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Executive Summary

Pursuant to Higher Education Article § 11-307. The Commission shall:1) Compile and review the reports of the institutions and system; and (2) Present the reports, together with the comments and recommendations of the Commission, to the Governor and, subject to § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly of Maryland.

The annual Performance Accountability Report (PAR) serves as an important mechanism by which public colleges and universities in Maryland are held accountable. Through a performance accountability plan, institutions are required to establish and maintain performance standards, and use metrics to assess their effectiveness in tackling institutional and statewide higher education goals. Every year, the governing board of each public institution of higher education is required to submit a written report to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) on the institution's progress in attaining the objectives in the performance accountability plan. This summative statewide report includes highlights from Maryland's public institutions' submissions for the 2024-2025 academic year.

The 2024-2025 Performance Accountability Report summarizes institution's progress toward the three key goals of the 2022 State Plan for Higher Education. 2025 marks the conclusion of the 2025 55% completion goal. As Maryland looks beyond 2025 and constructs the new state plan this year, the institutions are required to respond to two prompts regarding the lessons learned and experiences gained through their work toward the 2025 completion goal.

This year, eleven University System of Maryland (USM) institutions updated their Managing for Results (MFR)/PAR metrics and benchmarks (see the detailed analysis in the institutional assessment section). Morgan State University and St. Mary's College of Maryland are in the middle of their current cycle. All 16 community colleges concluded their current PAR indicator cycles this year. In summary, four-year public institutions are on a good trend in increasing enrollment and graduation for students. Black students are still below the state average in retention and graduation rates, with the gap widening in the past several years. USM institutions updated MFR metrics to include more indicators for transfer students' and first-generation students' performance. Community colleges face challenges in meeting their benchmarks in credit and non-credit enrollment. The transfer and graduation rates improved significantly, though the gap between Black and Hispanic students and the state average still persists.

The full institutional reports in the later part of this volume provide a more detailed summary of the efforts that the institutions made to meet the goals, objectives, and priorities of the State Plan.

Overview of the Accountability Report

The annual Performance Accountability Report (PAR) provides an opportunity for the State, the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), colleges and universities, and individual governing boards to review and evaluate institutions' efforts to advance the goals of the State and fulfill their missions. Maryland's public colleges and universities' commitment to this is demonstrated by their ongoing efforts to provide detailed and high-quality reports to the Commission each year. This is the 30th- Performance Accountability Report published by the Commission.[1] In addition to the annual reporting requirement in which institutions report on their progress toward stated goals and benchmarks, the Commission requested that institutions respond to the following two prompts for the institutional response:

1. Given the complex needs of today's students, what innovative supports (academic, financial, mental health, basic needs) has your college found most effective in boosting student success? How might these be expanded or reimagined to support long-term degree completion goals?

2. In what ways has your institution changed (e.g., structures, policies, practices, or culture) as a result of pursuing the 55% completion goal? What lessons have you learned about sustaining institutional change over time?

This statewide report includes a summary of highlights from institutional submissions for the 2024-2025 academic year reporting cycle1[2]. In addition, this volume contains the full, unedited performance accountability reports for all of the public two- and four-year institutions in Maryland.

In 2000, the Commission approved major revisions to the accountability process. As a result, the accountability reporting requirements differ for the community colleges and four-year public institutions, although the general indicator-and-benchmark system has been maintained for both segments.

Community colleges developed and refined a common set of indicators across all 16 community colleges. Each community college may also choose to include additional campus-specific measures.

The community colleges'[3] reports include:

- An update regarding their performance on the indicators in each "mission/mandate" area;

[1] For a more detailed history of the accountability process in Maryland, please see the 2017 Performance Accountability Report Volume1 and the 2016 Performance Accountability Report found here under the section of "Performance Accountability Reports":
https://mhec.maryland.gov/publications/Pages/research/index.aspx

[2] Institutional submissions for the 2025 Performance Accountability Report are based on analysis of data collected in the 2024-2025 academic year. The measures used to evaluate the institution's performance may have a lag, depending on the frequency and period of data collection.

[3] The community colleges are: Allegany College of Maryland, Anne Arundel Community College, Baltimore City Community College, Carroll Community College, Cecil College, Chesapeake College, College of Southern Maryland, Community College of Baltimore County, Frederick Community College, Garrett College, Hagerstown Community College, Harford Community College, Howard Community College, Montgomery College, Prince George's Community College, and Wor-Wic Community College.

- Their progress toward meeting the goals of the 2022 Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education most applicable to the community colleges;
- A discussion of how well the campuses are serving their communities;
- Degree Progress Analysis;
- Benchmarks for each indicator and performance on these benchmarks; and
- Four years of trend data for each measure.

Four-year colleges and universities created a single document framework that incorporated the elements of both the Commission's PAR and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM)'s Managing for Results process (MFR). The MFR process accounts for goals established in institutional strategic plans and connects institutional performance to the budgeting process overseen by DBM. The task of merging the two reports was undertaken in conjunction with DBM, the Department of Legislative Services, and representatives from the four-year public institutions and their governing boards.

The reports from the four-year public institutions[4] include:

- An update regarding their performance on the indicators in each "mission/mandate" area;
- Their progress toward meeting the goals of the 2022 Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education;
- A list of their accountability goals and objectives;
- An update regarding their progress toward meeting their goals;
- Objectives and performance measures as submitted to the state for *Managing for Results* (MFR); and,
- Five years of trend data for each measure.

This report contains two distinct sections: the Overview of the Key Indicators provides the key indicators of post-secondary education in Maryland. These include enrollment, retention, transfer and graduation trends as well as a discussion of the indicators by demographic groups. The Institutional Assessment section summarizes institutions' performance on their institutional goals, measures and benchmarks as well as their responses to the two prompts tied to advancing student completion goals.

[4] The four-year public institutions are: Bowie State University, Coppin State University, Frostburg State University, Morgan State University, Salisbury University, St. Mary's College of Maryland, Towson University, University of Baltimore, University of Maryland, Baltimore, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, University of Maryland, College Park, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, and University of Maryland Global Campus.

Institutional Assessment by the Maryland Higher Education Commission

The 2025 Performance Accountability Report (PAR) highlights institutions' performance on their progress toward meeting their established goals, metrics and performance standards, with a focus on those aligned with the three goals of the 2022 State Plan for Postsecondary Education[5] (access, success, and innovation). This report begins with an overview of key indicators, which provides necessary context through a discussion of enrollment trends, retention rates, and graduation rates.

In sum, indicators provide a mixed picture of the state of post-secondary education in the state. Overall, student enrollment continues to rebound from its lowest level in 2022 in two decades. Indicators such as the percentage of students receiving the Pell grant, statewide racial and ethnic demographics of enrolled students, and tuition and fees have remained stable. In addition, graduation rates for both four-year public institutions and community colleges reflect persistent gaps in outcomes among racial and ethnic student groups. More detailed discussion is provided below.

