**UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE**

**Managing for Results**

**Academic Year 2023-24**

**Mission**

The University of Baltimore (UBalt) offers career-focused education for aspiring and current professionals, providing the region with highly educated leaders who make distinctive contributions to the broader community. UBalt has a long history of providing quality, professional undergraduate and graduate education for working adults who aspire to advance in their careers.

**Institutional Assessment**

Ubalt’s strategic plan supports the above mission and six strategic priorities below.

**Goal 1**: Position UBalt as the region’s premier professional, career-focused university

**Goal 2:** Strengthen student success

**Goal 3:** Solidify Ubalt’s commitment to community engagement and service

**Goal 4:** Organize for long-term financial stability

**Goal 5:** Achieve excellence in research, scholarship, and creative activity

**Goal 6:** Strengthen Ubalt’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Ubalt’s mission and implementation of the strategic plan is consistent with the *2022 State Plan for Postsecondary Education: Student Success with Less Debt*, the 2022 Plan for Postsecondary Education, and the goals listed below. Specifically, Goals 2, 4, and 5 of Ubalt’s Strategic Plan align with the Maryland State Plan. The University of Baltimore assesses impact and aligns and revises strategies as appropriate.

| **State Plan** | **UBALT Strategic Plan (SP) – Initiatives Aligned with State Plan** |
| --- | --- |
| **Access**: Ensure equitable access to affordable and quality postsecondary education for all Maryland residents. | **Goal 2:** Enhance affordability and student financial literacy.  **Goal 2:** Evaluate the tuition structure for all programs to ensure market competitiveness.  **Goal 2**: Increase need-based financial aid.  **Goal 2**: Revise financial aid processes to ensure clarity, consistency, and ease for students.  **Goal 2**: Enhance strategic use of funds for improving student outcomes and reducing negative financial impacts on students and the institution.  **Goal 3**: Expand engagement with public-school systems to ensure more students are prepared for college (e.g., high school dual enrollments) |
| **Success:** Promote and implement practices and policies that will ensure student success. | **Goal 2:** Increase degree completion rates and shorten time to degree.  **Goal 2:** Mine academic data to identify and support student success.  **Goal 2:** Close gap in educational achievement among all undergraduates.  **Goal 2:** Maximize flexible course delivery, enhance winter and summer offerings, and develop multi-semester course schedules.  **Goal 2:** Enhance opportunities for awarding credit via transfer institutions, early college admittance, dual high school enrollment and military credit; create a campus-wide structure and institute policies and procedures for awarding Prior Learning credit.  **Goal 2:** Develop a strong and proactive approach to academic advising that focuses on academic pathways and timely student completion.  **Goal 2:** Develop a University-wide initiative to assist students in making prudent financial decisions. |
| **Innovation**: Foster innovation in all aspects of Maryland higher education to improve access and student success. | **Goal 2**: Strengthen excellence in teaching and learning.  **Goal 2**: Grow student participation in high-impact practices.  **Goal 4**: Reorganize academic structures to better support academic excellence and student success.  **Goal 5**: Expand Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity (RSCA) partnerships and sponsored research with industry, government and community organizations, and other academic institutions. |

Guided by our strategic plan and aligned with university and college retention plans, we carefully track retention, graduation, attrition, and student success rates. We use data to guide our initiatives and direct and indirect measures to chart our progress. And we implement best practices and enhance existing services based on student feedback. Over the past several years, UBalt has implemented many new initiatives, e.g., Embedded Peer-Support Programs, Enhanced Mental Health and Wellness Resources, while enhancing others in order to strengthen our focus on student success and the student experience. Additionally, the University engaged in the important work set out in the Board of Regents USM/Ubalt Task Force Report. In particular, the Student Experience Workgroup carefully reviewed the student experience at the University and made several suggestions to senior executive leadership that would positively impact recruitment, student success, retention, and degree completion. These suggestions and recommendations remain under primary consideration in the development of interceptive programs.

