September 3, 2009

The Honorable Ulysses Currie, Senate Chair
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Building
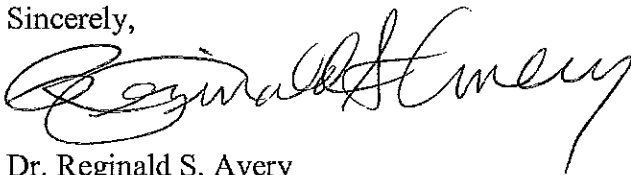Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

The Honorable Norman H. Conway, House Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
Room 121 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401-1991

Dear Senator Currie and Delegate Conway:

The fiscal 2010 Budget Bill requires Coppin State University to submit a report that outlines how the University will use $1.5 million to implement new programs and services based on the best practices developed in conjunction with the Maryland Higher Education Commission and the State's Historically Black Institutions to improve student retention and graduation rates. This report is due to the budget committees by October 1, 2009. Coppin State University would like to request an extension of the due date for this report to **November 2, 2009** so that the University can successfully complete the requirements of this request.

Thank you for your support of this request. If additional information is needed, please do not hesitate to contact me at (410) 951-3838.

Sincerely,

Dr. Reginald S. Avery
President

cc: Dr. William Kirwan, Chancellor, University System of Maryland
        Ms. Rachel Silberman, Department of Legislative Services
        Ms. Charlene Uhl, Department of Budget and Management

COPPIN STATE UNIVERSITY

REPORT ON PROGRAMS AND SERVICES NEEDED TO PROMOTE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND ENSURE STUDENT PERSISTENCE THROUGH GRADUATION

FY 2010 Access and Success Report As Requested By The Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and the House Appropriations Committee

2009 Session of the Maryland General Assembly

Operating Budget R30B27.00

11/2/2009

The fiscal 2010 Budget Bill requires Coppin State University (CSU) to submit a report that outlines how the University will spend $1.5 million to implement programs and services that have shown success in promoting academic achievement and ensuring student persistence through graduation. The committee narrative is as follows:

> ....*Provided that $1,500,000 of this appropriation, made for the purpose of improving student retention and graduation rates, may not be expended until:*
>
> 1) *The public historically black institutions (HBIs) and the Maryland Higher Education Commission submit a report that outlines the programs and services that are needed and have shown success in promoting academic achievement to ensure that undergraduate students at HBIs that are less prepared for college graduate. The programs and services shall be comprehensive and use criteria for academic achievement that are shared by all HBIs, which shall include graduation rates as the primary criterion; and*
> 2) *Coppin State University submits a report that outlines how the funds will be used to implement the new program and measures that will be used to evaluate performance, including graduation rate. The report shall include how all funds for the new program will be spent.*
>
> *The budget committees shall have 45 days to review and comment on the report.*[1]

This report addresses the committees' request by describing programs and practices identified in the Maryland Higher Education Commission's 2009 Joint Chairmen's Report that have worked well for Coppin State University (CSU) and the University's plan to implement new programs and expand existing services to improve student persistence through graduation.[2] This report incorporates initiatives cited in the University's Strategic Enrollment Plan and is consistent with CSU's strategic goals related to improving persistence through graduation for students.[3]

Overview of Best Practices at CSU:
Summer Bridge Programs and the Honors Program

This section provides an overview of several strategies identified by MHEC that are utilized by CSU to promote academic achievement and have improved persistence through graduation rates. This includes summer bridge programs and the honors program.

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[1] Department of Legislative Services (2009). *Report on the State Operating Budget and the State Capital Budget and Related Recommendations by the Chairmen of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and House Committee on Appropriations: Joint Chairmen's Report.* Annapolis: Department of Legislative Services, p. 149.
[2] Maryland Higher Education Commission (2009). *Best Practices for Accelerating Student Success at Maryland's Public Historically Black Institutions.* Annapolis: Maryland Higher Education Commission.
[3] Coppin State University (2009). *Strategic Enrollment Management Plan 2010 – 2013: A Blueprint for Student Persistence.* Baltimore: Coppin State University.

