Section 1. Overview: Closing the Achievement Gap at Frostburg State University

Frostburg State University (FSU) fully supports and actively participates in “Closing the Achievement Gap” efforts by the University System of Maryland to retain and graduate underrepresented minorities and low-income (Pell-eligible) college students in Maryland. Frostburg is also working to address its own identified achievement gap, which is defined as the differences in retention and graduation rates between male and female students at the University (see section two).

The University’s newly established Academic Success Network (fall 2014), reports to the Office of the Provost and coordinates efforts to ensure the persistence and graduation of all Frostburg students (see section five). The network also implements existing programs that address Frostburg’s gender-based achievement gap and promotes college completion among underrepresented and low-income students at the University. The results of these programs during the reporting period (fall 2013-spring 2014) are discussed below and include the One-Step-Away Program, Championship Forum, Student Support Services, Academic Enrichment Series, and Course Redesign. Also, under the direction of the Academic Success Network are important new or expanded initiatives designed to help increase Frostburg’s retention and graduation rates, thereby contributing to the University System of Maryland’s goal of cutting the achievement gap in half by 2015. These initiatives are discussed at the end of this report.

Section 2. Frostburg State University Graduation and Retention Rates

Frostburg State University’s overall student retention and graduation rates continue to increase but are uneven across categories of student groups (see Table 1). The University’s overall student six-year graduation rate in 2008 stood at 49%, which was two percent higher than in 2007 (47%). These rates in 2008 for African-American students (45%) and Pell-eligible students (46%) also increased from their 2007 levels, which was 44% for both groups. The graduation rate for Hispanic students, however, declined from 49% to 38% during that same period. Moreover, the graduation rates of males lag behind females at the University. The most recent second-year retention rate for the University reached 76% in 2013 (a 5% increase over 2011, but a percentage point decrease from 2012). The retention rates of males behind females at the University. The most recent second-year retention rate for the University reached 76% in 2013 (a 5% increase over 2011, but a percentage point decrease from 2012). The retention rates in 2013 for African-American (79%), Hispanic (76%), and Pell-eligible (76%) students equaled or exceeded the 2013 University rate.

Table 1 – Frostburg State University Six-year Graduation and Second-year Retention Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frostburg State University</th>
<th>Six-year Graduation and Retention Rates at Institutions of First-Entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall Cohort First-Time Full Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st Year Graduation Rate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd Year Retention</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3rd Year Retention</td>
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<td>4th Year Retention</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5th Year Retention</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6th Year Retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1st Year Graduation Rate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd Year Retention</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3rd Year Retention</td>
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<td>4th Year Retention</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5th Year Retention</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6th Year Retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1st Year Graduation Rate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2nd Year Retention</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3rd Year Retention</td>
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<td>4th Year Retention</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5th Year Retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6th Year Graduation Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution’s Low-income (Pell)</td>
<td>1st Year Graduation Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd Year Retention</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd Year Retention</td>
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<td>4th Year Retention</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5th Year Retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6th Year Graduation Rate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
~Non-Returns are cumulative
~Data Source: P409 Student Research Population File
As of January 2, 2015
Frostburg’s gender-based achievement gap was still evident during the reporting period. For the 2008 student cohort, the graduation rate was 46% for males and 54% for females, which is an 8% gap. In 2013, the retention rate was 71% for males and 82% for females, which is a 12% gap (see Table 2).

### Table 2 - Frostburg State University Male vs. Female Second-Year Retention and Six-Year Graduation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male FSU Students</th>
<th>Female FSU Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2nd-yr Retent Rate</strong></td>
<td>Fall 2002</td>
<td>Fall 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort Size N</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6-yr Grad Rate</strong></td>
<td>As of Fall 2008</td>
<td>As of Fall 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort Size N</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Gap</strong></td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: P409 Student Research Population File, Enrollment Information System

Although the overall retention and graduation rates at Frostburg are generally improving, there is considerable work yet to be done. The new initiatives and continuing programs described in this report, when taken together, are intended to enhance the persistence and completion of underrepresented minority and low-income students while addressing Frostburg’s gender-based achievement gap.

