. While screenings to identify mental health conditions is an evidence-based tool to identify at-risk students, Hood has an opportunity in future screenings to improve follow up with students to help ensure they keep their appointments with clinical providers. This is specifically important for students of color who have lower rates of utilization for mental health services. Discussions with the student-led Diversity Coalition to design messaging and educational materials for their specific student groups may be helpful to connect students with services.

Financial Aid Strategies

Hood College has been proactive in developing and implementing initiatives to support students' access to financial aid. Here are three key initiatives, with descriptions of evidence-based practices and tracking methods.

1. Hood Advantage Program

Initiative Description: Introduced in 2023, the Hood Advantage Program is designed to make higher education more accessible by providing financial support and resources to students with significant financial need. This initiative includes covering tuition costs that exceed federal and state financial aid awards and offering additional support such as grants and scholarships to help bridge financial gaps. Qualifying students are guaranteed to have their tuition covered each year without loans for up to four years.

Evidence-Based Practices:

- **Comprehensive Financial Aid Research:** Evidence shows that programs providing significant financial aid support can reduce dropout rates and improve student retention. The Hood Advantage Program is informed by research indicating that eliminating the financial gap for students can lead to increased enrollment and higher graduation rates (e.g., studies by the Education Resources Institute and other research organizations).
- **Holistic Support:** Incorporating both financial aid and supplemental support (like advising and academic resources) aligns with best practices that suggest comprehensive support systems improve student outcomes ("Higher Education Research Institute").

Tracking and Impact:

- **Retention Rates:** Hood College is monitoring retention rates of first-year students participating in the Hood Advantage Program compared to those who do not receive similar levels of financial aid. Preliminary data (below) shows lower retention rates for participating students, but the College will continue the program and ongoing assessment.

Hood Advantage	Cohort	Spring Retention		Fall Retention	
Recipients	29	26	90%	18	62%
Zero award*	4	3	75%	3	75%
Total	33	29	88%	21	64%
None	270	244	90%	185	69%
Total Fall 23 FTF	303	273	90%	206	68%

* zero awarded due to MDGA/living with parents or Honors

- **Completion Rates:** Analysis of graduation rates for students involved in the program is not yet available as the program is only in its second year; however, for future years, graduation rates will help assess the program's effectiveness in ensuring timely degree completion.
- **Financial Metrics:** The College intends to track how the program impacts students' ability to meet their financial needs and whether it reduces student loan debt levels.

- **Longitudinal Studies:** Additional data is also required for tracking student progress over multiple years to assess the long-term impact of the financial aid provided.

2. Maryland Guaranteed Access (GA) Grant Match

Initiative Description: Hood College participates in the Maryland Guaranteed Access (GA) Grant match program, which helps students who are eligible for the state's GA Grant by matching it with institutional funds. This initiative is designed to close the gap between what students receive from state grants and their total educational costs, making college more affordable for low-income students.

Evidence-Based Practices:

- **Grant Matching Research:** Evidence shows that institutional grant matching can significantly reduce the financial barriers to higher education. Research, such as studies by the National Bureau of Economic Research, indicates that matching grants help improve college access and reduce dropout rates among low-income students.
- **Support for Low-Income Students:** Programs targeting low-income students are based on findings that financial support tailored to the specific needs of economically disadvantaged students leads to better academic outcomes and higher retention rates ("Financial Aid and Student Success: What We Know and What We Need to Know" by the College Board).

Tracking and Impact:

	Cohort	one-yr retention rate	4-yr grad rate	5-yr grad rate	6-yr grad rate
2018	**239**	**74.5%**	**43.5%**	**54.0%**	**56.9%**
MDGA	10	90.0%	60.0%	70.0%	80.0%
no-MDGA	229	73.8%	42.8%	53.3%	55.9%
2019	**320**	**74.4%**	**42.2%**	**51.6%**	
MDGA	19	100.0%	42.1%	63.2%	
no-MDGA	301	72.8%	42.2%	50.8%	
2020	**293**	**72.0%**	**43.3%**		
MDGA	36	72.2%	36.1%		
no-MDGA	257	72.0%	44.4%		
2021	**323**	**73.1%**			
MDGA	16	75.0%			
no-MDGA	307	73.0%			
2022	**294**	**80.3%**			
MDGA	17	88.2%			
no-MDGA	277	79.8%			
2023	**303**	**68.0%**			
MDGA	30	80.0%			
no-MDGA	273	66.7%			

- **Retention Rates:** The College tracks retention rates of students receiving the GA Grant match to determine if this financial support helps them stay enrolled from year to year. In general, the data supports the assertion that this financial support does lead to increased retention.
- **Graduation Rates:** By analyzing graduation rates, Hood College can assess whether matching the GA Grant contributes to timely degree completion. The data shows that five and six year graduation rates are increased due to the additional financial support.
- **Financial Impact:** In general, students receiving the matching funds have minimal student loan debt or out-of-pocket expenses.

3. Enhanced Financial Literacy Programs

Initiative Description: Hood College has developed financial literacy programs to help students and families better understand the FAFSA and manage their finances. These programs include workshops, presentations on-campus and at high schools, one-on-one financial counseling, and online resources.

Evidence-Based Practices:

- **Educational Effectiveness:** Research supports the effectiveness of financial literacy programs in improving students' financial behaviors and reducing financial stress. For example, studies in the "Journal of Financial Counseling and Planning" show that financial education can lead to better financial decision-making and increased academic success.
- **Behavioral Economics:** Applying principles from behavioral economics, such as goal setting and incentives, helps in designing more effective financial literacy interventions ("Behavioral Economics and Financial Literacy" by the National Endowment for Financial Education).

Tracking and Impact:

- **Pre- and Post-Assessment:** Limited tracking has been done to date; however, the College is reviewing a plan to conduct assessments before and after financial literacy interventions to measure changes in participants' financial knowledge and behaviors.
- **Yield and Retention Analysis:** The College is working to track student participation to monitor the enrollment and retention rates of students who participate in financial literacy programs versus those who do not.

4. Attrition Prevention Counseling and Funding

Initiative Description: In 2023, Hood College launched a pilot program to identify and counsel students with outstanding financial balances or holds on their institutional accounts. Counselors worked closely with students to provide the assistance and additional financial support needed to ensure students' enrollment in the following semester.

Evidence-Based Practices:

- **Intervention Research:** Studies indicate that this type of financial assistance can prevent short-term crises from escalating into long-term academic issues ("Emergency Financial Aid and Student Success" by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation).
- **Supportive Interventions:** Research shows that immediate financial support can help students stay enrolled and complete their degrees by mitigating the impact of financial emergencies ("The Role of Emergency Financial Aid in Student Retention" by the Institute for Higher Education Policy).

Tracking and Impact:

- **Retention Metrics:** Preliminary data showed an overall increase in retention rate, from 73.1% to 80.3% for the time period the program was active.
- **Fund Utilization Tracking:** While preliminary data showed an increase in retention from the program, the institutional funds invested were significant and as a result prevented the continuation of the program for the time being.

Summary

Hood College's mental health and financial aid initiatives are well-informed by evidence-based practices aimed at improving students' success in support of the State of Maryland's 55% Completion Goal by 2025. The College uses a range of methods to track and analyze the impact of these initiatives, including retention, completion rates, and financial metrics. Through these efforts, Hood College strives to provide comprehensive support to its students and ensure that mental health and financial challenges do not impede their academic and personal success.

Johns Hopkins University submission to the Maryland Higher Education Commission 2024 report on best practices and annual progress toward the 55% completion goal

Introduction

Johns Hopkins University places the utmost importance on the wellness of our students, which is fundamental to both academic and personal growth. We strive to foster an environment that empowers students to address their unique mental health and wellness needs, increases awareness of available supports, and offers an open dialogue about mental health. Complementing this are supports and resources to buttress students' success and access to financial aid and information. What follows are several complementary initiatives that address student mental health and well-being and access to financial aid. It also elucidates their impact on retention.

Student Mental Health - Task Force on Mental Health and Well-being

In 2016, President Daniels committed to conduct a thorough review of the factors affecting students' well-being at both the undergraduate and graduate level. In response, the Task Force on Student Mental Health and Well-being was convened in March 2016 to assess the state of mental health resources available to students, review current research on effective strategies for mental health promotion, and make recommendations on how the university can better support the mental students' health needs.

The Task Force, composed of twenty-eight faculty, staff, and students from across the university, met regularly and received input from more than 2,300 students through its September 2016 mental health survey and through numerous listening sessions. The Task Force published a draft set of recommendations in May 2017 to solicit additional feedback from the community.

After a thorough analysis of available research and incorporating comments from students, the Task Force published its final report.

Recommendations that the university has pursued includ the naming of an inaugural vice provost for student health and well-being, the hiring of an executive director for student disability services and an executive director for student well-being, and the creation of a Behavioral Health Crisis Support Team (BHCST).

Since the final Task Force report was published in 2018, a university wide effort has bolstered staffing, trainings, and programming that help respond to the varied needs of our student population. The institution continues to evaluate and assess progress via annual implementation report and regular surveys. Progress reports also detail evaluation and assessment of progress to-date.

Access to financial aid – Bloomberg gift

Johns Hopkins's student body has grown significantly more diverse in the last decade. The percentage of its undergraduates from underrepresented groups, for example, increased from 18% in 2013 to 31% in 2021.