Overview of the Key Indicators: Enrollment Trends, Retention, and Completion Outcomes

Enrollment

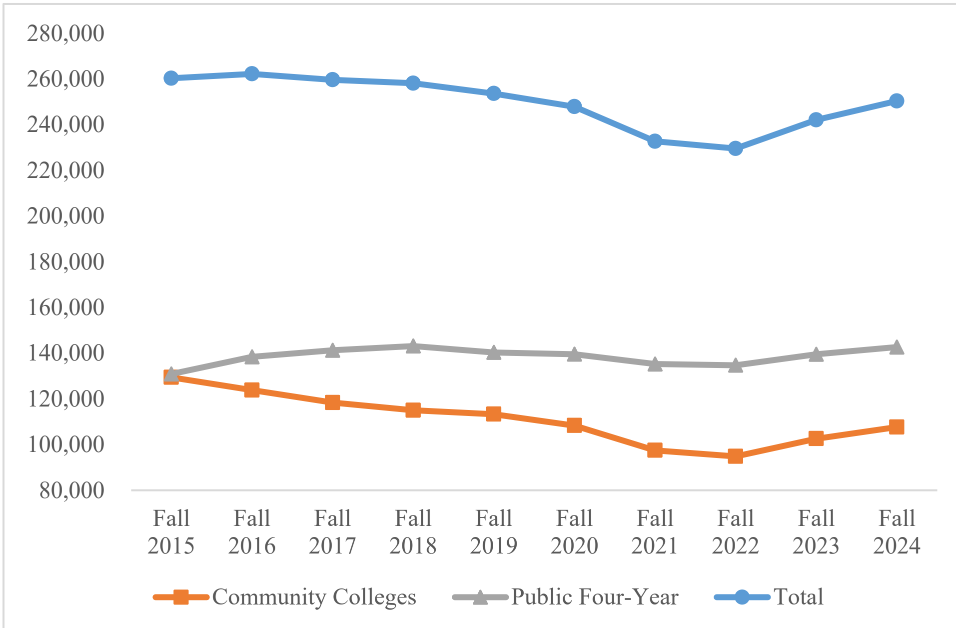
Data from the 2024-2025 academic year indicate that enrollment at Maryland postsecondary institutions is returning to pre-pandemic levels. In fall 2024, the total undergraduate credit enrollment of Maryland public colleges and universities increased by 3.4% as compared to fall 2023. Undergraduate enrollment in four-year public institutions increased by 2.3%, reaching the second highest level in over a decade. Community colleges experienced a 5.0% rise, returning to the enrollment levels of fall 2020. The upward trend continued in fall 2025, with preliminary data demonstrating an overall increase in undergraduate enrollment by 4.1%[6]. In addition, the proportion of minority enrollment remained stable, with slight increases in the proportions of Black and Hispanic students and students of other races[7] (Figure 2).

[5] 2022 Maryland State Plan for Higher Education: https://mhec.maryland.gov/Documents/2022-Maryland-State-Plan-for-Higher-Education.pdf

[6] Maryland Higher Education Commission. November 2025. Opening Fall Enrollment. Baltimore, MD: Maryland Higher Education Commission, retrieved from https://mhec.maryland.gov/About/Pages/Dashboards.aspx. Note that undergraduate enrollment includes students who are dually enrolled in high school and college.

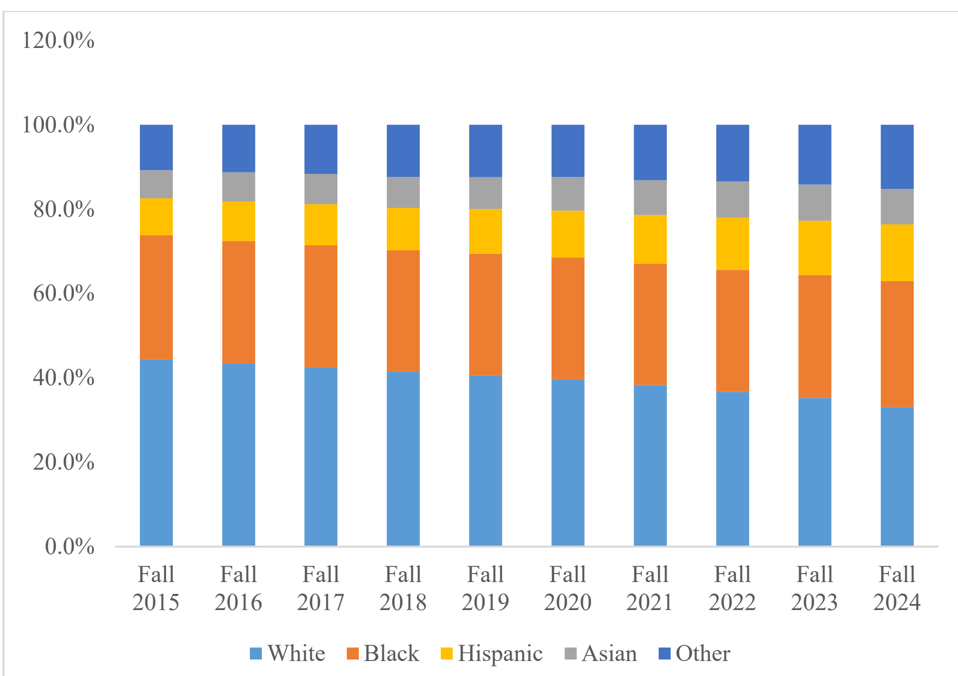
[7] Other races include American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, students with two or more races, students whose race is unknown, and U.S. non-residents.

Figure 1: Undergraduate Fall Headcount Credit Enrollment in Maryland Public Colleges and Universities, Fall 2015- Fall 2024



Source: MHEC Enrollment Information System

Figure 2: Undergraduate Fall Headcount Credit Enrollment in Maryland Public Colleges and Universities, by Race/Ethnicity - Fall 2015- Fall 2024