### Section 3. Major Programs to Address Frostburg’s Achievement Gap

The following programs were in place during the reporting period (fall 2013- spring 2014) and are intended to effectively address Frostburg State University’s gender-based achievement gap. These programs are also designed to improve retention and graduation rates among underrepresented minorities and first-generation students. A more detailed discussion of these programs, including a review of outcomes, is presented in section four of the report.

- **One-Step-Away Program (OSA)**
  
The One-Step-Away program assists undergraduate students who left university study 12 months or more before their expected graduation date. Students in good academic standing who accumulated 75% or more credits towards a bachelor’s degree were initially recruited into the program and provided financial and academic support through graduation. During the reporting period, 61 students participated in the program.

- **Championship Forum**
  
  For a third consecutive year, Frostburg State University was awarded in April 2014 a Maryland College Access Challenge Grant to operate The Championship Forum. This program is designed to improve the persistence rate of Pell-awarded, academically at-risk freshman and sophomore male students. During the reporting period, 42 students participated in the program.
• TRiO Student Support Services (SSS)

Student Support Services is a federally supported program serving low income, first-generation minority students as well as students who have a documented disability. During the reporting period, the program served 275 students, the maximum number funded by the enabling grant.

• Academic Enrichment Series

A collaborative program of Frostburg’s divisions of academic affairs and student affairs, the Academic Enrichment Series features workshops on academic and personal development conducted by faculty and staff. The program is designed to enhance academic skills and the social connections of students. During the reporting period, 628 attendees participated in the program.

• Course Redesign

At Frostburg, nine courses have been redesigned using the National Center for Academic Transformation principles, models, and assessment. These courses were selected for unique reasons, the most common being to improve bottleneck courses, reduce high failure rate, and address achievement gap issues. The redesign of Frostburg’s DVMT 100, Intermediate Algebra, shows promise in helping to reduce the University’s gender-based achievement gap.

**Section 4. Summary and Assessment of the Major Programs to Address Frostburg’s Achievement Gap**

Brief summaries and assessments of the programs that are intended to address Frostburg’s gender-based achievement gap are presented below. As noted above, these programs also have a positive impact on retention and graduation rates among Frostburg’s underrepresented minorities and first-generation students. With the exception of the One-Step-Away program, retention and graduation data for all students who participate in these programs will be collected and presented in the University’s future achievement gap reports.

**One-Step-Away Program (OSA)**

The One-Step-Away (OSA) program, funded through a Maryland Higher Education Commission grant and directly administered by the Office of the Provost, is designed for students who have “stopped-out” from the University to direct them on an efficient pathway to graduation. The program succeeded in addressing Frostburg’s gender-based achievement gap, improving overall graduation rates, increasing enrollments in courses, collecting additional tuition revenues, and better recognizing return on institutional investments in participating students.

The initial assessment of the pool of degree-potential near-completers for FY2013 (conducted in October 2012), identified 35 students who had met the definitions of the grant. Of the 35 students actively pursued, 20 (57%) were re-engaged (responded) and 19 (54%) were re-enrolled. Due to an efficient use of grant funds during FY2013, an extension was requested and received in March 2014. The process to identify eligible students was used again in order to find those who were not previously eligible, including students who entered Frostburg back to 2000. As there was a condensed timeline to re-engage and re-enroll students by the end of the grant period, attention was placed on students with at least 105 credit hours earned at the time of stopping-out.
Originally, it was estimated that 40% of OSA-eligible students would complete their bachelor’s degrees under this grant; Frostburg’s performance exceeded expectations with a completion rate over 50% (see Table 3).