The university's progress will be sustained in significant part by a transformative $1.8 billion gift from Michael R. Bloomberg, which has already helped the university to move to a permanent need-blind, no-loan admissions policy for Homewood undergraduate students. With many of its undergraduates— one third of the fall 2022 incoming first-year class—Pell-eligible or first generation, the university has developed a range of programs and services to support first-generation limited-income students in their campus life and studies.

Access to financial aid – Hop-in summer program and PILOT program

Johns Hopkins University offers a variety of programs and services to support first-generation limited-income students, including the Hop-In summer program, the PILOT program, and a newly designed success coach model in academic advising. Johns Hopkins recognizes that all students, graduate or undergraduate, must receive support and guidance tailored to the conditions, requirements, and opportunities of their schools and programs. Concomitantly, it affirms the value of maintaining a consistency of experience that fosters students' sense of affinity to Johns Hopkins as one university.

Access to financial aid – Student Services Excellence Initiative

To address the desire to develop and maintain a consistency of experience that fosters students' sense of affinity these different but related needs the university launched the Student Services Excellence Initiative (SSEI). SSEI's goal is to enhance the student experience by reducing barriers and redundancy across university units and making school and university systems more navigable and user-friendly. The university also works continuously to enhance resources for students in areas such as admissions and financial aid, academic success, mental health and wellness, and student conduct.

Individual colleges and units routinely assess student engagement, interaction, and satisfaction with university services. SSEI, has represented a multi-year central assessment project covering six components of the student experience: recruitment and admissions, registration, advising, student accounts, financial aid, and career services. SSEI launched its efforts in January 2016 with a discovery and analysis phase that, as illustrated in Figure I below included student

surveys, student interview and focus groups, working groups and working sessions for faculty and staff, open town-hall briefings, and interviews with key leaders. Findings were analyzed and shared with stakeholders, including the SSEI Steering and Advisory Committees, the Council of Deans, and the Johns Hopkins board of trustees; this process issued in recommendations that have since driven SSEI's initiatives and resource allocation. Outcomes of SSEI continue to be assessed via routine periodic assessments. For example, the performance of the Office of Student Enrollment and Account Management, an office established because of the SSEI, is now evaluated routinely via Periodic Quality Reviews (PQR), which are agreed-upon key performance metrics included in service-level agreements (SLA) with the schools. Both individual school-level and aggregated institutional level findings from PQR drive change in practice, process, and resource allocation.

Figure 1: SSEI engagement and assessment approach
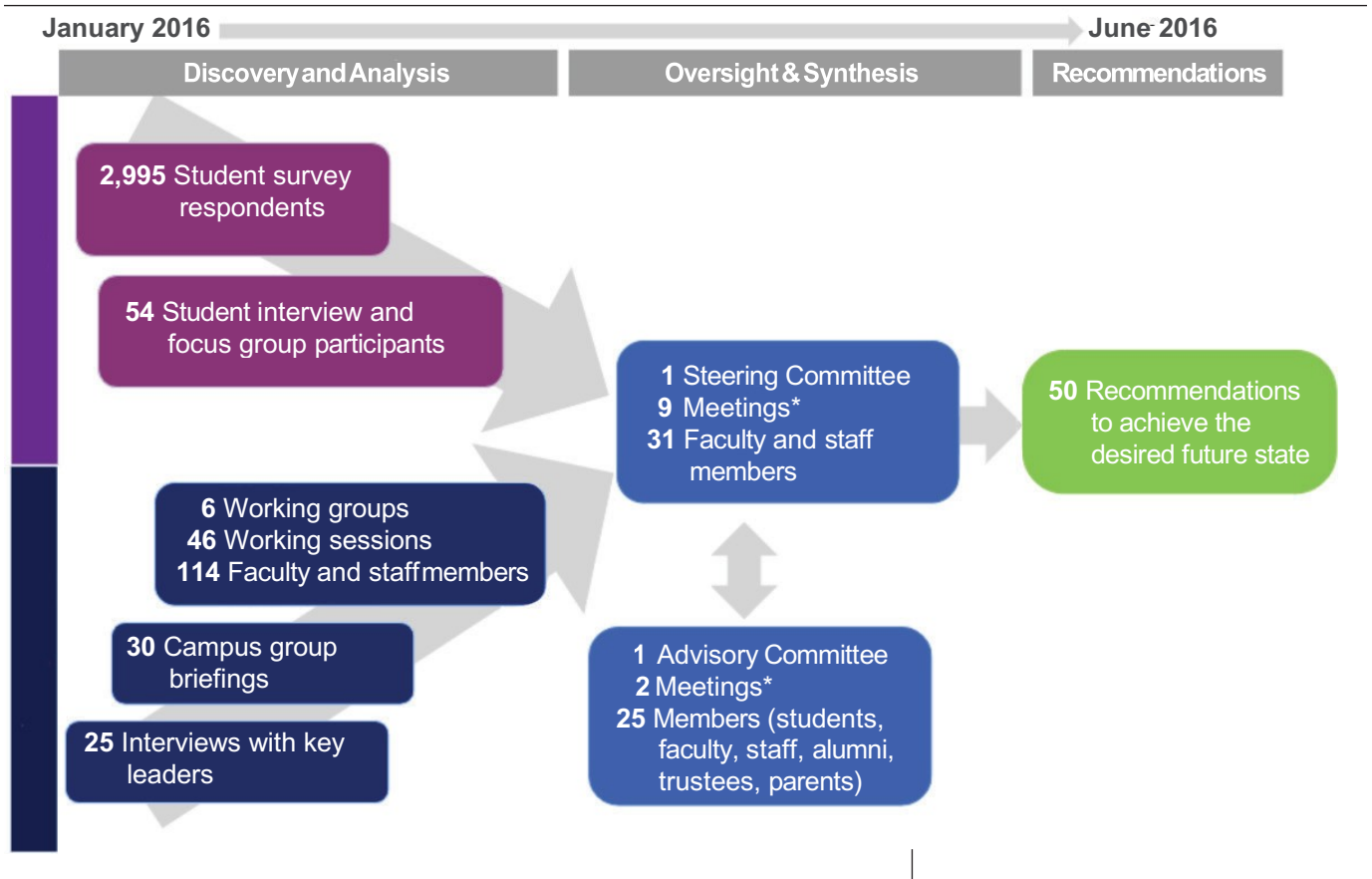
Conclusion and assessment

The university continues to monitor its student services and financial aid initiatives through a large number of school, service, and office specific evaluation and assessment tools and projects. Ultimately, the university's retention and graduation rates should reflect these initiatives' effectiveness. The university monitors these trends annually as detailed in Figure II.

Figure II: undergraduate six-year graduate rates and first year retention rates, 2009-2021

Undergraduate Retention (For Cohort entering in Fall each year)

6 Year Graduation Rates — First Year Retention Rates
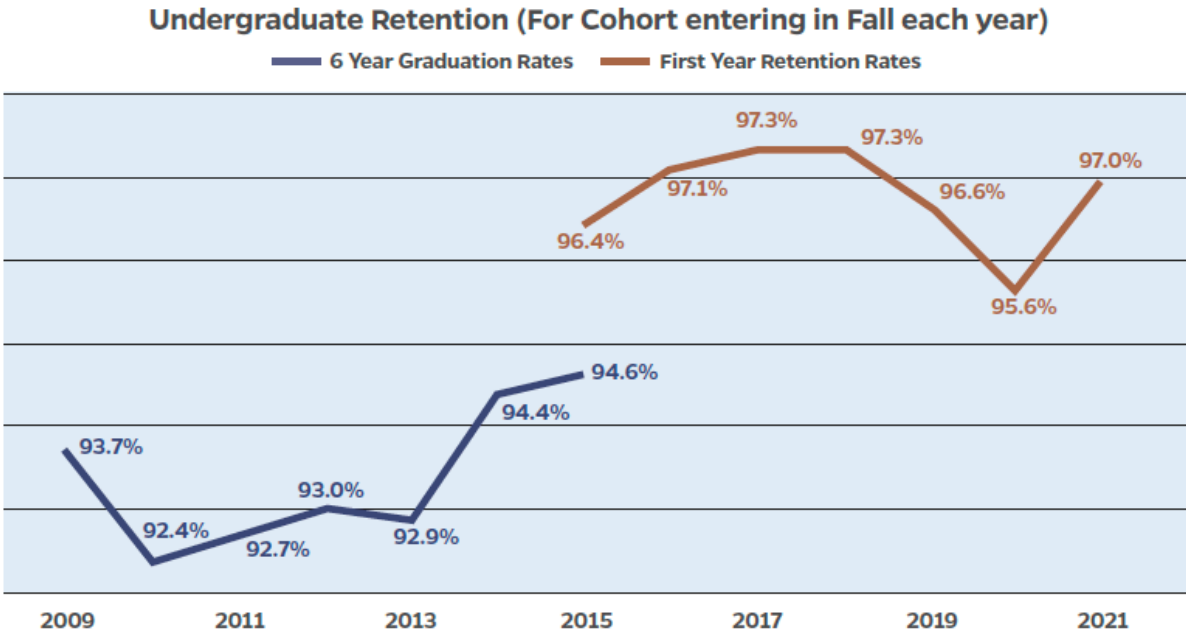
Loyola University Maryland

2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress Toward the 55% Completion Goal

In support of the Moore-Miller Administration 2024 State Plan Goal
"Setting up Maryland Students for Success"

July 2024

Report Focus - State Plan Objective 2.4:
Provide more resources for student success by strengthening wraparound and mental health services through community schools, establishing workgroups on multilingual learners, improving students' access to state financial aid, and increasing funding for special education, financial assistance, and other evidence-based support.