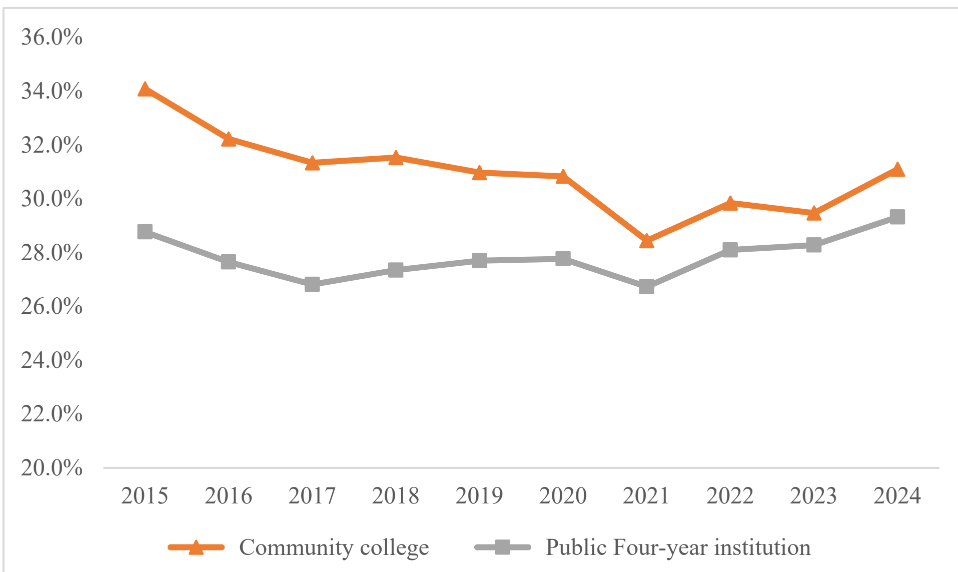


Source: MHEC Enrollment Information System

Pell Grants

The Federal Pell Grant Program is designed to help low-income undergraduate students. Around 30.0% of Maryland undergraduate students enrolled in public colleges and universities received Pell grants in academic year 2023-24[8], which is comparable to the national average of 29.7%[9]. In Maryland, community colleges enrolled a slightly higher proportion of Pell grant recipients (31.1%) when compared to four-year public institutions (29.3%). This difference was larger in 2013-14. The trend in the proportion of undergraduate students receiving Pell Grants shows a notable divergence between community colleges and four-year public institutions. Over the past decade, community colleges have seen an overall decline in the percentage of students receiving Pell Grants, falling below levels recorded ten years ago. This decline reached its lowest point in the 2020-21 academic year, during the pandemic. However, the proportion among community college students has started to recover. In contrast, four-year public institutions have consistently maintained a stable percentage of Pell grant recipients over time, with a notable increase in recipients in the last three years.

Figure 3: Percent of undergraduate students receiving Pell Grants: AY2014-15 – AY2023-24



Source: MHEC Interactive Data Dashboards

Affordability

An indicator of college affordability is the trend in tuition and fees at public institutions. Despite the 2024 Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act reducing the Senator John A. Cade Funding Formula for community colleges from 29% to 27.2% of state funds allocated to four-year public institutions, Maryland's tuition and fees remained stable for the 2024-2025 academic year.

[8] Maryland Higher Education Commission. May 2025. Pell Grant Dashboard. Baltimore, MD: Maryland Higher Education Commission, retrieved from https://mhec.maryland.gov/About/Pages/Dashboards.aspx.
[9] See the national data on the website of National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/TrendGenerator/app/answer/8/35. The most current year of the national data is 2022-23 as of the report publication.

Community colleges saw a slight increase of 0.6% in tuition and fees compared to the previous year[10]. Four-year public institutions saw a 2.2% increase[11]. In 2024-2025, on average, an in-state, in-district, full-time community college student paid $3,888. An in-state four-year public full-time student paid $10,449 per year, $179 more than the average tuition and fees amount in 2023-2024. In comparison to the national average, the cost of attending Maryland community colleges is slightly higher, while the cost of attending four-year public institutions in Maryland is slightly lower[12].

Retention and Graduation –Four-Year Public Colleges and Universities

Trends in student success outcomes have shown a stable pattern compared to last year. The overall second-year retention rate for the Fall 2023 cohort of first-time, full-time students was 79.6%, 1.2 percentage points lower than that of the Fall 2022 cohort for the four-year public institutions (see Figure 4). While most racial subgroups did not experience large declines in retention rates, Black students observed a decrease of 1.6 percentage points, marking the second consecutive year of decline[13]. However, the statewide retention rate is still significantly lower than that of the Fall 2014 cohort (10 cohorts ago), which was 82.5%, as well as the pre-COVID era (Fall 2019 Cohort), which was 84.0%.

The six-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time students for the Fall 2018 cohort[14] (Figure 5) increased by 1.6 percentage points compared to the Fall 2017 cohort, reaching the highest level seen in the past six cohorts. All racial and ethnic groups experienced an approximate increase of 1 percentage point, except for Asian students, who saw a slight decrease of 0.4 percentage points in their six-year graduation rate. One concerning finding is that the gap between Black students' graduation and retention rates and the state average has increased over the past six cohorts. Specifically, the retention rate gap has widened from 4.4% to 6.9%, while the graduation rate gap has grown from 14.0% to 16.8%.

[10] Tuition and fees for full-time in-state students of service area.

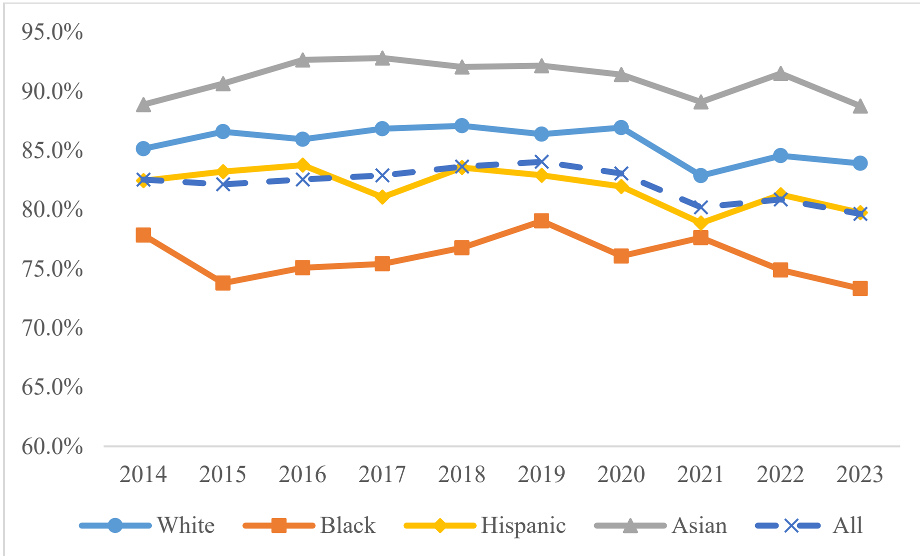
[11] Maryland Higher Education Commission. January 2026. Tuition and Fees. Baltimore, MD: Maryland Higher Education Commission, retrieved from https://mhec.maryland.gov/About/Pages/Dashboards.aspx. .

[12] Due to the methodological differences, the national average figures are not fully comparable to the MD figures. Thus, this comparison is conducted on the basis of the published national and state average figures (data source: Ma, Jennifer, Matea Pender, and Xiaowen Hu (2025). Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2025, New York: College Board.). The average tuition and fees for four-year public institutions in the nation is $11,610, while for community colleges, the average is $4,050. In Maryland, the figures are slightly lower, with four-year public institutions charging an average of $11,156 and community colleges at $5,002.

[13] This figure represents data for the four race/ethnicity categories representing the largest student groups in the State: Asian, Black/African American, White and Hispanic. Data on smaller race and ethnic categories are excluded in alignment with the suppression policy of the agency.