Table 3 - Demographics of OSA Student Cohort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of OSA-eligible non-completers who were re-engaged</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Pell recipient Y/N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>45/33</td>
<td>52W/22BL/4Other Minority</td>
<td>41/37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of degree-completers under OSA Grant (Summer 2013-Summer 2015 graduates)</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Pell recipient Y/N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>23/17</td>
<td>19W/17BL/4Other Minority</td>
<td>21/19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographic data provided by the University’s Office of Planning, Assessment, and Institutional Research (PAIR) define the demographics of the cohort under investigation.

Analysis of the cohort:
- The male-female ratio is uneven with 57% (45) of OSA-eligible and 57% (23) of the degree-completers being male.
- While the OSA-eligible cohort was 33% minority representing the University’s overall student demographics, degree-completers were 52% minority.
- Additionally, 52% of the OSA-eligible students (41) and degree-completers (21) were Pell-eligible, consistent with the larger Frostburg student demographic.

Championship Forum

For a third consecutive year, in spring 2014 Frostburg was awarded a Maryland College Access Challenge Grant in the amount of $34,015 to operate a program with the purpose of improving the persistence rate of Pell-awarded, academically at-risk freshman and sophomore male students. The main components of this highly successful program, entitled The Championship Forum, are intensive advising with academic coaches; mandatory workshops on financial literacy, learning strategies, and personal growth topics; and weekly study hall sessions. Participants who fulfill program requirements are eligible for a $550 stipend.

Below are the mid-year results of Frostburg’s 2014/2015 Championship Program.

- Number of participants: 42 male students for spring 2014; 57 male students for fall 2014.
- 84% of the 57 program participants are African-American, Latino, or multi-racial.
- 98% of spring semester participants (41 of 42) returned for the fall semester.
- 45% (19 of 42) of program participants earned a 3.0 or better for the spring 2014 semester; 10 of them were on the Dean’s List.

TRiO Student Support Services (SSS)

Student Support Services (SSS) is an educational opportunity program funded by the U.S. Department of Education that serves 275 eligible Frostburg State University students. Of these program participants in 2013-2014, 68.8% were underrepresented minority students and 40.7% were males. The program’s mission is to provide services to students who are academically underprepared, low income, first generation, or with disabilities in an effort to foster a supportive environment and help them persist to graduation. The services of SSS include intensive advising, establishment of an academic requirement plan, financial aid and financial literacy counseling, tutoring, academic/personal skills development, and assistance with the graduate school application process.
The SSS program has three student persistence or graduation objectives, all of which were exceeded during the reporting period. The success of males in the program equaled or exceeded that of other participants in 2013-2014.

**Objective 1:** Seventy-five percent (75%) of all participants served by the SSS project will persist from one academic year to the beginning of the next academic year or graduate.

Persistence Rate for all Participants 2013-14: 91%
Persistence Rate for all Male Participants 2013-14: \(\frac{103}{112} = 92\%\)

**Objective 2:** Eighty-five percent (85%) of all enrolled participants served by the SSS project will meet the performance level required to stay in good academic standing.

Good Academic Standing Rate for all Participants 2013-14: 93%
Good Academic Standing Rate for all Male Participants 2013-14: \(\frac{104}{112} = 93\%\)

**Objective 3:** Fifty percent (50%) of new participants served each year will graduate within six years.

Graduation Rate 2008-09 Entering Participants: 64%
Graduation Rate 2008-09 Entering Male Participants: \(\frac{155}{22} = 68\%\)

**Academic Enrichment Series**

The Academic Enrichment Series (AES), a cooperative program between Frostburg’s divisions of academic affairs and student affairs, features workshops on learning strategies, technology skill building, and career development. Students attending the workshops build relationships with faculty and staff presenters, increasing the likelihood that participants will use campus resources important for student success. Initially AES programs were established for low income, underrepresented minority students, and topics were selected specifically to help these students benefit from resources on campus – especially financial aid and tutoring. Presently, the programs also serve a wider student population. The following student participation numbers include individuals who participated in more than one workshop. During the reporting period (fall 2013 - spring 2014), there was nearly a six percent (6%) increase in the number of attendees, with 628 participants attending 16 different themed sessions in comparison to 593 during the previous reporting period (fall 2012 - spring 2013). There was a fall to fall increase in attendance (fall 2012: 191 and fall 2013: 325); however, the spring to spring attendance decreased (spring 2013: 402 and spring 2014: 303). Some of the decline during this period was likely due to weather closures and delays on campus.