**Performance Accountability Metrics Supporting Access, Success, Innovation, Financial Resources, and Institutional Capabilities**

* FTFT (first-time full-time students) retention is 60%.
* FTFT (first-time full-time students) retention for African American students is 48%.
* The six-year graduation rate for undergraduate students is 33%.
* The six-year graduation rate for African American students is 35%.
* Law graduates who pass the bar exam on first attempt remains stable at 61%.
* Percentage of African American undergraduates has increased to 49%.
* Percentage of economically disadvantaged students enrolled continues to increase. Current gain is from 74% to 76%.

It is important to note that the average freshmen retention rate for the entire period that UBalt has had freshmen is 73%.  The range is wide: 60%-87%, but this difference is partially due to the fluctuation of the small numbers of first-time freshmen.  The pandemic has posed multiple challenges for our diverse student population and the institution continues to monitor student needs and preferences and implement changes based on this information. In particular, many students that have expressed strong preference for in-person classes have now shifted to an online preference.

The percentage of economically disadvantaged student continues to rise, and now exceeds ¾ of the undergraduate students (76%). Financial assistance and need remain the top issue for our student population. Ubalt continues to assess its need-based financial aid strategy to support recruitment and retention. We leverage the Bob Parsons Scholarship Fund for Pell Grant eligible transfer students who maintain full-time enrollment, a 2.0 cumulative GPA, and Pell Grant eligibility. This scholarship allows eligible students to complete their degree debt free by covering the remaining tuition and fees after the Pell Grant is applied. The Sam Rose Scholarship Fund supports newly admitted full- and part-time undergraduate students with 24 credits, a 2.0 cumulative GPA, and in-state residency status. UBalt continues to offer a Near Completion Grant for undergraduates within 30 credits of graduation with either no remaining financial aid eligibility or hardship. Importantly, Ubalt has an extensive incarcerated student program (2nd Chance Pell) that is 41% as large as the regular freshmen class. Merit scholarships are incremental to need-based aid.

**Prompts from the Commission**

The Commission requested that institutions respond to two prompts. The prompts and responses are below.

1. **Identifying Long-term Equity Gaps:**

*a. What are the largest long-term equity gaps that exist in student access, success, and innovation in your institution?*

The primary measure of our student equity gap is the  *graduation rate* difference between African American students and all students[[1]](#footnote-1). The University recognizes that significant differences exist as evidenced by entering student demographics, including differing rates of Pell grant percipiency and college preparatory curricula. The University has been engaged in continuing efforts to narrow these gaps, and notable progress has been achieved in the most recent year. The University has done so by targeting programs specifically for change in the delivery of instruction coupled with identifying and meeting the academic needs of the student body. Graduation rates for African American students has nearly returned to pre-pandemic levels. This is not yet the case for all students, as these graduation rates remain at levels incurred during the pandemic. This has resulted in the graduation for African Americans (35%) exceeding that of all students (33%).

We expect, however, the graduation rates of all students to begin to return to pre-pandemic levels in the forthcoming year, and that a marginal gap of approximately 2 to 4 percentage points is possible, but such small margins cannot be forecasted, and higher performance by the African-American student group remains a distinct possibility.

*b. How are these equity gaps uncovered/discovered/identified at your institution and how are they shared with your community?*

The University monitors via data reports and dashboards the equity gaps in regard to retention, DFW/CFW rates, academic probation, attrition, and graduation rates. These are disaggregated by time status, admission type, race, sex, Pell Status, Subsidized Stafford Loans, as well as by academic major. These are part of the University’s regular reporting or specific, targeted analysis. In particular, the tracing of DFW/CFW grades is of primary importance for intervention, as many of these other metrics are backward looking. The DFW rates allow early identification of student academic difficulties and provide opportunity for forward-looking intervention. This may involve curriculum redesign or targeted resources to a particular curriculum of instruction. The distribution of the reports includes the academic deans, student success leadership, and the members of the Office of the Provost. This allows broad sharing and discussion across the academic disciplines. This is applicable at both the undergraduate and graduate level, and proceeds from the academic deans through the level of the individual program directors and faculty.

1. *What interventions have been implemented to eliminate these gaps?*

UBalt continues to use direct and indirect measures, including student feedback, to develop and enhance initiatives focused on student success. UBalt continuously assesses the impact of the pandemic as well as course and service modality. UBalt has operated in a hybrid fashion over the past year and continues to do so. Some initiatives and examples are below.