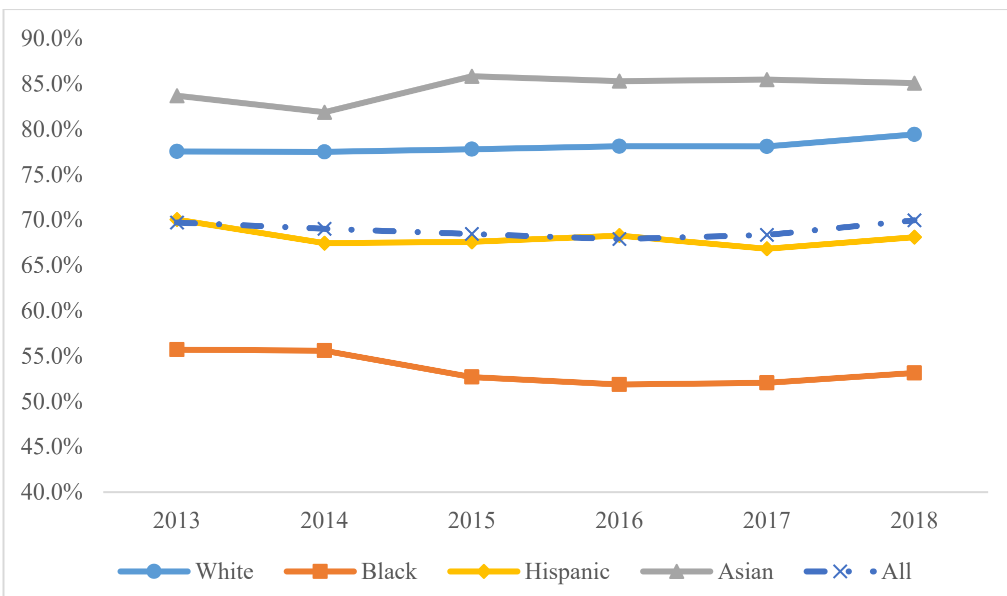
[14] In 2024, MHEC reconstructed the definitions and data analysis for the data file that informs the retention and graduation outcomes. Therefore, the graduation outcomes of the earlier cohorts published in the previous Reports may not fully match the trend data in this report.

Figure 4: Second-Year Retention Rates of Four-Year Public Colleges and Universities: Fall 2014 Cohort – Fall 2023 Cohort



Source: MHEC Interactive Data Dashboards[15]

Figure 5: Six-Year Graduation Rates of Four-Year Public Colleges and Universities: Fall 2013 Cohort - Fall 2018 Cohort



Source: MHEC Interactive Data Dashboards[16]

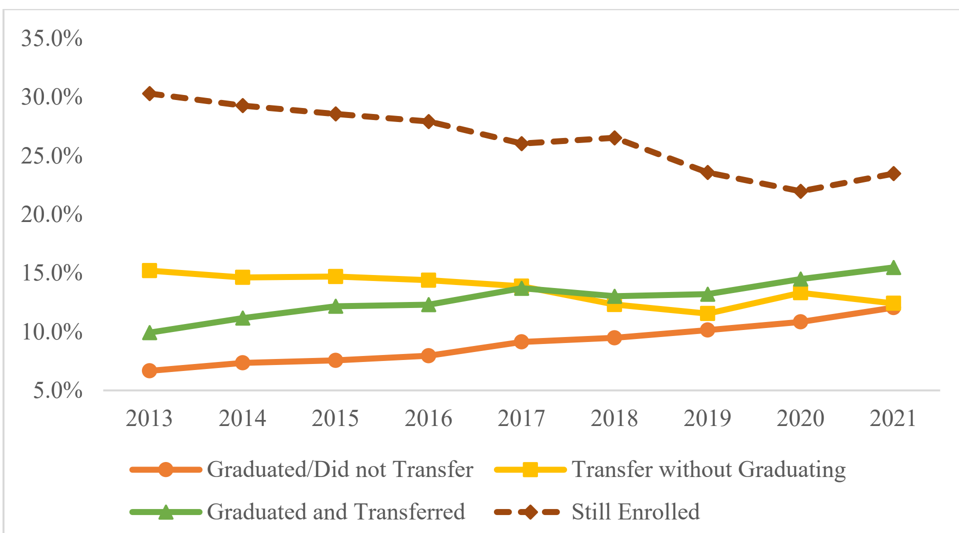
[15] Maryland Higher Education Commission. October 2025. Trends in Graduation Rates in Maryland Four-Year Institutions. Baltimore, MD: Maryland Higher Education Commission, retrieved from https://mhec.maryland.gov/About/Pages/Dashboards.aspx.

[16] Maryland Higher Education Commission. November 2023. Retention and Graduation in Maryland Four-Year Institutions. Baltimore, MD: Maryland Higher Education Commission, retrieved from https://mhec.maryland.gov/About/Pages/Dashboards.aspx.

Transfer and Graduation – Community Colleges

For the community colleges, measures related to students' three-year completion and transfer outcomes provide a similar framework to the second-year and six-year outcomes reported for the four-year public institutions[17]. This section involves analysis of four important, three-year outcomes for first-time, full-time students: (a) students who graduate from a community college and do not transfer to a four-year institution, (b) students who graduate from a community college and do transfer to a four year institution, (c) students who transfer to a four-year institution but do not earn their associate degree first, and (d) students who are still enrolled in any community college. Data for these three-year outcomes show that the proportion of first-time, full-time students from the Fall 2021 entering cohort who graduated and did not transfer, as well as those who graduated and transferred, improved when compared to both the 2020 cohort and the data from the earlier cohorts. The proportion of students who transferred without graduating continued declining and remained significantly lower than that of the Fall 2013 entering cohort. This suggests that overall, more community college students are transferring to Maryland four-year institutions within three years, with a higher proportion of students transferring after earning an associate degree first (Figure 6). The total of the students who achieve one of the four outcomes – transfer only, graduation only, transfer and graduation, and enrollment – represents the proportion of students who either complete their degrees or remain actively engaged in the higher education system. This rate has been steadily increasing over the years; for the Fall 2021 cohort, 63.5% achieved one of these four outcomes, which is a 2.9 percentage point increase compared to the previous cohort.

Figure 6: Three-Year Graduation and Transfer Rates of Community Colleges: Fall 2013 Cohort – Fall 2021 Cohort

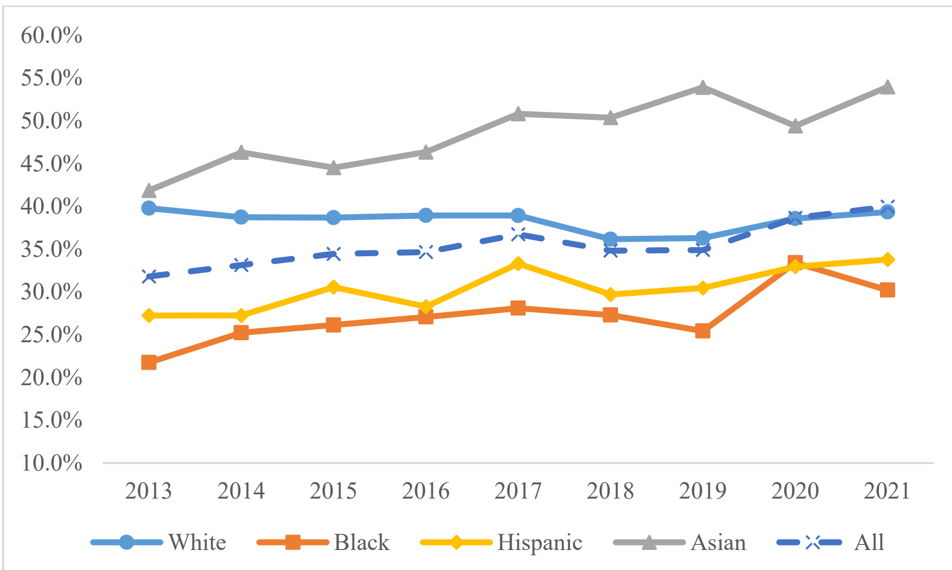


Source: MHEC Interactive Data Dashboards[18]

[17] More transfer-related measures will be available from the Maryland Transfer Intensive coordinated collaboratively by the Aspen Institute and MHEC.
[18] Maryland Higher Education Commission. December 2025. Trends in Graduation and Transfer Rates in Maryland Community Colleges. Baltimore, MD: Maryland Higher Education Commission, retrieved from https://mhec.maryland.gov/About/Pages/Dashboards.aspx.