Summer Bridge Programs

The University has recognized and addressed the fact that many potential freshmen need skill development prior to enrollment. To that end, the University has implemented the Student Services' Step Ahead Program, the Pre-College Summer Program (PCSP I and PCSP II) and the Natural Science Department's Summer Bridge Program. The Office of Admissions identifies candidates for these programs based on high school grade point averages, SAT scores, and other indicators. Student Services' Step Ahead Program is a four-week comprehensive summer program designed to provide incoming freshman and freshman transfer students a head start on their college careers. The purpose of this federally funded, TRIO program is to increase the persistence and graduation rates of first generation, low-income, and disabled students. Overall, this program impacts approximately 50 students per year and has been a successful tool for matriculating and retaining students. The Pre-College Summer Programs (PCSP I and PCSP II) provides academic and social enrichment for conditionally admitted and high risk students. During two 3 week sessions, the program provides approximately 100 students with intensive instruction in math, reading, and English.[4] During this summer program, students live on-campus in the residence halls and receive tutoring, study skills development, college survival skills, and participate in cultural and recreational activities. Furthermore, students interact with administrators, staff, faculty, graduate students, current CSU students, and community leaders and various professionals from the Baltimore metropolitan area. The Natural Science Department's Summer Bridge Program provides rigorous instruction in math and science for admitted students interested in pursuing careers in the natural sciences (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics or STEM programs). This six-week program provides academic support, classes, tutorials, as well as career and science exploration for approximately 20 students during the summer.

All three of these pre-enrollment programs have been successful at matriculating and retaining students. Program reports show the second-year retention rates for participants to be 80 percent in STEP AHEAD, 83 percent in the Natural Science Department's Bridge Program, and 75 percent for the PCSP.[5] Table I below provides a summary of CSU's pre-enrollment summer programs.

Table I. Coppin State University
Pre-Enrollment Summer Programs

Program	Eligible Students	# of Participants	Program Period	Activities
STEP AHEAD	Admitted students; low-income; first generation	50	4 weeks	Classes, tutorials, study skills, cultural and career exploration
Pre-College Summer Program (PCSP)	Conditionally admitted students; high risk	100	Two 3 week programs	Classes, tutorials, study skills, cultural and personal awareness
Natural Science Department's Summer Bridge Program	Admitted students; interested in careers in natural sciences	20	6 weeks	Classes, tutorials, career and science exploration

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[4] Enrollment in this program is limited to only 100 participants each summer.
[5] Coppin State University (February 2008). *Self Study Report: Pioneering Academic and Community Innovation Through Technology*. Baltimore: Coppin State University: Prepared for Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

The Honors Program

While simultaneously strengthening programs for more academically-challenged students, the University seeks to attract more high-ability students. Since 1990, the Honors College has attracted a talented pool of students to the University. Among the best practices within the Honors College is the Accelerated Baccalaureate Program (ABC). Although this initiative began only 3 years ago, the results have had a positive impact on student success. In 2004, the pilot ABC cohort enrolled twelve (12) students. Approximately 81 percent of these students graduated within 3 ½ years.

Moving Forward: Expanding Existing Services and Implementing New Programs to Improve Persistence through Graduation

In order to help ensure the persistence of our students through graduation, the University has redefined enrollment management by developing a strategically focused, multi-year enrollment management plan.[6] Based on current research and best practices identified by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) and Coppin State University's Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, CSU will utilize funds to:

- Expand the Pre-College Summer Program;
- Expand the First-Year Experience Program;
- Develop an Early Alert Warning System; and
- Improve advising policies and practices.

These programs and services are consistent with the University's overall strategic objective of improving persistence to graduation rates. This section describes each new program and examines the strategies and measures that will be used to evaluate the performance of each program. Table II (page 6) shows the allocation of the $1.5 million *Access and Success* funds and the total cost of fully implementing each program.