**Course Redesign - Developmental Math (DVMT 100)**

Developmental Math 100, Intermediate Algebra, was redesigned in 2011 to improve its historical 41% failure rate and gender achievement gap. Overall, the redesign has been successful in reducing failure rates, which averaged 22% over the last seven semesters. Initially, males outperformed females for the first two semesters of full implementation of the redesign. Once the course grade structure was changed from pass/fail to A, B, F, females have slightly or significantly outperformed males (range: 5% - 19% difference). Nevertheless, the average failure rate per gender since the redesign is significantly better than historical measures: Females: 18% instead of 35% historical rate (a 17% reduction); Males: 25% instead of 44% historical rate (a 19% reduction). In 2014, the redesign team made changes to align DVMT 100 curriculum with one of the next math courses students would need to take: MATH 119, College Algebra. The instructional software was switched to the same one used in Math 119 and standards were raised. Students in DVMT 100 are now engaging in additional math problem solving to help them succeed in their next math course. For the spring 2014 semester, females achieved the highest success rate in DVMT 100 since the redesign: 94%. Their success rate for the fall 2014 semester was 84%. For males, the spring 2014 success rate in DVMT 100 was 75% and for fall 2014 was 73%. Thus, more students are now passing DVMT 100 than they have historically, despite the increased workload.
Attendance and giving up early may be an issue for the male students, which likely reflect the same maladaptive student behaviors that are impacting the male achievement gap at Frostburg. Changes will be made in the spring 2015 semester to help with attendance. The main instructor of DVMT 100 already employs a variety of techniques to assist all students, including the use of Beacon (see Section 5), early warnings, and pedagogy aimed at adaptive student behaviors. The redesign of DVMT 100 should be able to maintain its results, and the new change in attendance may positively impact the gender-based gap.

Section 5. New Initiatives and the Expansion of Established Efforts Designed to Enhance Frostburg’s Retention and Graduation Rates

In fall 2014, Frostburg undertook several new initiatives expected to increase student persistence and graduation rates at the University and contribute to the University System of Maryland’s goal of cutting the achievement gap in Maryland’s public universities in half by 2015. These initiatives include the establishment of the Academic Success Network, the creation of the Freshman Progress Survey, a collaborative pilot program established by the director of the Diversity Center and assistant provost for student success and retention, and academic workshops for student athletes. In addition to these new actions, the University continues to pursue improved student persistence and graduation rates through the increased use of its existing Beacon student early alert system and the restructuring of services provided by its Tutoring Center. Where appropriate, student data necessary to assess the effectiveness of these new initiatives and expanded programs will be collected and evaluated over the course of the coming year.

Academic Success Network

Created in the summer of 2014, the Academic Success Network, under the direction of an associate provost, encompasses the efforts of Programs Advancing Student Success (PASS), TRiO Student Support Services (SSS), Disability Support Services (DSS), programs managed by the assistant provost for student success and retention, and the new Center for Academic Advising and Retention (CAAR).

As in the past, PASS oversees the Tutoring Center and related services. The assistant provost for student success and retention moved into CAAR and continues to oversee efforts to retain upper-classmen, reduce the achievement gap, and develop and implement intervention initiatives for at-risk students. The Center for Academic Advising and Retention also manages the freshman orientation classes (ORIE), as well as directs students to appropriate services. These freshman-oriented programs are led by the director of freshman advising and retention.