Figure 7 presents the combined graduation and transfer rates (a summation of the three graduation and transfer trends in Figure 6) by racial/ethnical subgroups. Compared to the previous cohort of first-time, full-time college students who entered in Fall 2020, the combined graduation and transfer rate for the 2021 cohort increased for all groups except Black students. However, Black students still achieved a graduation and transfer rate that is higher than previous cohorts and at a historically high level. Both Black and Hispanic students tend to have lower graduation and transfer rates than the statewide average.

Figure 7: Combined Three-Year Graduation and Transfer Rates of Community Colleges by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2013 Cohort – Fall 2021 Cohort



Source: MHEC Interactive Data Dashboards

The multi-year trend in retention and graduation outcomes of four-year public institutions (Figures 4 and 5) and graduation and transfer outcomes for the community colleges (Figures 6 and 7) show that disparities persist and even worsen in recent years for some measures, such as the six-year graduation rate at four-year public institutions and the three-year transfer and graduation rates at community colleges. Community colleges reflect in the reports that the Fall 2020 cohort began their studies during the pandemic shutdown, which impacted their experience. Colleges speculate in their reports that it may take years to see the achievement gaps narrow.

In an effort to better understand these differences in outcomes among students, MHEC has chosen to deepen the investigation of this year's Performance Accountability Report on completion, transfer, and student educational and career success in Maryland public universities and colleges, with a special focus on equity. Both this statewide analysis and the institutions' reports aim to address this topic. The next section will summarize the institutional assessment on

Maryland public colleges and universities' performance over the last year, discussing institutional performance tied to their selected PAR indicators, benchmarks and goals.[19]

Institutional Assessment

MHEC staff conducted a review of the institutions' data submissions as well as their annual narrative reports. What follows contains highlights of that review with a focus on the goals of the 2022 Maryland State Plan for Higher Education and the responses to reporting prompts. Since 2000, the accountability reporting requirements have differed for the community colleges and four-year public institutions.

It is challenging to assess, at the statewide level, the success of Maryland's four-year public institutions in meeting their individual and unique performance metrics and goals. This is due, in part, to the fact that none of the 13 four-year public institutions' performance indicators, goals, and benchmarks are the same across institutions. This is driven by the institutions' varied missions and strategic priorities as well as the agreement in 2000 that the Department of Budget and Management's MFR format/metrics would serve as the framework from which to assess four-year public institutions' accountability and performance.

In contrast, the 16 community colleges in Maryland share common PAR metrics, and the accountability indicators used for reporting are tightly aligned with the State Plan. Therefore, the assessment for four-year public institutions in the following summary is based on a small group of the metrics that are commonly reported in a subset of the institutions. The assessment for community colleges covers a broader set of indicators of all 16 colleges, unless stated otherwise.

Another distinction between the four-year public institutions and community colleges are the cycles in which metrics, benchmarks, and goals are determined. Maryland's four-year public institutions have different cycles for establishing their Performance Accountability/MFR metrics (e.g. benchmarking year or next cycle update). In 2025, all 11 USM institutions updated their MFR measures and entered new cycles, with six institutions establishing their MFR benchmarks set for 2029[20] and three not specifying the benchmarking year. Morgan State University (Morgan) updated their MFR in 2023 and the new benchmarks are set for 2027. St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) does not specify a concluding year of its MFR cycle. Thus, the institutions are at different points of progress toward their established benchmarks. As a

[19] These indicators, benchmarks and goals are established by the institutions; community colleges establish these on a five-year cycle and align them with the State Plan for Higher Education and the four-year public institutions' metrics, benchmarks, and goals are established through their Managing for Results process. The 2017 Performance Accountability Report Volume 1 and the 2016 Performance Accountability Report introduced more detailed history of the accountability process in Maryland.

[20] These six institutions are Frostburg State University (FSU), Salisbury University (Salisbury), Towson University (Towson), University of Baltimore (UB), University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), and University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC). Bowie State University's (Bowie), Coppin State University (Coppin), and University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) did not indicate their benchmarks or the corresponding year of the benchmarks. University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) and University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) still anchor their performance to the year of 2024 even though the measures have been updated in 2025. Seven USM institutions' MFR indicates that the year 2024 marks the conclusion of their current cycle and associated benchmarks. The remaining four institutions either did not specify an end year or indicated an end year beyond 2024. However, all eleven USM institutions updated their MFR metrics in 2025. For a detailed list of the last MFR cycle and the institution names, please refer to the 2024 Performance Accountability Report.

comparison, all community colleges started their current cycle from 2021, conclude in 2025, and are benchmarked to the goals of 2026[21]. Therefore, this year's report assesses whether the community colleges met their stated final benchmarks. For four-year institutions, however, since 11 out of 13 institutions just entered new cycles and began to report on new measures, this year the assessment focuses on summarizing the measures and their benchmarks, rather than evaluating the annual progress toward the benchmarks.

In summary, the following institutional assessment will be discussed from the perspectives of the 2022 State Plan, Access, Success, and Innovation for two segments, respectively.

- **Access - Ensure equitable access to affordable and high-quality postsecondary education for all Maryland residents.**

Maryland Four-Year Public Colleges and Universities

The trend in undergraduate enrollment is one of the key measures to assess student access to higher education. MHEC data shows that ten[22] of the 13 institutions' enrollment increased in this reporting year (Fall 2024). In total, undergraduate enrollment of four-year public institutions rose by 2.3%. The majority of the four-year public institutions report on the measures reflecting enrollment diversity in their MFRs. Eleven four-year institutions[23] set benchmarks for minority students, economically disadvantaged students, and/or enrollment of Pell Grant recipients. Five institutions report on first-generation students' enrollment, and this is new for the current cycle[24]. Several institutions also set goals tied to specific subpopulations of undergraduates. For example, six institutions (Bowie State University [Bowie], Coppin State University [Coppin], Frostburg State University [FSU], Salisbury University [Salisbury], University of Maryland, Baltimore County [UMBC], and University of Maryland Global Campus [UMGC]) chose to report enrollment in undergraduate STEM programs in their MFRs. Many institutions remain optimistic about recruiting and graduating more students in STEM majors as more new STEM programs have been approved and will be offered soon. Notably, three institutions track the enrollment of transfer students (University of Baltimore [UB], Morgan, and SMCM), reflecting their effort in receiving transfer students in partnership with Maryland community colleges.