Expand the Pre-College Summer Program

According to current research and best practices identified by the Maryland Higher Education Commission, national research suggests that summer program experiences enhance a student's educational career and potential for success by reducing time-to-degree and increasing levels of academic preparedness.[7] Therefore, CSU is investigating the feasibility of expanding its Pre-College Summer Program for **all** incoming first-time, full-time freshmen. As previously mentioned, the current Pre-College Summer Program (PCSP I and PCSP II) is limited to only 100 conditionally admitted students while the Department of Natural Science's Summer Bridge STEM Program and Student Services' Step Ahead Program serves approximately 20 and 50 students respectively. Expanding all pre-college summer programs would require additional

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[6] Coppin State University (2009). *Strategic Enrollment Management Plan 2010 – 2013: A Blueprint for Student Persistence.* Baltimore: Coppin State University.

[7] Maryland Higher Education Commission (2009). *Best Practices for Accelerating Student Success at Maryland's Public Historically Black Institutions*. Annapolis: Maryland Higher Education Commission.

human capital and financial resources needed to more than quadruple the size and scope of the current Pre-College experiences offered by CSU. [8]   An expanded program would consistent of a 3 to 5 week residential program designed to enrich high school experiences and allow students who place into developmental courses to complete at least one such course during the summer. Given the high proportion of low-income students who attend CSU, the concept here is to provide support for a full residential program that is **free** to all freshmen.

According to the Maryland Higher Education Commission, many CSU students arrive at the University from a Maryland public high school ill-prepared for the rigors of advanced education.[9]   It seems reasonable to assume that this is a trend that will continue for the next several years and the best way to address it is to provide an adjunct program to better meet the goal of preparing students for college level work. It should be noted that such a program, in conjunction with a fully functional first year experience program (explained below) would be one of the University's best hope for significant improvement in persistence through graduation.

To examine the feasibility of implementing a full residential summer bridge program, the University will implement the following strategies:

1. Determine the resources necessary to implement a fee-free summer bridge program;
2. Determine the criteria for entry into the summer bridge program;
3. Determine the structure and length of the summer bridge program; and
4. Reassess how summer school is delivered.

Key Measures to Evaluate Performance

1. All students testing into a developmental class complete at least one course during the summer;
2. A reversal of the negative trend in 1st year retention rates for all sub-cohorts;
3. Improvement in freshmen grade point average; and
4. Improvement in participant grade point average throughout academic career.

<u>**Expand the First Year Experience Program**</u>

The first year of college is a critical time for persistence, learning, and skill development. Currently, CSU's freshmen program consists of an orientation course. The University will reexamine some of the weaknesses of its freshmen persistence rates through the development of a fully functional First Year Experience Program. This program will include a service learning component as well as a thematic experience for students. A fully functional first year program will include the following:

- A Director of Freshmen Studies (or New Student Experience Program)

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[8] In Fall 2009, CSU enrolled 565 first-time, full-time freshmen. See Coppin State University's *Preliminary Opening Fall Enrollment Report (2009)* at http://www.coppin.edu/OIR/publications/openfallenrollment/Prelim2009.pdf.
[9] Maryland Higher Education Commission (2009). *Student Outcome and Achievement Report: College Performance of New Maryland High School Graduates*. Annapolis: Maryland Higher Education Commission

- Linkage to Freshmen Orientation
- Freshmen Seminar
- Service Learning component (first and second semester)
- Thematic experience
- Block-scheduled classes for at least 3 classes each semester

Key Measures to Evaluate Performance

1. A reversal of the negative trend in 1st year retention rates for all sub-cohorts
2. A reduction in the number of students on academic probation
3. Increase in the number of early alerts
4. More intentional advising sessions
5. Improvement in freshmen grade point average
6. Improvement in participant grade point average throughout academic career

Develop an Early Alert Warning System

Early Alert Warning Systems (EAWS) are a best practice that is nationally recognized as a method of improving student persistence. According to a 2007 survey conducted by Noel-Levitz, 76 percent of public four-year colleges and universities use an EAWS as tool to enhance persistence through graduation.[10] In order to better serve students, Coppin State University will review and implement a comprehensive Early Alert Warning System. All undergraduate students would be subject to this system whereby the student and their advisor would be notified if they fail to reach particular grade point average parameters. In addition to this system, there would be mandated academic student support and additional monitoring by advisors and success coaches. This tool would be used to communicate warnings to both students and advisors that an academic performance problem is beginning to appear or has become more serious. Warnings can be generated based on graded performance, late or missing course work, or attendance within an on-line course. Additionally, the instructor will have control over the message each time a warning is communicated. The instructor should also be able to use a default message or modify the message to more accurately communicate the seriousness of the particular situation.