Freshman Progress Survey

Recognizing that by the time mid-term warnings come along, some students are too far behind to catch up before the end of the semester, Frostburg instituted a survey that was completed at the third and fifth weeks of fall 2014 by all faculty who teach first-semester, first-year students. The survey simply asked instructors to identify any issues they may have encountered that would impact a student’s success, such as poor attendance, inattention, not completing assignments, or low test scores. Instructors’ comments were shared with advisors who could then assist advisees with establishing a plan for tutoring or other interventions.

Just under half of the faculty responded to the surveys, indicating a need for greater buy-in, but by the middle of the academic term, 100 fewer freshmen received warnings this year than last year (418 vs. 518) in a first-year class that was 64 students larger this fall (961 vs. 897 in fall 2013). For the spring 2015 semester, there was a 7% increase in the number of freshmen in good academic standing when compared to the percentage for spring 2014. Demographic data was not collected during this pilot. However, the future use of the survey will gather student demographic data in order to assess its impact on Frostburg’s gender-based achievement gap and on the retention of all student categories.
Collaborative Pilot Program to Assist At-Risk Students

Upon review of institutional data that indicated students were withdrawing from Frostburg for nonacademic reasons, the director of the Diversity Center and assistant provost for student success and retention established a collaborative and evidenced-based pilot program that facilitates student academic success along with personal development and responsibility. Under the pilot program, Diversity Center and Center for Academic Advising and Retention staff mediate roommate disputes, conduct diversity training, and provide service and leadership opportunities for students to improve their communication skills and enhance their enjoyment and appreciation of the university community.

Academic Workshops for Athletes

The assistant provost for student success and retention works collaboratively with the Department of Athletics to conduct academic workshops for Frostburg’s football players to further the retention of these students and improve the overall male persistence and graduation rates at the University. The workshops are designed to meet the needs of a diverse population, including African American, Latino, and Pell-eligible students who are members of the team. The fall 2013 team roster had 159 members. Of these players, 38.9% were African Americans, 4.4% were Latinos, and 38.9% were low-income students as identified by their Pell eligibility.

During summer training in 2013, when the athletes returned to campus, the assistant provost presented a workshop that focused on learning strategies. Student athletes were administered a learning styles inventory and the results were interpreted for both students and coaches. The students were also provided study strategies to enhance their preferred styles of acquiring and retaining new information. The goal was to develop independent learners who benefit from their strengths. The coaches were given resources to augment the material covered during the session, which could be used throughout the year to assist the team.

Increased Use of Beacon

The 2013-2014 academic year saw a significant increase in faculty and staff use of the Beacon early alert system with twice as many users (150 vs. 74) and over four times the number of notifications posted (2,755 vs. 618). The primary topics for Beacon notifications continued to be concerns about students’ attendance and assignment/test performance. The Beacon notifications give athletic coaches, academic support staff, freshman advisors, and faculty opportunities to reach out to students and help them access support services and improve academic behaviors. The increased communication between and among faculty, staff, and students has created a stronger and better informed network of support for students.

Restructuring of the Tutoring Center Services

The FSU Tutoring Center is a College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) certified tutoring program. The CRLA is an international body that establishes peer tutoring standards and training curriculum and independently reviews tutoring and learning centers for operational excellence. Frostburg’s center historically has provided peer tutoring in groups and on an individual basis to students experiencing difficulty in specific 100 and 200-level courses. The center is restructuring its services by expanding current centralized tutoring in writing and math to include courses in the natural sciences and business. The purpose of these changes is to provide more focused, effective, and efficient tutoring services. Another goal of the restructuring of services is to decrease the achievement gap of underrepresented minority students by providing additional support for courses with high “D,” “F,” and “W” rates. In fall 2013, the center provided tutoring services to 787 students with 641 served in spring 2014. Spring 2014 also saw an increase in student use of the center’s mathematics tutoring services and the initiation of centralized biology tutoring in efforts to focus on STEM disciplines to prepare historically underrepresented students for demands of the future.
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