Community Colleges

Different from four-year institutions, community colleges serve a more diverse student body. Their data show that the majority of community college enrollment is part-time students (approximately 70%)[25]. Besides credit enrollment, community colleges enroll a comparably

[21] Depending on the availability of data, some benchmarks are anchored to FY 2026 while others may be aligned with FY 2025. Some benchmarks for retention, graduation, and transfer outcomes are set based on the most recent entering cohort that has enough subsequent years of data available to track progress to FY 2026.
[22] These ten are Coppin, FSU, Salisbury, UB, UMBC, UMCP, UMES, UMGC, Morgan, and SMCM.
[23] Bowie and UB do not report similar measures in their MFR.
[24] They are Salisbury, Towson, UMBC, UMCP, and UMES.
[25] Community colleges also provide the same 11 commonly defined "Student & Institutional Characteristics" metrics in their PAR reports. These metrics help clarify institutional missions and offer context for interpreting performance outcomes. They cover various aspects of college enrollment, including enrollment intensity, college readiness, English learner status, age, race/ethnicity, employment status, and modality. Additionally, these metrics provide an overview of the college's revenue and expenditures, which further aids in understanding the financial context

sizeable number of students in non-credit academic programs to those enrolled in credit programs. In academic year 2023-24, over 140,000 students enrolled in non-credit courses in Maryland community colleges, versus approximately 149,000 students enrolled in credit courses. In addition, community colleges enroll over one-third of students assessed as unprepared for college-level courses, such as those needing developmental or remedial education in math or English.

Because the current PAR indicators and their corresponding benchmarks were developed in early 2021, community colleges were unable to anticipate the COVID-19 pandemic and its profound impact on enrollment. As a result, the benchmarks for the annual unduplicated headcount (credit and non-credit) remain too ambitious for most colleges to achieve in this reporting cycle (annual enrollment for FY 2024), despite a considerable improvement in enrollment compared to the recession experienced during the pandemic. Eleven community colleges were significantly behind their stated PAR benchmarks in credit enrollment[26]. Despite the fact that non-credit enrollment increased after the COVID-19 pandemic, all colleges except for Allegany College of Maryland (ACM) and Montgomery College (Montgomery) missed their target of FY 2025.

One notable indicator of enrollment is high school student enrollment in the community colleges, namely through dual enrollment courses and early/middle college programs. Thirteen community colleges either have exceeded or are close to the benchmarks set for high school student enrollment for Fall 2025 [27]. In their narrative reports, the community colleges underscored the importance of high school student enrollment amidst the challenges faced in maintaining overall enrollment. Community colleges summarized their efforts on partnering with local school systems in the section "Community Outreach and Impact" of their reports.

In addition to enrollment, community colleges also monitor various "market shares" to analyze institutional standing and recruitment effectiveness in their service areas. In this cycle, they face challenges in maintaining their market share of first-time full-time students[28] and recent college-bound high school graduates[29]. Most are not on track to meet their benchmarks. Conversely, a small number of colleges have exceeded their stated benchmarks, moving beyond what they had hoped to achieve by fall 2025. Three colleges' market shares of first-time full-time students and five colleges' market shares of recent high school graduates were close or exceeded their established benchmarks for fall 2025[30].

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[26] Allegany College of Maryland (ACM), Frederick Community College (FCC), Garrett College (Garrett), Hagerstown Community College (Hagerstown), and Howard Community College (Howard) are the only five colleges whose for-credit enrollment unduplicated headcounts meet the benchmark for FY2025.

[27] Anne Arundel Community College (AACC), Baltimore City Community College (BCCC), and Cecil College (Cecil) fell behind the benchmark for high school enrollment.

[28] Market share of first-time full-time students refers to the percentage of service area residents enrolled as first-time, full-time freshmen at any Maryland college or university who are attending the community college.

[29] Market share of recent college-bound high school graduates refers to the percentage of recent service area public high school graduates enrolled at any Maryland college or university the following fall who are attending the community college.

[30] Three colleges that reached the benchmarks for the first-time, full-time market share are: Garrett, Hagerstown, and Prince George's Community College (PGCC). Five colleges that reached the benchmarks for the market shares of recent high school graduates are ACM, Cecil College (Cecil), FCC, Garrett, and PGCC.

- **Success- Promote and implement practices and policies that will ensure student success.**

Maryland Four-Year Public Colleges and Universities

A set of common metrics four-year public institutions use to measure student success are retention and graduation measures, disaggregated by student characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status). For this reporting cycle, several USM institutions have ceased reporting retention and graduation rates for racial and ethnic groups. Instead, they have shifted their focus to reporting success measures for Pell Grant recipients, underrepresented students, economically disadvantaged students, and first-generation college students. Among 10 four-year public institutions reporting retention rates in their MFRs, most reported an increase or remained stable (less than one percentage point change) from the last year[31]. Six institutions have measures on retention rates of Pell Grant recipients, underrepresented students, economically disadvantaged students, and/or first-generation college students, and five of them set the corresponding benchmarks. Among 11 institutions reporting six-year graduation rates, seven experienced an increase or remained at the same level compared to last year[32]. Eight institutions have measures on the graduation rate of Pell Grant recipients, underrepresented students, economically disadvantaged students, and first-generation college students, and set benchmarks for these measures[33]. Most of them were able to improve or keep the rate stable in this reporting year[34].

A notable addition made to the MFR is that institutions started paying closer attention to their transfer students and their success. Six institutions (Bowie, Coppin, UB, UMBC, University of Maryland, College Park [UMCP], and SMCM) report the success measures for transfer-in students, including retention rate, graduation rate, and time-to-degree. Five of them created corresponding benchmarks for these measures.

Some institutions outline the initiatives they plan to implement to enhance their measures. These efforts include improving student advising support, strengthening partnerships with local community colleges, and promoting high-impact practices (e.g., undergraduate research, internships, and community engagement).

Community Colleges

Like four-year institutions, community colleges monitor the first-time full- and part-time student's fall-to-fall retention rate as one of the success metrics[35]. For this reporting year, most community colleges were able to maintain their progress on their retention goals. Eleven colleges [36] reported that they met or were close to their established accountability benchmarks in fall-to-

[31] Coppin and Salisbury experienced a decline from last year. UMB and UMGC do not have retention-related MFR measures. UB does not report the overall retention rate. Note that the assessment is conducted based on the data institutions reported in the MFR, which may not match the MHEC published retention and graduation rates due to the different data sources and methodologies.

[32] UB, UMES, and SMCM experienced a decrease in the graduation rate. UMGC does not have graduation related MFR measures. UMB does not report the overall graduation rate.

[33] BSU, Coppin, FSU, Towson, UMBC, UMD, Morgan and SMCM.

[34] SMCM reported a decline in graduation rates of first-generation and Pell Grant recipients.

[35] Note that the assessment is conducted based on the data institutions reported in the PAR metrics, which may not match the MHEC published retention rates due to the different data sources and methodologies.

[36] Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC), College of Southern Maryland (CSM), Garrett, Montgomery College (Montgomery), and PGCC did not meet the benchmarks.

fall retention. The retention indicators are also disaggregated by students' assessed "college readiness" and by Pell grant recipients. Colleges overall reached the goal in the retention of Pell students – 13 colleges met or almost met their benchmarks[37]. In contrast, about half could not meet their established retention goals for the developmental students[38] and college-ready students respectively[39].