1. **Expanded Embedded Peer-Support Programs:** An additional $40K funding from the Department of Education PBI program has supported an increase in embedded tutoring services, UBalt’s context-appropriate supplemental-instruction model of tutoring for traditionally challenging courses. Embedded programs include:
   1. Embedded tutoring with regular review sessions in quantitative courses including accounting, psychology research methods, and operations research
   2. Coaching in the First-Year Seminar
   3. Writing Fellows in writing-intensive courses.
2. **Enhanced Mental Health and Wellness Resources:** Our Student Assistance Program (SAP) is designed to provide students with an easily accessible, safe and confidential means to assist with issues that may interfere with school, work or family responsibilities 24/7 365 days a year.  UBalt’s Clinical Case Manager provides on-campus threat monitoring, assessment and response when needed and serves as the on-campus triage resource.  Due to an increase in referrals and usage, in spring of 2023 the University approved an additional full-time Case Manager for Student Health position who focuses on supporting case management services as well as developing a more robust set of health-related programming and initiatives. The institution continued with its implementation of Mental Health First Aid. During AY22-23.the Office of Student Support partnered with the Office of Human Resources and the Center for Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Technology to offer up to 60 staff and faculty the training annually in addition to the student focused trainings that had already been implemented.
3. **Expanded Mandatory Milestone Advising Initiative to Graduate Students:** This initiative requires students to see an advisor at distinct and critical times in their academic careers (45, 60, and 90 credits).  Specific advising syllabi are used at each touch point and include topics such as academic progression, support services, career and internship opportunities, financial aid and graduate school preparation.  In fall 2022, this initiative expanded from all undergraduates to include graduate students in specific programs.
4. **Expanded Use of Open Educational Resources (OER):**In 2023, The University received a $10,000 Hewlett Foundation grant through The Driving OER Sustainability for Student Success (DOERS3) Collaborative that focuses on supporting student success by promoting free, and customizable OER.  The grant focuses on implementing OER to achieve equity and student success.  Additionally, the university continues to utilize funds provided by the Predominately Black Institution (PBI) grant to decrease textbook costs for students by increasing the number of courses with free or low-cost text options.
5. **Continued to Implement the Grant for Primarily Black Institutions (PBI) and Student Success:** Secured $250,000 per year for five years to support undergraduate student success. Two positions were hired: one to recruit students and another to support them once on campus. In addition, grant dollars are also funding Open Educational Resources (OER), embedded tutors, and software to support students learning in the field of accounting. Implemented a series of transfer student success seminars and student gatherings to create a sense of belonging at the University.
6. **Enhanced Credit for Prior Learning Processes**: A course was developed to allow students to build a portfolio of work products and documented experiences to be reviewed by faculty to earn credit with the goal being to shorten the degree completion time (course proposal to be submitted in fall 2023 but groundwork completed last academic year).
7. **Planned Expansion of Salesforce Advisor Link (SAL) and the Student Success Hub:** In spring 2021, UBalt implemented SAL, a software platform that focuses on advisor and student success engagement. Students can interact with their academic advisors to make advising appointments, review and handle academic to-do items, and learn more about their Student Success Team. This is UBalt’s primary student communication platform and system of engagement. Planning for other offices to be incorporated into the platform to improve engagement and communication has begun. Records, Bursar, Financial Aid, and Career and Internship Offices will be incorporated into the platform in AY23-24.
8. **Developed Additional Student Online Learning Preparedness Resources:** UBalt Ready was launched in August 2023 to replace the pandemic-generated Student Quickstart tool. UBalt Ready consists of modules including student preparedness for all modes of learning, information focused on first-gen student success such as Growth Mindset and the ‘hidden curriculum,’ educational technology and campus resources, and engagement and belonging modules to integrate freshmen and transfer populations to UBalt campus culture.
9. **Engaged a Task Force to Assess Challenging Courses**: A new taskforce convened in 2023 with renewed focus on developing multi-year data analysis of D/F/W (C/F/W for grad courses). Longitudinal data pre- and post-pandemic with a focus on modality provides insight into changes in previously established patterns with grade distribution and what constitutes a challenging course. Task force goals include identifying appropriate interventions at the course and program level, whether through curriculum redesign, changes to pedagogy, faculty development, or increased academic support.
10. **Enhanced Curriculum Support in Challenging Topics**: Academic support units developed instructional offerings to address changes in course requirements. As several programs have adopted Python programming language requirements in courses, students have struggled to master this new material which has not traditionally been part of academic support. Workshop development and updating for Python, Excel stats, statistics (Lumen), SPSS, and other quantitative tools/platforms are all part of an ongoing effort to increase student success by monitoring student workload requirements, particularly in quantitative courses which introduce regularly new learning platforms.
11. **Enhanced Messaging Regarding the Basic Needs Virtual Resource Center:** The focus of the Basic Needs Virtual Resource Center is to provide students a one-stop virtual support for basic and emergency needs. Important resources such as the Campus Pantry, Career Closet, Student Emergency Assistance Fund, and the Student Assistance Program are featured. Additionally, a Basic Needs Advisory Council has been established to ensure greater communication and research sharing amongst the individual offices that play a role in supporting students basic needs. Amongst the topics currently being discussed by this group are cross training and a more streamlined intake process to better connect students with the web of resources available to them.
12. **Enhanced Opportunities for Students to Engage in Paid Internships:** New and/or enhanced programs provided by the Schaefer Center for Public Policy, the University’s Career and Internship Center, and individual Schools/Colleges afforded more students the opportunity to engage in paid internships. These programs are expected to grow over the next year.