1) **Initiatives in place to support the Goal**

The Moore-Miller Administration's 2024 State Plan Goal for "Setting up Maryland's Students for Success" focuses on K-12 education. Among the key performance indicators listed for the goal is the percent of new teachers of color.

In the past three years, Loyola University Maryland's School of Education awarded 108 master's degrees to teachers of color in the fields of Curriculum and Instruction for Social Justice, Educational Technology, Kodály Music Education, and Literacy. Loyola awarded bachelor's and master's degrees in initial teacher preparation programs to 19 teachers of color. In addition, 52 education professionals of color earned master's degrees from Loyola in School Counseling, and 56 education administrators of color earned master's degrees from Loyola in Educational Leadership.

Loyola has been honored for multiple state, county, and city public schools' Teachers of the Year to have chosen our School of Education as part of their educational preparation. The recognition of these teachers acknowledges their extraordinary achievement and the profound differences they have made in the lives of their students, their communities, and our state. Loyola graduates who have been selected as Maryland Teacher of the Year include Brianna Ross in 2022 and Teresa Beilstein in 2020. Heather Carnaghan was named Anne Arundel County Teacher of the Year in 2019. Daleisha Myers was named Prince George's County Teacher of the Year in 2018. And Justin Holbrook was named Baltimore City Public Schools' Teacher of the Year in 2017.

   a. **student mental health**

   CRISP Grant - The School Counseling Program has been awarded a five-year $3.3 million School-Based Mental Health Services Grant from the USDOE. This grant provides resources to increase students' access to school-based mental health services by increasing the number of qualified and culturally responsive mental health counselors working in K12 schools.

   Kahlert Foundation Gift – The School Counseling Program has been awarded a $100,000 foundation gift to support access to mental health counseling and expand training of school counselors. Program faculty will provide professional development opportunities and training for 24 school counselors who are site supervisors at their schools. This train

the trainer program will improve K12 students' access to high-quality counseling in schools.

b. **multilingual learners**

Loyola University Maryland's teacher preparation programs include initiatives to prepare teachers to support the success of Maryland's multilingual learners. These initiatives include:

- Adaptation of the four literacy courses so that all courses include aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion, including language learners. One course is uniquely devoted to meeting the literacy assessment and instruction needs of multilingual learners.
- Strategies for working with multilingual learners in other content areas (math, social studies, science) is included in methods course for those content areas.

The School of Education's Center for Equity, Leadership, and Social Justice in Education (CELSJE) faculty fellows research includes:

- *Experiential Learning of School Counselors-In-Training to Work with English Learners*
- *Adapted Strong Kids Curriculum for English Language Learners During COVID-19*
- *Identifying the Assets of Emergent Bilingual Middle School Students' Writing*

c. **students' access to financial aid**

The financial aid process can be overwhelming for many students due to the complexity, varying deadlines, terminology, and uncertainty. To address these challenges, Loyola has a combined undergraduate and graduate team of 10 administrators and two support staff members dedicated to providing resources and support to help prospective and current students navigate the process and help alleviate the stress and confusion. We are committed to making Loyola affordable for all students.

Loyola has simplified the aid process by requiring only one form to apply for financial aid, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). While we encourage students to complete the FAFSA by priority deadlines, all students who complete the process are reviewed, regardless of whether they meet our deadlines.

Additional recognition and support are offered to Pell eligible students from Baltimore City public, charter, or Catholic high schools who demonstrate significant financial need. This program ensures eligible students receive a financial aid package that meets 100 percent of their demonstrated need toward Loyola's full direct cost of attendance.

At Loyola, 99 percent of our undergraduate students receive some type of financial aid, and 98 percent of students receive a Loyola-funded scholarship or grant. At the undergraduate level, Loyola sponsors an excellent program of institutionally funded academic scholarships, need-based and non-need-based grants and athletic grants, in addition to our participation in the major federal and state student aid programs. Parents

may also consider additional financing alternatives through the Federal Parent Loan Program (PLUS) and the TMS monthly payment plan.

Approximately 80 percent of students' aid comes from institutional awards, 15 percent from federal awards, and 1 to 2 percent from state awards, private awards, and endowed awards each (see figure below).
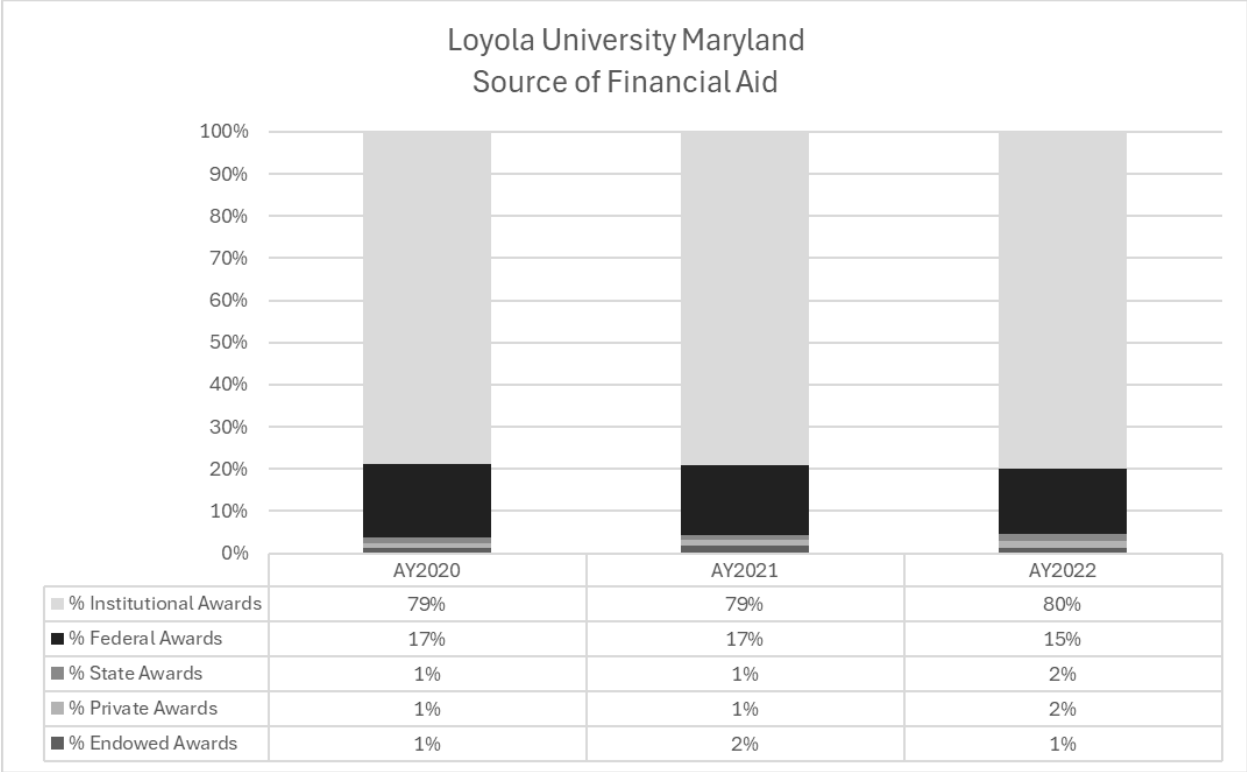

	AY2020	AY2021	AY2022
% Institutional Awards	79%	79%	80%
% Federal Awards	17%	17%	15%
% State Awards	1%	1%	2%
% Private Awards	1%	1%	2%
% Endowed Awards	1%	2%	1%

Figure 1 Sources of Financial Aid at Loyola University Maryland; Source: LUM Fact Book

At the graduate level, individual academic departments offer a limited number of fellowships, scholarships and grants to assist students with their education expenses. Graduate assistantships are available through academic and administrative departments, and students may also consider borrowing funds through the Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan Program.

2) **Evidence-based practices that inform the initiatives' efforts.**

   a. **student mental health**

      Qi Shi, Ph.D., LCPC, Professor of School Counseling and the Director of the Center for Equity, Leadership, and Social Justice in Education is leading the evaluation of the CRISP Grant, referenced above. Data will be collected on interns' placement in high-need schools and the changes in student-to-counselor ratios in high-need schools.

   b. **multilingual learners**

      Candidates learn and include content and language objectives and the research-based and validated Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model in their lesson plans to address the needs of multilingual learners. Candidates learn and practice using multiple assessments for multilingual learners based on WIDA Consortium frameworks and TESOL standards for PK-12 teachers. Candidates utilize multilingual learners' background knowledge and language proficiency levels to plan adequate support and instruction based on multiple assessments. Candidates learn about the process of language and literacy development of diverse children who are exposed to more than one language and cultural contexts in which this development occurs. Students are required to complete mandatory field experience working with multilingual students in a classroom setting.

   c. **students' access to financial aid**

      Loyola's financial aid initiatives are based on a variety of evidence-based practices to create a supportive and effective financial aid system that enables all students to succeed. Key practices include:

      - Simplifying the financial aid process by requiring only the FAFSA.