Providing this important feedback should enable the University to forestall some of the problems observed in not granting students and advisors clearer feedback about the academic performance of students. By intervening earlier in any given semester, we may be able to prevent students from being on academic probation and prevent their suspension or dismissal for academic reasons.

Over the next few months, the University will investigate which software or system will be a feasible mechanism to alert students and their advisors of poor student performance as soon as the problem occurs.

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[10] Maryland Higher Education Commission (2009). *Best Practices for Accelerating Student Success at Maryland's Public Historically Black Institutions*. Annapolis: Maryland Higher Education Commission.

Key Measures to Evaluate Performance

1. A reversal of the negative trend in 1st year retention rates for all sub-cohorts
2. A reduction in the number of students on academic probation
3. Increase in the number of early alerts
4. More intentional advising sessions
5. Improvement in grade point averages

Improving Advising Policies and Practices

The University will reassess its current advising model and improve advising policies and practices. Many students are confused about the purpose of advising and the processes involved. In order to better meet the needs of our students, the University will increase the number of full-time advisors from two (2) to four (4). As important as advisement is to students, CSU has not had adequate resources to be as intentional as it should be in providing sound and deliberate advisement while keeping case loads among professional advisors manageable. In addition, there are numbers of other policy issues related to advisement that the University will need to address to better serve students. For instance, CSU will develop a clear policy related to 'pre-majors' who do not meet the requirements for entry into the major with the specified time frame. Additionally the University will address the issue of 'unknown' as an advising category. This is confusing to students and leaves students without an assigned advisor.

Key Measures to Evaluate Performance

1. A reversal of the negative trend in 1st year retention rates for all sub-cohorts
2. A reduction in the number of students on academic probation
3. Increase in the number of early alerts
4. More intentional advising sessions
5. Improvement in grade point averages
6. Increase the number of professional advisors
7. Reduce the number of pre-majors and unknown majors

Allocation of Funds for Each New Program

Table II below shows the allocation of the $1.5 million *Access and Success* funds and the total estimated cost of fully implementing each program. According to the Maryland Higher Education Commission, a six-week Summer Bridge Program costs an average of $3,000 per student (including room and board).[11] Furthermore, given the socioeconomic status of the students served by these programs (e.g., low-income students), the Commission recommends highly subsidized summer bridge programs to ensure maximum participation. Therefore, in order to fully expand the Pre-College Summer Program initiative and provide support for a full residential program that is **free** to all freshmen, the University will need to seek funding from other sources.

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[11] Maryland Higher Education Commission (2009). *Best Practices for Accelerating Student Success at Maryland's Public Historically Black Institutions*. Annapolis: Maryland Higher Education Commission.

Table II: Allocation of Funds for New Programs

New Program	Access and Success Allocation (Estimate)	Total Cost of Implementation (Estimate)
Expand the Pre-College Summer Program	$750,000	$1,695,000
Expand the First-Year Experience Program	$350,000	$350,000
Develop an Early Alert Warning System	$150,000	$150,000
Improve Advising Policies and Practices	$150,000	$150,000
Total	**$1,500,000**	**$2,345,000**

CONCLUSION

A major strategic goal of Coppin State University is to enhance persistence through graduation as well as improve teaching and learning for both faculty and students. Increasing persistence through graduation rates at CSU will require a number of different programs and strategies. The University will continue to focus on student learning outcomes and more importantly, strategies for improving persistence through graduation rates. Coppin State University acknowledges the importance of the Access and Success funds in improving persistence through graduation and expresses gratitude to the State of Maryland for funding this program.