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1. **Measuring Equity Gaps:** 
   1. *How has your institution used disaggregated data to identify equity gaps in students’ educational opportunities and outcomes?*

Following the identification of possible equity gaps as in Question 1 above, this information is used to drill down to individual student outcomes. This involves review of the original admission record—of strength and weakness in college preparation. If a student has not returned to the University, submission of student record is made to the National Student Clearing House for identification of possible transfer to another higher education institution. Follow-up also occurs to see if the student was academically successful and graduated from the transfer institution. An examination of the student’s coursework follows. How did the student’s grades compare to the other grades in the class, were there Early Alerts submitted and addressed, and were these students on the radar of the CARE Team (students of concern)? Individual advising discussions that focus on interventions and connections to resources occur. In particular, the University looks to see the extent to which academic or financial holds may be addressed. The University regularly monitors each term for courses in which students are having exceptional difficulty and advises for remediation. Moreover, the student’s record can be disaggregated down to the level of high school preparation, success or failure in specific academic disciplines, and use or non-use of academic resources.

* 1. *What stakeholder engagement (students, faculty, staff, etc.) is used to collect and review this data?*

The primary stakeholders are the faculty, the program directors, the assistant & associate deans, the College Dean, and the Office of the Provost. These are integrally related to the work in the Division of Student Success and Support Services which has primary responsibility in the provision of services as well as the Office of Institutional Research which provides analytical support. Moreover, the University utilized a retention and graduation dashboard to facilitate the availability of retention and graduation data. The Office of Provost provides the overarching review and direction on the engagement and intervention efforts.

* 1. *Does your institution set goals/benchmarks in regard to the elimination of equity gaps?*

The University’s goal is to eliminate the equity gaps. As overviewed in question 1, this must be an integral and progressive goal. This is reflected in the University goals and objectives as provided in the MFR data templates. As highlighted above, the University has been successful in obtaining equitable outcomes in student graduation; however, this must be kept in context of working to raise both the African-American and the all student groups to higher benchmark levels. In this regard, we benchmark against USM institutions as well our competitor peer Instituions.

* 1. *If so, what steps does your institution take to ensure accountability in meeting the established goals/benchmarks of equity?*

Accountability in meeting the established goals/benchmarks of equity is an integral part of the academic and administrative performance review process. Individual staff members are to address performance on meeting goals, explicate the current status, make recommendations for changes in program to enhance obtainment of goals. More integrally, the university’s staff members work to promote and make requirements on partner staff in the advancement of goals. Co-accountability is integral to making progress. Efforts cannot be made at cross-purposes, and increasing student success is a University-wide responsibility.

1. The comparison of group of African American students and all students follows the guidance provided by the University System of Maryland. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)