      - Offering workshops and one-on-one assistance to help students and families navigate the process effectively.

      - Having two dedicated administrators to ensure Maryland students are informed about state grants and scholarships, enhancing their financial aid opportunities.

      - Creating supportive environments and initiatives to help first-generation students thrive through a dedicated team of faculty, administrators, and first-generation-to-college students.

      - Emphasizing *cura personalis* (care for the whole person) in Loyola's 2030 strategic plan by developing an integrated support network to enhance student success.

3) **How Loyola tracks the impact of the initiatives on retention and completion**

   a. **student mental health**

   Retention and completion data of each cohort of CRISP scholars are being collected as part of the grant evaluation process. Evaluators review and analyze retention and completion data and provide both informative and summative feedback to the program director, who then incorporates them into the improvement of the design and implementation of the program.

   b. **multilingual learners**

   Candidates are required to upload artifacts that demonstrate how they meet the International Literacy Association Standards, TESOL Standards, and State Legislative requirements for meeting the needs of multilingual learners. Candidate artifacts and assessments are reviewed in assessment meetings by Teacher Education Department faculty to ensure completion of standards. Teacher Education faculty and staff also review exit surveys and employment status to monitor retention and preparedness as it relates to working with multilingual learners.

   c. **students' access to financial aid**

   Loyola closely monitors retention and graduation rates, which are publicly displayed in the Fact Book, https://www.loyola.edu/department/institutional-research/facts/fact-book/. Additionally, the Office of Institutional Research provides access to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Data Feedback Reports on its website. These reports include lagging data from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics.

   A comparison of Loyola students' graduation rates, disaggregated by the type of federal aid received, shows similar results across aid types, with graduation rates ranging from 77% to 80%. This consistency indicates that Loyola's support structures are effective across different types of financial aid recipients.

   In a comparison of student success across socio-economic strata, Federal Pell Grant recipients graduated at a rate of 83% within six years, while non-Pell Grant recipients graduated at a rate of 81% within the same timeframe. These high graduation rates for both groups demonstrate Loyola's commitment to supporting all students, regardless of their financial background.

   Loyola aims to support all our students with a commitment to academic excellence and a transformational experience that educates the whole person. The university's strategic initiatives, including enhanced financial aid support and dedicated resources for first-generation and underrepresented students, contribute to these positive outcomes.

   By continuously analyzing and responding to retention and graduation data, Loyola ensures that it meets our goals of providing a high quality, supportive education environment for all students.

McDaniel College

McDaniel College changes lives by inspiring students to achieve educational excellence and realize their potential within a supportive, inclusive, and diverse community. As part of our strategic plan, we emphasize building student success structures and programming to increase retention, persistence, and graduation rates. This includes prioritizing students' overall well-being. Below we highlight initiatives McDaniel College has implemented to support student mental health and access to financial aid.

Supporting Student Mental Health: Specified Wellness Counselors

The Wellness Center integrates Health, Counseling, and Wellness Education services. McDaniel has invested in a staffing model addressing the unique needs of diverse student populations.

Mental Health Counselor for Student Accessibility and Support Services

With approximately one-quarter of students registered with the Student Accessibility and Support Services (SASS) due to disabilities, many of whom have complex mental health needs, McDaniel created a dedicated counselor position. During the 2023-2024 academic year, students registered with SASS made up 34% of the students receiving crisis intervention services in the Wellness Center. This high utilization of crisis services along with the importance of providing mental health services focused specifically on the needs of students with disabilities, including neurodivergence, led to the creation of a Mental Health Counselor for Student Accessibility and Support Services position. This counselor specializes in mental health support for students with disabilities such as ADHD, ASD, and LD, and is embedded in the SASS, increasing accessibility and collaboration with disability support professionals.

Mental Health Counselor for DEI Initiatives

In line with the *Equity in Mental Health Framework* outlined by the Steve Fund and the Jed Foundation, McDaniel established a counselor focused on students of color. This counselor supports students dealing with race-based stress, isolation, culture shock, split experience of self-identity between home and college environments, and imposter syndrome. This counselor partners with the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for wellness-related programming aimed at multicultural student groups.

Acute Care Counselor

McDaniel also created an Acute Care Counselor position to manage crisis intervention and connect students to social services. This counselor leads risk assessments, urgent care, and coordinates care for high-risk students, partnering with local agencies to provide

comprehensive wraparound support. The Acute Care Counselor also works with college departments to coordinate services for students including post-hospitalization or discharge from higher levels of mental health care.

Supporting Students (Mental Health): Student Success Software

In the fall 2023, McDaniel College implemented EAB's Navigate 360, a student success and support management system that integrates best practices in advising and student planning. Navigate 360 allows faculty, staff, and advisors to track and support students more effectively. In the system, advisors can view a student's profile and can take direct actions such as contacting the student, scheduling an appointment for the student with another department or opening a support ticket with another department so that the student completes transactional tasks. Its workflow solutions help academic advisors, faculty, and other staff scale interventions, streamline day-to-day work and create a coordinated network for student success.

One of the ways in which Navigate 360 has helped support students is with progress reports, alerts, and referrals. Early in each semester, at the end of week four, faculty submitted Progress Reports through Navigate 360. This early feedback from professors on students' academic performance allowed support staff to reach out and connect students to resources for academic skill-building, and/or a refer and connect to other resources, such as Financial Aid, Wellness, Career Development, etc. Navigate 360 also allowed faculty to share "kudos" with their students for a job well done. In addition, faculty are also able to submit alerts at any time via the system and report concerns. Information from alerts and progress reports are then used to create cases to document and track student referrals and interventions to determine the effectiveness and impact of those initiatives. This case management workflow helps ensure students receive timely intervention.

McDaniel sent its inaugural progress report campaign in September of the Fall '23 term. The results of the campaign included 169 instructors who provided feedback on 1,638 unique students. The campaign yielded an 89% response rate from faculty.

Fall 2023 Progress Report	
# of evaluations sent	7,560
# of evaluations received from Professors	6,799
Response rate (%)	89%

# of Unique Professors Responding	169
# Unique Student Responses	1,638

Following the progress report campaign, the Student Success and Support Team managed alerts and cases to intervene with students where needed, closing 100% of the cases opened throughout the term. In Spring 2024, the Progress Report campaign had an 84% response rate with 6,140 individual responses. Again, the Student Success and Support Team were able to follow up with students and close 100% of the cases.

Each week members of the Student Outreach Network (SON) discuss students with "at-risk" behavior. SON members can access notes and up-to-date information about the student via Navigate 360 related to academic performance, out-of-classroom involvement, disciplinary issues, appointments with individuals across campus with accompanying notes, and other information gathered from faculty, staff, advisors, coaches, and other members of the coordinated care network. SON members then collaborate to develop and implement an appropriate plan of action.

Further, Navigate 360 helped with scheduling and tracking student appointments. A total of 1,479 individual appointments were made with the Student Success and Support team for academic concerns, general advising, academic standing concerns, and personal concerns. Again, through the case management of students, this helped enhance the support of our students and refer students to campus services as needed. The use of Navigate 360 fostered a more holistic approach to supporting students through better communication and collaboration by campus stakeholders.

McDaniel looks forward to onboarding additional care units in Navigate 360. The College hopes to implement the predictive analytics module, which will assist in understanding critical factors contributing to student success and identifying students' predicted level of support that is needed. In short, by having a better understanding of what determines our students' success, the College hopes to offer additional programming and build better systems that can provide students with more personalized, appropriate, and timely support.

Supporting Students' Access to Financial Aid

McDaniel College employs a caseload model in their Financial Aid office. Each student is assigned their own personal financial aid specialist who remains with the student throughout their time at the College. This allows McDaniel to provide more personalized support to students.

Students receive individualized attention from their specialist who is familiar with the student's situation and can better understand students' unique circumstances. The model builds trust between the Financial Aid office and students, which in turn, creates stronger relationships resulting in students feeling more comfortable asking questions and seeking help. In addition, the caseload model creates more consistency with communication, processes, and problem resolution. When individualized specialists are already familiar with their students' situations, it allows for a more streamlined approach and issues to be addressed more quickly. Financial Aid specialists are accountable for the progress of their caseload which leads to improved service quality. The following chart represents the percentage of McDaniel students that have received state aid over the past 5 years.

Year	% of Students Receiving State Aid
2019	26%
2020	26%
2021	27%
2022	28%
2023	30%

Conclusion

McDaniel College is committed to supporting student success through targeted mental health initiatives, innovative student success software, and a personalized financial aid model. Each initiative is grounded in evidence-based practices and designed to meet students' needs holistically. The College continuously tracks the effectiveness of these initiatives through data-driven approaches, ensuring that interventions directly contribute to improved retention, persistence, and completion outcomes. These efforts align with the goals of the 2024 State Plan, positioning McDaniel as a leader in student success and well-being.

