

OSA State Grant Awards

FY 2019 Awards

Bowie State University

Project Title: One Step Away Initiative

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

Award: \$36,760.00

Project Abstract: The need to raise college completion rates of students is a priority for Maryland and Bowie State University (BSU). BSU received OSA grant awards from 2013 to 2018 to increase the college completion rate.

During this time, the OSA program increased the number of graduates during each grant cycle by at least 1%, graduating 34 students total. It is anticipated that BSU will be able to expand on this success by graduating five or more students currently in the program by May 2020. Based on experience with previous grants, the OSA program will target 15 participants in the fall (two new and thirteen returning) and four in the spring. The focus will be on these three program objectives: (Obj.1) continuing/expanding existing outreach strategies to inform and encourage near-completers to re-enroll in college; (Obj.2) enhancing student support systems to include offering guidance, answers about BSU policies and procedures, as well as addressing a broad-range of areas related to: admissions, academic advising, financial aid, student accounts, registrar and graduation, with a keen intent to facilitate smooth re-entry into the educational environment and retention through degree completion and; (Obj.6) increasing reenrollment rates of near-completers by offering new campus-based sustainable financial aid options using campus or other financial aid resources for support such as textbook cost waivers and/or tuition discounts. Primary responsibility for all OSA administrative functions and project outcomes will lie with the Center for Academic Programs Assessment (CAPA).

Community College of Baltimore County

Project Title: One Step Away

Project Director: Debra M. Baker

Award: \$46,206.00

Project Abstract: CCBC has had success re-engaging stopped-out, near-completer students through this grant program and CCBC's own efforts, but retention and graduation rates are still low. For credit students beginning CCBC in fall 2013, only 17% graduated by fall 2017: For the 2017-2018 academic year, semester to semester retention was 65%, and within 12 months over half of the student cohort leaves CCBC.

By December 2018 of the current grant period, CCBC had successfully contacted 2,919 potential participants, with 175 meeting graduating requirements and 2,744 degree-potential students being invited to apply to a One Step Away scholarship. Of the 175 meeting graduation requirements, 42 received their diploma in December 2018.

In 2019, CCBC identified 4,237 individuals who had been enrolled since 2007 or later and who are eligible to participate in the One Step Away program. CCBC proposes to develop a more targeted outreach system using One Step Away funds to increase marketing efforts to student 90% complete toward a degree, as well as pointedly marketing online courses for students to make finishing a degree as efficient and accommodating as possible. Furthermore, the project will examine all degrees with students close to finishing rather than focusing primarily on the General Studies degree. CCBC will augment the outreach and online marketing with waived graduation fees, stipends for books and supplies, and scholarships for the students most at-need, all supported by One Step Away grant funds.

Coppin State University

Project Title: Project Hope 2.0

Project Director: Dr. Derrick Bullock

Award: \$50,000.00

Project Abstract: To improve the university's graduation rate, Project Hope was developed in 2012 to assist near completers with fulfilling the requirements of their degree programs. This proposal suggests a continuation of this initiative as Project Hope 2.0. Project Hope 2.0 will provide proactive, targeted, and collaborative efforts to improve graduation rates among the near completers enrolled (N = 81) during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 academic years.

The three selected objectives are to 1) enhance and improve existing outreach strategies to encourage near completers to re-enroll in college; 2) increase re-enrollment rates of near completers by offering an individualized plan of study to facilitate completion; and 3) increase re-enrollment rates of near completers by offering financial aid resources. Coppin will use a collaborative team approach for this project, with the Project Director, Retention Specialists, and Peer Tutors. The Retention Specialists from each academic college at the university will serve as the consultant team and academic advisors for the project. The Peer Tutors will be assigned to each academic college to assist near completers with developing study skills and organization techniques to help improve their academic performance. Project Hope 2.0 recognizes the importance of a collective approach and the role that "hope" plays in making a difference in the lives of students. This proposal intends to demonstrate that 30% of all near completers will graduate within 2-years of re-enrollment.

Harford Community College

Project Title: One Step Away 2019

Project Director: George Budelis and Roger Hoover

Award: \$59,957.00

Project Abstract: The Harford CC One Step Away (OSA) Program focuses on reaching out to former Harford students who have completed a substantial number of college credits toward an associate degree but have not yet earned a degree. The program provides the services needed to facilitate and expedite completion. The program was successfully launched with the assistance of Maryland State grants in 2014. This 2019 project is a continuation and enhancement of those successful projects from 2014 through 2018.

The program identifies students who are already "Degree-Eligible," meaning they have completed all degree requirements but never applied to have their degrees awarded. These students will receive a letter from the College President, encouraging them to accept their earned degree. For students who are "Degree-Potential," specialized OSA Concierge Advisors complete individualized degree completion plans and use various means of recruiting to reach these students, including social media, email, letters, postcards, and phone calls. As discovered in the previous projects, providing meaningful scholarship funding to incentivize these past students to re-enroll is an extremely effective strategy and will continue to be a focus in the 2019 project. The "concierge services" provided include specialized and individualized academic advising for completion, assistance with appeals, financial aid, registration assistance, transfer credit evaluation, prior learning assessment, and tutoring.

The program also includes continued utilization of the Degree Works degree audit and Student Planner tools. These tools will help OSA students and advisors develop individualized roadmaps and plans for completion.

The program's goal is to award 10% associate degrees to "Degree-Eligible" students by August 2020 and an additional 5% associate degrees to "Degree-Potential" students by December 2020, for a total of 45 graduates during the grant period.

Notre Dame of Maryland University

Project Title: NDMU Achieve!

Project Director: Dr. Suzan Harkness

Award: \$60,000.00

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

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

The new OSA grant funds tuition, books, and fees, provides tutoring and academic support services, and engages the students in near-completer events to ensure that students are active and successful as they wrap up their college career. Adjustments to the near-completer model reflect lessons learned from prior iterations of the program and the needs specific to the completer population at NDMU, as well as the inclusion of a new policy on credit for prior learning.

NDMU's outreach program includes staff from Enrollment Management, Academic Affairs, as well as the University Business office. As one recent near completer said on the day of her graduation in May 2017, "This program has truly transformed my life! I never imagined that I would be able to finish my degree." NDMU anticipates graduating a new cohort of 10 near-completers through NDMU Achieve! by the conclusion of the grant period.