In addition to retention rates, community colleges utilize the Degree Progress Analysis (see appendix in the institutional submission for an example) to monitor other success metrics, such as persistence, transfer rates, and graduation rates for students by their college readiness status and race/ethnicity. This analysis focuses on a specific cohort of students who attempted at least 18 credits over first 2 years and selects their graduation-transfer rates after four years as an additional measure for assessing colleges' performance in student success[40]. For this reporting cycle, the colleges' performance is tied to graduation-transfer (Fall 2020 entering cohort); performance on these metrics is significantly improved compared to the last PAR reporting cycle. All but one college met or were close to meeting the goal for graduation and transfer[41] and all of them experienced an increase in this rate compared to last year. However, many institutions face challenges in meeting the graduation and transfer rate goals for developmental completers[42] and college-ready students. Nine colleges did not meet the benchmarks for developmental completers[43] and seven colleges did not meet the benchmarks for college-ready students[44]. Another important finding is that only 29.6% of the Fall 2020 cohort are identified as needing developmental education according to the Degree Progress Analysis, 37 percentage points lower than the previous cohort (from 47.0% to 29.6%). This trend may be linked to community colleges' increased emphasis on using multiple measures to identify students in need of remediation.

To eliminate the barriers to retention, facilitate completion, and smooth transfer to four-year institutions, the community colleges summarized various initiatives implemented on campuses. Examples include but are not limited to: redesigning developmental education, adopting a student-centered advising model, providing financial support, and forming partnerships with four-year public institutions on transfer student success. Institutions stated that they will continue to monitor short- and long-term outcomes for students at-risk and provide necessary support to improve their success.

- **Innovation** - Foster innovation in all aspects of Maryland higher education to improve access and student success

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[37] CSM, Garrett, and Montgomery did not meet the benchmarks.
[38] These are AACC, Cecil, CSM, FCC, Garrett, Harford Community College (Harford), and Montgomery.
[39] These are AACC, Carroll, CCBC, CSM, Garrett, Hagerstown, MC, and PGCC.
[40] Note that these measures are distinct from the MHEC published three-year graduation and transfer rate of community colleges (Figure 6 & 7) in terms of student population as well as time horizon.
[41] The exception is PGCC.
[42] Developmental completers are students who, within four years, successfully completed all recommended developmental coursework or completed a college-level course in the recommended areas.
[43] These are AACC, BCCC, Carroll, Cecil, Chesapeake, CSM, MC, PGCC, and Wor-Wic Community College (Wor-Wic)
[44] These are CCBC, FCC, Hagerstown, Howard, MC, PGCC, and Wor-Wic.

Maryland Four-Year Public Colleges and Universities

This year the assessment focuses on the professional licensure pass rates, graduates of education programs, and research engagements as metrics that reflect the institution's effort on innovatively increase student success. Eight institutions[45] reported the pass rates in various licensure examinations. The primary licensure exams that the students in four-year public institutions complete are Praxis (teaching) and NCLEX (nursing). UMB also reported pass rates for law, medicine, pharmacy, physical therapy, and social work licensure. In general, the licensure exam pass rates remain consistent this year for most institutions. Most of them were able to maintain the pass rate above their benchmarking level or improve the rate[46]. Furthermore, institutions report that there remains a significant shortage of teacher graduates. Eight institutions[47] incorporated the number of teacher preparation program graduates into their MFRs and established a specific benchmark for this metric; however, five of these institutions saw a decline in the number of their teacher preparation program graduates[48]. Some of these institutions reported that they worked more closely with their colleges of education in order to recruit more undergraduates into teacher education programs. Four institutions (UB, UMBC, UMCP, and Morgan) report their engagement in research. One common indicator they measure is the Research and Development (R&D) Expenditures, though the definitions and areas of focus are different from each other, and not all of them are benchmarked. Three of them experienced an increase in R&D expenditures from 2024 to 2025 (UMBC, UMCP, and Morgan).

Community Colleges

Community colleges documented various indicators regarding their performance tied to the innovation goal, including workforce outcomes for the graduates, licensure pass rates, and non-credit enrollment in continuing education.

Using data obtained from the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS)[49] on post-graduation workforce outcomes, the community colleges report that employment for community college graduates remained stable in this reporting year. Many colleges saw a modest growth in the employment rate within one year of graduation. MLDS data reflect that, three years after graduation, community college graduates earned 2.75 times higher wages than they did before enrollment.

Community colleges play an important role in providing education and training for employment that requires licensure/certification. The major licensure exams covered in the report include nursing, physical therapy, dental hygiene, medical technician, and other miscellaneous professions. The pass rate of various licensure exams improved from the last reporting year.

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[45] These eight are: Bowie, Coppin, FSU, Salisbury, Towson, UB, UMB, and UMES.
[46] UMB had a decline and fell below their targeted level in the BAR exam.
[47] These eight are: Bowie, Coppin, FSU, Towson, UMBC, UMD, UMES and Morgan.
[48] These five are: Coppin, FSU, Towson, UMBC and Morgan.
[49] See "Community College Workforce Participation Metrics" here https://mldscenter.maryland.gov/CenterReports.html

Twelve colleges' licensure exam pass rates are either stable or higher than the last cycle[50]. Despite the improvement, four colleges failed to meet the goals; they indicated in their reports that they are working with professional organizations and studying the preparation strategy for the examination.

Last but not least, community colleges create goals and track continuing education course enrollment in workforce development, professional education leading to government or industry-required certificate or licensure, and contract training courses as part of their innovation goal metrics. Although the total course enrollment numbers increased in FY2024, the majority of colleges have not yet recovered from the impact of COVID-19. Only four colleges partially met the benchmarks they created for FY 2025[51].

- **Assessment summary**

In sum, the vast majority of four-year public institutions (11 of the 13) established their new metrics and benchmarks in 2025 and are reporting them for the first time in their PAR reports. Many of them introduced new metrics that reflect their priorities on transfer students, low-income students, and/or first-generation students. Since the majority of the four-year public institutions are still at the beginning of the cycle, our analysis this year focuses on the annual change, instead of the progress toward the benchmarks. In general, most institutions saw stable trends in enrollment, retention, graduation, and licensure pass rate last year. However, there are still challenges in the performance indicators of underrepresented subgroups and some specific fields of study (teacher preparation, STEM, etc.) As for community colleges, the pandemic had a profound impact on them as well as a lasting nationwide decline in community college enrollment. All these challenges have made it difficult for many of these institutions to achieve their access goals, even with recent improvements to enrollment in recent years. However, partnerships with high schools have made dual enrollment and early/middle college programs an important source of new students for community colleges. In regards to success, students who are deemed "not college-ready" continue to face challenges in retaining their enrollment and completing their studies. Although reforms in developmental education have allowed more students to directly enroll in college-level credit-bearing courses, the issue of how to effectively support academically unprepared students still needs to be addressed.

Responses to MHEC Prompts

Last year, institutions responded to the prompts related to the institutional strategies and initiatives for student success. As Maryland looks beyond its 2025 55% completion goal, this year, institutions were required to respond to two prompts regarding the lessons learned and experiences gained through their work toward the 2025 completion goal. The prompts MHEC included in the 2025 reporting guidelines to institutions are noted below, and institutional responses are summarized in the bulleted section that follows.