2024_MICA_Best Practices Report

The Maryland Institute College of Art creates systems of care that support each student's success and sense of belonging. This short report highlights specific initiatives that support student mental health, multilingual learners, and student access to financial aid. The report describes evidence-based practices that MICA employs or seeks to employ as a component of these initiatives. The report also describes how MICA tracks or plans to track the impact of our actions on retention and completion. MICA is developing an integrated Student Success and Belonging approach, connecting, and coordinating academic student support, academic advising, health and wellness programs, financial aid programs, and student engagement opportunities that will enhance our student culture and climate and inform data-driven student retention, persistence, and belonging efforts.

MICA Student Mental Health
The MICA Student Counseling Center (SCC) serves and supports the emotional and psychological well-being of MICA students. SCC mission is to provide effective, high quality, readily accessible, culturally informed mental health, and outreach services to MICA students.

In response to an increase in demand for care and services post-pandemic, the SCC conducted research and consulted with other college counseling centers to identify best practices in the field. The SCC staff collected and analyzed student/client data from the Titanium-SCC database management system, the Center for Collegiate Mental Health pre- and post- treatment outcome data from the Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms Instrument, and the SCC's semi-annual student survey. At the conclusion of this research, the SCC adopted a stepped-care model within a more comprehensive and integrated counseling center approach. The stepped-care model informs the PATHs program described below. The comprehensive counseling center approach integrates four primary commitments: to clinical services, consultation and collaborative services, outreach and prevention, and training and education.

To deliver on its mission, SCC implemented a new and comprehensive care model in Fall 2023 named PATHs (Positive Actions Toward Health) that encompasses robust prevention and intervention services. The SCC step-care model consists of providing MICA students individual therapy; group therapy and support groups; case management and referral services; guided care; on-campus programming/outreach; a 24/7 support line; wellness spaces on campus; and crisis intervention. The implementation of SCC's PATHs model created five SCC signature initiatives: (1) customized care, offering varying tiers of individual therapy with the option of case management and group counseling support; (2) group care—rotating groups, based on students' self-reported needs, addressing depression, anxiety, and ADHD; (3) outreach events/programs and collaborative events with campus partners; (4) wellness spaces for students to facilitate self-care (via teletherapy, medication, grounding, etc.); and (5) a 24/7 counseling support line and wellness app that provides crisis intervention, including after-hours support for students in distress or in crisis. These five initiatives provide MICA students wrap-around care by developing a wellness and prevention culture, eliminating long wait-times or waitlists, and providing same day/next day appointments.

The Student Counseling Center's assessment of the inaugural year of the PATHs care model shows remarkably positive student outcomes. Student use of the SCC's programs increased from 23.6% of MICA's student population in the 2022-2023 academic year to 38.24% of the MICA student population in the 2023-2024 academic year. Over the same period, data shows a reduction in crisis hospitalizations among MICA students, further evidence of the initiative's success.

The implementation of SCC's PATHs care model has contributed to improved retention and completion among those students who received services based on SCC administered student satisfaction surveys in Fall 2022, Spring 2023, Fall 2023, and Spring 2024. In the 2023-2024 academic year, 92% of survey participants agreed, or strongly agreed, that an SCC program "*has positively impacted my ability to remain in college*" compared to 80.9% in the 2022-2023 academic year—before the implementation of the PATHs program. Similarly, the Spring 2024 survey shows that 88% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that "*Counseling has helped me to be more successful in college*" up from 72.4% reported by the Spring 2023 survey. Data will continue to be collected, analyzed, and tracked through new and existing modalities in SCC's ongoing efforts to provide the MICA student premier holistic care.

Multilingual MICA
MICA employs a strength-based approach to the language-minority student experience, building on the unique skills multilingual students bring to the institution. The support for undergraduate multilingual students at MICA begins with their first contact with a designated international student admissions counselor who guides them through the process. Once admitted, multilingual students are advised by MICA's first-year advisor, who streamlines the registration process by preregistering them for MICA's unique language-supported sections of first year requirements, taught by English learning specialists who hold advanced degrees in language acquisition.

New curricular and co-curricular initiatives are being developed including a live/learn community with an emphasis on retention through social integration of international and domestic students and an opportunity for multilingual students to note their English language development on their transcript by minoring in English Language Studies. Advances have been made in fuller integration of international students in MICA's signature entrepreneurship program, and the Myerhoff Career Development Office is expanding their international internship opportunities. The Writing Studio provides individual instruction by professional tutors for multilingual students. The Counseling Center offers support groups for international students and has a network of multilingual therapists. ELL specialists provide ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty to work successfully with multilingual students, including workshops, an 8-week online course in inclusive teaching methods, and the publication of an inclusive teaching zine.

The initiatives, directions, and areas of support for multilingual learners at the graduate level include culturally responsive pedagogical practices in the classroom, and training and support

for students, faculty, and staff. Graduate Studies embraces an evidence-based asset model toward multilingual learners. As such, the Emphasis in Intercultural Communication, a twelve credit, four course emphasis that helps bridge the communication gap in diverse contexts, launched in the 2021 academic year. Each course focuses on preparing students to navigate an increasingly global society by integrating multilingual learners through interdisciplinary communication. Graduates of the Emphasis in Intercultural Communication more than doubled in number after the initial launch.

In addition, an ELL Specialist with expertise in linguistics and intercultural communication provides one-on-one faculty and student support regarding access to, and development of, effective multilingual resources in and out of the classroom. During the admission process an oral interview is conducted by an ELL Specialist to aid directors and faculty in assessing multilingual learners. Intercultural Perspectives Training is provided for Graduate Program Assistants every fall semester to introduce them to potential differences and similarities in cross-cultural communication. In addition, for New Student Orientation, International Perspectives and Intercultural Communication sessions are offered to prepare students to interact with MICA's diverse population of peers and introduce the community to ELL resources and support available at MICA. The success of these training courses can be measured by consistent successful evaluation and feedback from participants in requests for continued engagement, course evaluations, informal surveys, and ad hoc narratives.

Initiatives to increase access to learners in and outside our MICA graduate education community are provided by offering a distinct Thesis Writing course focused on clarity in communication for multilingual learners and non-traditional students. Graduate Studies students have access to the Writing Studio for individual writing support from professional tutors for multilingual students. Training sessions focused on pedagogical support specific to multilingual learners are also periodically provided for faculty.

Making all students feel included, valued, and engaged in a more inclusive MICA community, in particular for those who identify as multilingual, is the direction of our undergraduate and graduate education programs.

MICA Student Access to Financial Aid
MICA supports students who seek admission to the Institute by providing a series of FAFSA workshops aimed at improving students' understanding of the financial aid process. These workshops offer hands-on assistance with completing the FAFSA, identifying eligible aid, and managing financial aid effectively. Based on evidence-based practices, the workshops include personalized guidance, as research indicates that students who receive one-on-one support are more likely to complete the FAFSA accurately. MICA monitors the effectiveness of these workshops by analyzing FAFSA completion rates before and after their implementation. Student feedback surveys are also distributed to gauge participants' understanding and ease of access after attending the workshops. MICA also assesses resultant yield and first year retention by key socio-economic factors to inform early alert interventions.

MICA also employs a need-based institutional aid micro-grant strategy entitled the Horizon program to distribute financial aid equitably and efficiently and cover needs not covered by the Federal and State aid. The Horizon program aims to cover additional financial need of students against tuition and cost of attendance while supporting institutional goals related to access, retention, and completion. MICA administers longitudinal studies to track the progress of aid recipients over time, from initial enrollment through graduation, to assess the long-term impact of the aid strategy. The Financial Aid Office also conducts a pre- and post-analysis of student awards on yield/enrollment or progression indices before and after the implementation of any changes in the financial aid awarding strategy. The office evaluates how adjustments to aid packages (e.g., increasing need-based aid for certain student groups) impacts outcomes, identifying which modifications lead to improved retention and completion rates. MICA will implement the CSS profile to further refine and expand its awarding approach for 2025.

MICA understands that financial aid is a key component in student retention and persistence to graduation; it is central to our new Student Success and Belonging initiative.

MICA and Student Success
Overall, MICA reports a strong undergraduate retention and graduation rate. Of the first-time, full-time students who started in Fall 2023, 83% returned to MICA in Fall 2024. And the last six-year graduation rate that the Institute reported to IPEDS was 71%. MICA seeks to improve on these positive student outcomes through the launch of our Student Success and Belonging initiative, which will provide holistic support for each student's academic, financial, social, mental and physical wellbeing.

Mount St. Mary's University

NO 2024 SUBMISSION

NOTRE DAME
OF MARYLAND
UNIVERSITY

2024 Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal

Notre Dame of Maryland University's ("NDMU" or the "University") continues to implement and refine several initiatives that address student mental health, support for multilingual learners, and improve access to financial aid. These initiatives are in line with the University's mission to educate and empower students while enhancing retention and completion rates.

To support student mental health, NDMU's Division of Student Life takes a multifaceted approach. The Office of the Dean of Students (ODS) launched a Case Management team in fall 2022. This team was created to address concerns around basic needs, sense of belonging, problem-solving, and extenuating circumstances. The team proactively intervenes with students to ensure their well-being and academic success. The ODS convenes the Students of Concern Committee bi-weekly to execute coordinated wraparound care for students experiencing barriers to success. This is an evidence-based practice. In addition to the Students of Concern Committee, in the fall of 2023, Student Life re-introduced the Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT), which also meets bi-weekly. BIT is a cross-functional working group responsible for reviewing student cases involving significant risk or potential harm to students or the campus community. This initiative is grounded in evidence-based practices emphasizing the importance of holistic student care and proactive outreach. In rank order, mental health, general financial concerns, and academic concerns are the top three reported concerns of students engaging in case management services. The NDMU Counseling Center provides mental health counseling and outreach support to students. Students seen in the Counseling Center frequently present with diagnosable mood disorder, anxiety, and/or history of trauma.

In support of multilingual learners, NDMU's Student Success Center offers a variety of academic resources, including peer tutoring, writing support, and workshops on study skills, time management, and overcoming procrastination. The Center expanded its services in Fall 2023 to include loaner laptops and textbooks, ensuring that all students have access to the tools they need for academic success. Additionally, NDMU introduced BrainFuse, a 24-hour online tutoring platform, which provides students with continuous access to academic support, further benefiting multilingual learners who may need assistance outside of regular academic hours. The introduction of BrainFuse and the expansion of resources in the Student Success Center are informed by best practices in academic support, with research showing that continuous and flexible access to tutoring improves student outcomes.

For first-generation students, the Trailblazers Program has been instrumental in supporting their academic and financial needs, particularly with FAFSA completion and financial literacy. This program has demonstrated significant positive outcomes, with participants showing higher retention and graduation rates than their non-participating peers. For example, in the 2017 cohort, first-generation students participating in the Trailblazers Program retained at a rate of 70%, compared to 55% for non-participants. Similarly, the retention rates for the 2018 cohort were 74% for Trailblazers participants versus 70% for non-participants. This data shows the

impact of the program in supporting first-generation students both academically and financially. Additionally, Pell Grant recipients in the 2017 and 2018 cohorts who participated in the program had higher retention rates (78% and 71%, respectively) than non-participants (60% and 52%). Cumulative GPA data also reflects the positive influence of the program, with Trailblazers participants showing higher GPAs than their non-participating peers across multiple cohorts.

NDMU utilizes the Navigate system to track the impact of these initiatives. Navigate provides real-time analytics on student engagement, academic performance, and at-risk behaviors, allowing the university to monitor the effectiveness of its retention efforts. Through Early Alerts and Predictive Analytics, at-risk students are flagged for interventions, ensuring timely support is provided. The Case Management Team, Student Success Center, and Trailblazers Program all benefit from data-driven decision-making, as retention and academic performance data are continuously analyzed to ensure program effectiveness.

At NDMU, all or nearly all traditional undergraduate students receive some form of scholarship and/or grant aid as a part of their financial aid package. In addition to the FAFSA activities referenced above, NDMU's Offices of Admissions and Financial Aid advocate for prospective students to complete their FAFSA in a timely manner in order to receive their full allotment of federal, State, and institutional financial aid. FAFSA completers typically receive a more robust financial aid package and are more likely to ultimately enroll and be successful. In AY2022-23, NDMU's average net price was approximately $22,000 compared to a weighted cost of attendance of just over $60,000. In FY2024, 89% of NDMU traditional undergraduate students were MD residents and just over 50% were individuals of a minority ethnic background. A quarter of these students were first generation and 50% were Pell Grant eligible and relied on a combination of federal, State, and institutional financial aid to support their educational pursuits. In FY2024, NDMU awarded just under $10.0M in institutional grants and scholarships.

In conclusion, NDMU's initiatives supporting student mental health, multilingual learners, and access to financial aid are informed by evidence-based practices and are yielding positive results. The Case Management Team's proactive support, the Student Success Center's expanded resources, and the Trailblazers Program's focus on financial literacy and academic planning are all contributing to improved retention and completion rates. The University's use of the Navigate system ensures that the impact of these initiatives is closely monitored, allowing for data-driven adjustments to further enhance student success.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Greg FitzGerald, Chief of Staff, at (410) 532-5109 or gfitzgerald@ndm.edu, or Dr. Martha Walker, Provost & Vice President of Academic Affairs, at (410) 532-5321 or mwalker12@ndm.edu.

Best Practices Report

September 2024

St. John's College, Annapolis

1. Initiatives aimed at addressing student mental health, multilingual students, and financial aid access.

   <u>Mental Health</u>
   Policies already in place:
   - Established, campus-based clinical mental health services (individual therapy, group counseling, psychiatric medication management) with integration with health services to help ensure holistic care
   - Additional, contracted telehealth support that includes individual therapy and psychiatric services to help ensure all students have access to free mental health services
   - Current wellness programming: workshops, outreach events and wellness walls including public health information, Serenity Space
   - 24/7 SJC Mental Health Crisis Helpline

   Policies in development:
   - Newly hired staff to focus on building wellness programming
     - Increase wellness promotion on social media to expand reach of public health information and mental health skill-building
     - Assist in implementing the following strategic goals to help students access social support and resources:
       - Red Folder Project (faculty/staff-focused) w/QPR training
       - Green Bandana Project (student-focused) w/QPR training
     - Assist in implementing the following strategic goal to help ensure we're meeting the mental health needs of students:
       - Determine potential needs for other mental health resources/services supports (SHWC-focused) via survey research
     - Improve/increase wellness workshops, possibly expanding Life Skills 101 workshop series, and ensure focus on self-care, stress management, proper nutrition, sleep hygiene, and the importance of appropriate movement/exercise
     - Implement "Toilet Talk"-type info sheet in student bathrooms
   - Working to ensure appropriate training of new hires in student-facing roles (e.g., MHFA for CF's, CIT training for Public Safety)

Financial Aid
- Regular and extensive work with Huron to meet best practices with Financial Aid
- Financial aid counselors take full advantage of our small number of students to:
  - Meet one-on-one with students
  - Explain policies
  - Help students make the best application for aid

Multilingual Students
- Regular campus celebrations of cuisine from the home countries of international students to assist with student sense of belonging on campus
- College writing tutor for ESL students
  - Meets one-on-one with students for additional help with writing
  - Counsels students on acculturation to the college
  - Assists with idiomatic speech
  - Helps students develop study plans
  - Advises on class participation strategies

2. Evidence based practices that inform the initiatives
   - Best practice therapies in mental health, including:
     - Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
     - Brain-Spotting
     - Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS)
     - Integrated care model
   - Regular attendance at colloquia and conferences to help learn about and maintain best practices in financial aid, including those sponsored by:
     - Council for Independent Colleges (CIC)
     - National Association of College Admissions Counseling (NACAC)
     - College Board Forum
     - National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) a
     - Other regional conferences
   - Online webinars sponsored by many entities, including:
     - Department of Education
     - Huron
     - the College Board
     - EAB
     - National Student Clearinghouse

3. Tracking the impact of our practices on retention
   - St. John's is a very small campus, with under 600 students, and does not have a separate retention or institutional data office. It is difficult to find meaningful trends

with such small numbers. The Board of Visitors and Governors' Enrollment and Retention Committee provides guidance. The dean, registrar's office, student affairs, wellness center, and assistant dean's office work to:

- o Follow retention data and pull out basic demographic trends as useful
- o Survey the students regularly using the Maryland College Alcohol Survey
- o Give smaller targeted surveys on health and wellness programs and outreach
- o Bring students who are in danger of withdrawing to the notice of the appropriate staff
- o Interview twice every student who withdraws mid-year to help foster student retention and, if not retained, return at a later date
- o Collect and follow data on reasons for withdrawal

2024 Report to the Maryland Higher Education Commission — September 2024

Stevenson shares the State's goal of expanding educational access and attainment for all Marylanders and supports and contributes to Maryland's 2025 completion goal. In support of the Moore-Miller Administration 2024 State Plan's Goal "Setting up Maryland Students for Success", this 2024 report reviews initiatives Stevenson has put in place to support student mental health, multilingual learners, and student access to financial aid.

1. **SUPPORTING STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH**: Supporting student mental health has been a priority for Stevenson University with the implementation of several new initiatives and programs. First, there has been a focus on educating our entire campus community on the mental health needs of students and supporting their mental and emotional wellbeing. These educational programs included keynote addresses to our campus community, Mental Health First Aid Training, and QPR Gatekeeper Training. Second, courses and services have been added to provide direct support to students. An overview of these initiatives is provided below.

   <u>**Keynote Addresses**</u>

   Engaging the Disengaged: Strategies to Connect with Our Students (January 2023). Keynote address delivered at the faculty in-service to all full-time faculty.

   Supporting Student Mental Health: The Role of Faculty (August 2023). Keynote address delivered at the faculty in-service to all full-time faculty.

   Teaching and Learning in a Neurodiverse World: Multidisciplinary Perspectives (January 2024). Keynote address delivered at the President's Faculty/Staff Meeting to all full-time faculty and staff.

   Providing Holistic Support for Students: The Role of Faculty (January 2024). Keynote address delivered at the faculty in-service to all full-time faculty.

   <u>**Mental Health First Aid Training**</u>

   In December 2023, the Center for Student Success at Stevenson hosted its first ever Mental Health First Aid training for staff in student-facing roles at the University. Staff from the Office of Academic Advising, the Office of Academic Support, the Office of Accessibility and Disability Services, the Office of Residence Life and Housing, the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, and the Wellness Center attended this training. [Mental Health First Aid](#) is an evidence-based, early-intervention course that teaches participants how to recognize when someone is experiencing a mental health challenge and to connect them to resources on and/or off campus.