MHEC Prompts:

[50] Carroll, Chesapeake, and PGCC are the three colleges experiencing declines. Garrett did not report this measure. AACC, Cecil, Chesapeake, and Wor-Wic did not meet the benchmarks.
[51] These colleges are ACM, CCBC, CSM, and Hagerstown.

1. **Given the complex needs of today's students, what innovative supports (academic, financial, mental health, basic needs) has your college found most effective in boosting student success? How might these be expanded or reimagined to support long-term degree completion goals?**

2. **In what ways has your institution changed (e.g., structures, policies, practices, or culture) as a result of pursuing the 55% completion goal? What lessons have you learned about sustaining institutional change over time?**

Summary of Institutional Responses to Question 1:

This section highlights key takeaways from the 13 four-year public institutions' and 16 community colleges' narrative reports.

These supports were found effective in boosting student success according to institutions' responses.

1. **Academic support and reform**
   - **Academic advising:** Various academic services are provided in all institutions. Common supports include coaching, tutoring, supplemental instruction, profession advising, peer mentorship, intrusive advising, expanded counselling, etc.
   - **Curriculum redesign:** Institutions attempt to offer flexible learning options (e.g. summer bridge program, online courses) to meet students' needs. They also redevelop courses or curriculum to better reflect the industry demand, especially in high-demand fields. The reform in developmental education is another common topic mentioned by the community colleges. By placing more students in the college-level courses through corequisite or multiple assessment processes, institutions aim to remove the long-standing barriers for students to enroll and complete credit-bearing courses.
2. **Non-academic support**
   - **Mental health:** Mental health became a central focus of the student non-academic support, especially during and after the pandemic. 24/7 virtual counseling is available through various platforms, based on the institutions' reports. Same-day/next-day appointments or walk-in appointments are also offered on several campuses.
   - **Basic needs:** To address food and resource insecurity, institutions provide various forms of help to meet students' basic needs, such as food pantries, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and emergency funds. Because community colleges serve a great portion of student parents, many of them also provide childcare services or assistance with childcare costs.
   - **Financial Assistance:** Institutions recognize that finances are often a barrier to student completion. They applied for and received grant funds that directly support the complex financial needs of students. Effective initiatives that increase the subsidies for students in need include promoting timely FAFSA completion,

subsidizing non-credit credentialing programs, offering "last-dollar" funding, removing administrative barriers for students to apply for the aid, etc.

3. **Data-based strategy**
    - **Early Alert:** Many institutions establish early alert systems to identify students at-risk earlier in order to provide necessary support to students sooner.
    - **Data-based decision support:** Various data dashboards, predictive analytics, and trackers help administrative staff, faculty, and leadership closely monitor student performance and help with decision making.
    - **Technologies:** AI and new applications/platforms (e.g. Starfish, CREDO, Ellucian, and Canvas) not only provide key measures for institutions to guide advising and allocate resources, but also help students plan for their completion.

Not all institutions answer the second part of the question explicitly. However, from the institutions' responses, we summarized that institutions hope to reimagine or expand their supports in the following aspects.

- **Holistic support system:** Institutions remain committed to expanding integrated student support that combines academic, financial, and wellness interventions.
- **Investment in expanding the current services:** Institutions plan to sustain or expand effective practices for a broader student population to increase the number of beneficiaries. They stated that they intend to secure additional grants and funds to extend eligibility for benefits.
- **Stronger community partnerships:** Partnerships with communities and entities will extend the reach of supports.

Summary of Institutional Responses to Question 2

Institutions highlighted the two major types of change as a result of pursuing the completion goal.

1. **Structural change**
    - **Office creation or reorganization:** Led by institutional leadership (Provosts/Vice Presidents), institutions integrate the existing functions or launch new offices/programs to oversee the student success policies, procedures, and practices. With the structural change, institutions can focus holistically on enhancing student success by applying best practices, removing barriers, increasing student engagement, boosting financial aid for students.
    - **Collaboration and partnership:** Institutions are actively engaging in collaborative initiatives, forming strategic partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and community leaders to enhance student success. By developing clear communication channels and sharing best practices, these partnerships create a comprehensive support system.
2. **Cultural change**
    - Institutions have transformed their culture to prioritize student success in their daily operations. They are now more flexible and open to adopting changes that

have been shown to effectively improve students' outcomes. This culture of care has become an essential element, not only among advisors, faculty, and staff but also within college leadership. Finally, most institutions have accelerated the cultural shift toward data-informed decision making.

Not all institutions answered the second part of the question explicitly. However, the institutions' responses reflect that some of the major lessons learned about sustaining institutional change over time are the following:

- **Collaboration matters.** Long-term institutional change requires collaborations across all departments within the institution. One of the commonly mentioned strategies is embedding goals in the strategic plan, reinforced by shared accountability and governance. To sustain momentum beyond individual leaders or funding cycles, it is crucial to maintain continuous communication. Finally, effective leadership is key to inspiring and guiding teams through this collaborative journey, promoting a culture of synergy and innovation across the institution.
- **Presidential implementation is key.** The successful execution of initiatives relies on strong leadership from the president. Meaningful change will be sustained over time, depending on the effectiveness of the mechanisms through which the institution listens to students, collaborates respectfully, and measures, assesses, and communicates its efforts.
- **A culture that prioritizes data-informed decision-making enhances support and effectiveness.** Institutions stress the importance of meaningful assessments. To maintain long-term change, one of the lessons they learn is that they must proactively identify and address student needs through the strategic use of technology and data-driven approaches. This includes conducting comprehensive assessments of student learning, administrative effectiveness, student satisfaction, and employee satisfaction. Monitoring the impact of these changes ensures that all stakeholders have a voice in shaping the institution's policies and practices.

Conclusion

Seven of the 13 four-year public institutions concluded their MFR cycles in 2024, while 11 institutions updated their MFR cycles in 2025[52]. Meanwhile, sixteen community colleges concluded their PAR cycles in 2025 and will launch the new cycle next year. In general, both segments faced some challenges to meet the goals they established for student success before the pandemic; the challenge is especially severe for the historically underrepresented students. For community colleges, the significant impact on their enrollment is a major challenge in their performance accountability. Institutions either revised or will revise their benchmarks for the next cycle to better reflect their objectives and goals. Overall, universities and colleges remain committed to the goals of the 2022 State Plan for Higher Education and the vision established through their institutional missions.

[52] See footnote 19 for details.

As announced at the 2025 Student Success Summit, the Commission has embarked on developing new post-2025 goals as the cornerstone for the forthcoming revisions to the State Plan for Higher Education (due to the General Assembly no later than July 1, 2026). As that work solidifies a vision for higher education for the remainder of this decade, institutions will need to reevaluate their performance metrics and related benchmarks to fulfill their commitment to student success and the goals outlined in the forthcoming revised State Plan for Higher Education.

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the Maryland Higher Education Commission approve the 2025 Performance Accountability Report and ask the Secretary to forward it to the Governor and the General Assembly as required by law.