   <u>**QPR Gatekeeper Training**</u>

   In August 2023, all Resident Assistants and Resident Directors completed a live 3-hour QPR Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention Training. This [QPR Gatekeeper Training](#) program was designed to dispel common myths about suicide, help participants recognize the warning signs of suicide, and teach them how to respond to someone who might be having thoughts of suicide. In addition to content delivery, the training included small group exercises and behavioral rehearsal so students

could practice the skills they were learning.

Therapy Groups and Workshops

In Fall 2023, the university Wellness Center enhanced their counseling services by offering group therapy and workshops for Stevenson students. These included a new group for freshmen focused on helping with the adjustment to college and a series of stress management workshops.

1-Credit Course Options

In Spring 2024, the Center for Student Success launched the addition of three new 1-credit courses to provide holistic support to students. The courses, which can count towards a student's general electives, focus on helping students to develop skills to support their personal and mental wellness. Courses include Understanding and Managing Stress, Building Resilience through Mindfulness, and Personal Budgeting. In Spring 2024, one section of each course was offered with 42 students enrolled across all three courses. Course offerings have been expanded for Fall 2024 with a total of 6 sections being offered.

2. **SUPPORTING MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS**: In the Spring of 2024 Stevenson drafted a policy that outlines a process for multilingual learners to apply for academic adjustments in their first 60 credits of study. The policy is designed to provide equal opportunity for students to access their education as they develop proficiency of the English language. The policy has been approved for adoption in the 2024-2025 academic year.

3. **ENHANCING STUDENT ACCESS TO FINANCIAL AID**: In the Fall of 2023, Stevenson began the process of re-examining its policies and processes related the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) required for students to retain their eligibility for federal financial aid. The goal of this project was to remove barriers and increase access to federal financial aid. After a thorough benchmarking project, several changes to our policies and processes were made with the new policy going into effect on July 1, 2024. The following adjustments were made as part of this project:
   - A change to the SAP criteria that includes scaled requirements for GPA and Completion Rate based on a student's number of attempted credits. This adjustment allows more grace to students who are struggling with the transition into college.
   - The addition of a Warning Status so that students are evaluated for SAP at the end of each semester and are provided a warning if they are not on track to meet SAP requirements.
   - The development of resources, such as our Understanding SAP guide, to help students better understand the requirements for Satisfactory Academic Progress and eligibility for federal and State financial aid.
   - A simplified appeal process that includes support from the Center for Student Success in crafting an appeal and securing appropriate third-party documentation.
   - A streamlined process for creating the required academic plans for students who have a successful appeal.
   - A cross-campus communication plan to provide outreach to students who are in jeopardy of losing their eligibility for federal or State financial aid.

Through continued examination of student needs and university policies and processes, the University will continue to explore ways to enhance student mental health, support for multilingual learners, and student access to financial aid as elements of Stevenson's holistic efforts to support student success.

Washington Adventist University

NO 2024 SUBMISSION

Report on Best Practices and Annual Progress toward the 55% Completion Goal

Washington College's mission is to challenge and inspire emerging citizen leaders to discover lives of purpose and passion. We are proud to support the Moore-Miller Administration 2024 State Plan's Goal "Setting up Maryland Students for Success" and the 55% completion goal.

Efforts to address factors that led to student withdrawals were made college-wide last year, informed by withdrawal data, focus group work, retention consultation and departmental reviews. Guided by our Retention Working Group, which draws it membership from all areas of the institution, we have made big investments in student wellness:

Following data-supported recommendations put forth by a mental health strategic planning group back in 2020, Washington College launched a collaborative initiative with Mantra Health to provide free virtual mental health resources for its students to supplement our three-person clinical counseling staff. After two years of partnering with Mantra to provide individual teletherapy services to our students, we agreed to an expanded partnership last year to bring students additional virtual mental health and wellness services. These included short-courses for self-care, short-term coaching, and in-the-moment support and problem solving. This broader range of services enabled our students to select the level and type of care they needed and addressed their desire to have 24-7 access to a wide variety of mental health supports.

Through training of key student and employee leaders on campus, outreach to parents, as well as a digital and print campaign, our usage of the Mantra services has reached over 8% of our student population which far surpasses the campus goal of reaching at least 5%. Notably, the Mantra resources successfully reached certain populations at higher levels than their representation on campus (non-white and non-heterosexual), addressing the recommendations of the strategic planning group to provide more supports that serve under-represented populations who experience unique stressors. Student satisfaction with the Mantra resources during the 23-24 academic year was excellent, specifically, a rating of 9.18 on a 10-point scale (10 being the highest rating) for "fit with therapist," and an overall satisfaction rating of 5 on a 5-point scale.

In addition, inclusion efforts also seek to ameliorate social cliques. In the last year, the College:

- Expanded training and compensation for RAs and peer mentors
- Created New Connections for students seeking more social opportunities
- Established the All-Comers policy for SGA funding
- Updated the bias policy
- Launched the We All Belong campaign

Last summer the Center for Career Development implemented two new programs:

- FirstGenU - asynchronous professional development modules supporting first generation students
- Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) - connects students with disabilities to federal internships and employment

We also took action to ensure timely submission of midterm grades to support early intervention. 100% of faculty submitted mid-term grades in Spring 2023 and Fall 2023. This led to improved outreach and support for high-risk first-year students and students on warning or probation.

Envisioning community and civic engagement as a vital component of a sense of purpose at belonging, Washington College created the Thomas V. Mike Miller Director of Civic Engagement position and joined Transform Mid-Atlantic, the Premier civic engagement collaborative comprising nearly 40 schools in Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Delaware. A new qualitative research methods course engages students in active research assessing civic engagement on campus by studying the knowledge, beliefs and actions of students, faculty, and staff.

Responding to the need for more faculty professional development to support our increasingly diverse student population, the Center for Teaching and Learning shares insights and best practices for teaching and supporting language diversity as a strength in the classroom and on campus. As part of International Education Week, they held a panel with faculty members to discuss these topics:

- Teaching Multilingual Writers: Lessons from World Languages and Cultures

- Translingualism: Theory and Practice of Language Diversity in the Writing Center

- Ungrading Standard American English

Washington College also took steps this year to support students' access to financial aid:

- During peak FSFA filing time, we offer extended and evening hours, and one-on-one appointments to assist students in completing their FASFA applications.

- We have begun dispersing aid on the first day of classes, instead of waiting until the end of add/drop. This provides earlier access to credits that can be used at the bookstore so that students are better prepared for classes.

- During this semester, we will be increasing our communications and outreach with students, especially those related to aid renewal requirements. Data show that students respond to repetition and timely requests, and this new effort is expected to improve student engagement and access to financial aid resources.

Best Practices Report Regarding Initiatives for Supporting Mental Health, Learning for Multilingula Learners, and Financial Aid at St. Mary's Seminary and University

Background: St. Mary's Seminary and University (SMSU) is the oldest Roman Catholic semianry in the United States, having been founded in 1791. Today, its students comprise two groups: seminarians and part-time lay students. The seminarians are all full-time, residential students. This background makes it clear why the initiatives at SMSU may differ from those at other schools.

Responses to Prompts:

1) Identify at least three initiatives the institution has in place or will be developing to support (a) student mental health, (b) multilingual learners and/or (c) students' access to financial aid:

Answer: Regarding menthal health, 1) our students meet on a biweekly basis with mentors on an one-on-one to discuss a number of things, including menthal health. 2) Representatives of each class of the student body also meet with the schools administration at least twice per semester to discuss the atmostphere at the school; questions regarding mental health regularly come up here. 3) As for multilingual learners, we offer them extra help with the English language in the form of courses, tutorials, and mentoring.

2) Of those initiatives, describe how and what evidence-based practices inform the initiatives' efforts.

Regarding 1): Every full-time, residential student at SMSU is assigned a mentor on the faculty. The student meets with this faculty member biweekly to discuss a number of things, including mental health issues. When a student raises concerns about mental health, the mentor will adivse the student on how to avoid stress, anxiety, and other emotional states that negatively impacy mental health. The mentor will also suggest strategies to the student for keeping the state of his mental health positive. The mentor will check up on the student at future meetings to see if any progress is beging made regarding the student's mental health. If the student's state does not get better, or gets worse, the mentor will report this to the Vice Rector, who may either take matters into his own hands or else may suggest to the student's sponsoring diocese that he see a counsellor.

It is also worth noting that every residential, full-time student who comes to SMSU undergoes a full psychological evaluation before being admitted, which means that the faculty are, first of all, confident in the student's ability to undertake theological studies and undergo seminary formation, and, when a student does experience difficulties regarding mental health, the faculty are therefore more than prepared to address the issues causing the problems in question.

Regarding 2): The students are divided into five classes, based on how far advanced in the SMSU curriculum they are. Each class elects a representative to a body known as "House Council." On this council also sit the Rector, the Vice Rector, the Academic Dean, and other

administrators. This council meets twice per semester and the administrators present at the meeting ask the representatives of the study body about the general wellbeing of the students. Issues regarding mental health – for example the stress or anxiety level of the student body as a whole – are brought up. At such meetings, the students suggest institutional changes or initiatives that could be implemented to improve the overall mental health of the student body. Recent suggestions that have been implemented within the past few years have included: adjusting the academic calendar to allow more space between classes and increasing the number of informal activities for the student body.

Regarding 3): Every student – regardless of his native language – who begins full-time studies at SMSU is given a diagnostic exam to test his skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Any student who tests lower than would be expected for someone who is about to undertake graduate-level theology coursework is placed into a course or into a tutorial designed to develop the skill that is found to be lacking. So as not to overburden students, these courses take chronological priority over their curricular coursework.

3) Describe how the institution is tracking the impact of those initiatives on retention and completion (and any other relevant outcomes) and a brief description of relevant analyses.

Regarding 1): The mentorship system established at SMSU is common to every Roman Catholic seminary in the United States and has been inexistence since before any living person can remember otherwise. Consequently, it is impossible to measure the impact of this initiative as compared to what the state of affairs would be in its absence. Nevertheless, mentors are given regular training in how best to do their jobs and the handling of difficult cases is reviewed by more senior administrators, all of which incorporates feedback given in the form of anonymous surveys. Consequently, SMSU is constantly working to improve the mentoring initiative as well as its impact, even if this is not precisely measurable.

Regarding 2): The impact of the House Council initiatives is measured via student feedback at future council meetings.

Regarding 3): Each student who is placed in remedial English coursework or tutorials is given the same diagnostic exam that he was given when he was first placed in such coursework or in such tutorials. This provides us with valuable data by which to measure the effectiveness of our remedial English offerings.

Women's Institute of Torah Seminary & College
2024 Best Practices Report

Women's Institute of Torah Seminary & College (WITS) has taken a number of steps to support students' mental health, their access to financial aid, and to facilitate student completion of their degree programs.

WITS has a confidential email for mental health referrals staffed by a volunteer social worker. The Menaheles/Executive Dean also provides referrals. This information is shared with students at New Student Orientation, in the student handbook, via reminder emails, and on their SIS dashboard. To further support students, WITS provides pastoral counseling services with local rabbinic authorities who meet with students by appointment or as walk-ins during scheduled hours. The Menaheles/Executive Dean and faculty also provide guidance in academic and personal growth areas.

The Office of Financial Aid supports students' ability to apply and attend WITS. WITS continues to look for ways to simplify and streamline this process. The Director of Financial Aid has worked to clarify the needed information for both the scholarship applicant and the tuition committee. This helps students receive a faster response to their financial aid application. To keep families on timeline for FAFSA, the Director of Financial Aid sends email reminders starting in November. This email included "Helpful Tips" regarding FAFSA application/renewal and was sent to all current students and their parents. Sending this information earlier in the year should alleviate the last- minute pressure to complete the FAFSA by March 1st to qualify for Maryland state awards. Further, WITS added a custom field on each student's SIS account to record institutional scholarship application status: submitted, accepted, or denied. This field allows staff to track the number of submitted applications and the number of denied or accepted applications. Applicants who are awarded scholarships can access their institutional award amount in their Populi account.

WITS has a number of steps in place to support students throughout their degree program and facilitate completion. A new student accepted to WITS is assigned an Academic Advisor who supports their understanding of the degree acquisition process, knowledge of requirements for Majors and Minors, prerequisites for individual courses, and familiarity with the course choice and registration process each semester. Advisors meet with each student before her initial registration, explaining the basics of each of the above areas before proceeding with the actual registration process. First, new students attend a pre-registration group meeting to provide detail on the following critical areas of information: fundamentals of getting a WITS degree; use of program plans; testing opportunities; majors and minors; navigating the WITS website; choosing Kodesh courses; financial aid; use of the SIS system for registration; and accessing academic records. Students have a choice of attending this meeting in person or Zoom (3 dates were available for each).

After the group meeting, each new student meets in person or virtually with an Academic Advisor for a personalized session to develop a program plan and review academic policies and other information. WITS academic advisors seek to balance providing direction and a process as clear and uncomplicated as possible for our students while also empowering students to navigate getting their degree as independently as possible. Based on student feedback to clarify graduation requirements, WITS academic advisors design individual academic program plans for each student in accordance with their major and minor fields of study. These academic plans are divided by (1) Subject Areas Required for Graduation such as General Education Requirements; Required Jewish Studies; Requirements for the Major; Free Electives and (2) Status of Individual Courses: Required; Recommended; In Progress; Completed (with credits assigned). Students use these program plans, updated once or twice each

semester, to track their academic progress and readiness for graduation. The advisement team also created Advisement Sheets for each major/minor that listed all specific academic requirements. Students were encouraged to independently use these sheets to choose courses and plot their degree process. Students are further advised on the registration process in the SIS system, and their ability to register is unlocked after this meeting. Following this session, appointments with an Academic Advisor may be scheduled at any time through an online appointment system. At a minimum, each subsequent semester, students are required to meet with an Academic Advisor prior to registration.

Within the strategic planning process and from findings resulting from student surveys, WITS identified the need to strengthen academic services and supports to more fully respond to the differing learning needs of students. Strategic Objective 1.5 in the strategic plan (Strengthen academic services and supports that address the differing learning needs of students) specifically addresses this issue. WITS has begun providing referrals for tutorial assistance and subsidizing the cost. This tutoring is provided by both peers and alumnae. Academic advisors match current students to either previous or current students who served as peer or alumni tutors. This service is subsidized by the Executive Dean's Student Fund, a fund designated for providing services or benefits to students.

At New Student Orientation, the Academic Dean informs students of the academic support and tutoring available to them. In the revised New Student Orientation survey, WITS added a question for incoming students to express interest in providing peer tutoring with an option to specify the subjects in which they could tutor. In response to assessment results which demonstrated that by the end of the academic year, some students no longer recalled information on tutoring and mental health services from orientation and the student handbook, WITS began sending reminder emails of critical information each semester. This includes an email sent to students detailing the mental health support services available. This information is also available through a link on every student's SIS dashboard. WITS has also developed a new form, where faculty and staff can flag concerns about a student's academic performance or overall wellbeing. Submitted forms are reviewed by the Menaheles/Executive Dean and the Academic Dean, and the program coordinator if appropriate, who determine if intervention is warranted and the appropriate interventions.

WITS' high retention rates of over 90% and graduation rates of over 80% indicate the effectiveness of the academic guidance and advisement.

Yeshiva College of the Nation's Capital

The Yeshiva College of the Nation's Capital (YCNC) is a small boutique college offering a single specialized degree. This unique program creates an intimate atmosphere not typical of a larger college offering multiple disciplines of study. Additionally, since we only offer one degree, it is not atypical for students to decide during their studies to pursue alternate degrees. For the unique subset of students interested in pursuing a bachelor's of Talmudic Law, culturally, pursuing this degree is seen as a prestigious and desirable pursuit in of itself. This is true regardless of whether the students obtain the degree. Therefore, completion rate is not necessarily an accurate assessment of students' success at YCNC, as completion of this specialized degree is often not a student's primary objective in joining YCNC. Increasing enrollment may better reflect our success as an institution than our completion rate. That being said, our completion rate, although still relatively low, is increasing. We have several initiatives that have been effective in impacting both the student experience and our completion rate. Four of these initiatives are highlighted below.

"Knowing our Students"

Our foremost initiative "*Knowing our Students*" is a guiding principal of our institution. Our head administrators are both teaching staff and rabbinic leaders who interact on a personal level with each student. In addition to our head administrators giving classes to every student, they also develop personal relationships and are able to offer guidance through frequent one-on-one meetings and interactions. The rest of our teaching staff is composed of rabbis who spend much time regularly counseling students regarding life issues, learning issues, social issues, family challenges, careers, and mental health challenges. Through these meetings and personal relationships, students may be referred to mental health professionals.

We believe that our "Knowing our Students" initiative/guiding principal has been the cornerstone of our increasing enrollment, and subsequently our increasing completion rate.

One-on-One Academic Resources for All

To ensure the success of our student body, we offer extensive one-on-one tutoring services to all students at no additional cost. As part of required course work, students study with partners during

designated daily times. During those designated daily hours, we have dedicated staff, knowledgeable in their subject areas, that work with these student pairs. Every student, both those who are struggling and those who are excelling, knows who they can turn to with questions or academic guidance.

"One-on-One Academic Resources for All" is a large contributory factor in our student's averaging above a 3.0 GPA across all 4 years.

Multilingual Learners Welcomed

YCNC has several international students, who are multilingual learners. Additionally, our coursework requires fluency in multiple languages. We require international students to have a baseline proficiency in English but find they quickly broaden their ability to communicate, due to our small size and individualized attention. Additionally, our requirement that all students live in on-campus housing and eat meals in a single main dining room contributes to language and cultural immersion with other students. As mentioned above, student partnering contributes to language expansion in the multiple languages required for our degree.

Financial Aid Access Explained

During the application and registration process we provide detailed instructions on how to access financial aid. In addition to a standard financial aid application, students and parents are invited to provide a narrative explaining their individual circumstances and work personally with a financial aid officer. Most scholarships provided come from our institution. We provide significant financial aid to approximately 75% of our student body.

We find personal outreach, providing the parents/students with a dedicated financial aid contact, during the application process increases the likelihood of parents/students feeling comfortable with the process, and seeking financial aid.

Measuring Success through Data

Year Fall Enrollment	Total Enrollment	Graduation
Fall 2021	34	5
Fall 2022	43	4
Fall 2023	57	14

Enrollment & Completion Numbers Fall 2021 - Fall 2023