

## MISSION

The University of Baltimore provides innovative education in business, public affairs, the applied liberal arts and sciences, and law to serve the needs of a diverse population in an urban setting. A public university, UB offers excellent teaching and a supportive community for undergraduate, graduate and professional students in an environment distinguished by academic research and public service. The University makes excellence accessible to traditional and nontraditional students motivated by professional advancement and civic awareness; establishes a foundation for lifelong learning, personal development, and social responsibility; combines theory and practice to create meaningful, real-world solutions to 21<sup>st</sup>-century urban challenges; and is an anchor institution, regional steward and integral partner in the culture, commerce, and future development of Baltimore and the region.”

## INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT

### Overview

In the spring of 2015, significant challenges occurred in the city of Baltimore. This report reflects the same time period where we see a drop in our second year retention and six-year graduation rates. While we cannot attribute a direct cause for this decline in some of our key metrics to the unrest in Baltimore after the death of Freddie Gray in April 2015, we believe this may have contributed. As we closely watch our data for this year we have begun to see a recovery. After the unrest that ensued, UB was instrumental in promoting thoughtful civic discourse about the events that took place close to campus and also about the history and social context that frame those events. UB’s “Divided Baltimore” course offered in the fall of 2015 was covered by *The New York Times*. The course was offered for credit for students and was also open to the public free of charge on a non-credit basis, both live in the classroom and online. It brought together academics, community leaders, students, and government leaders in a manner consistent with UB's commitment to academic excellence made available to a diverse population; to develop students' foundation for lifelong learning, personal development, and social responsibility; and to educate students in an environment distinguished by academic research and public service.

**Goal 1. The University of Baltimore will enhance the quality of learning, teaching and research (Objectives 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.6). The 2013 Maryland State Plan Goal 1: Quality and Effectiveness.**

*2013 Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education* is to develop in students “the academic skills and knowledge necessary to succeed at postsecondary-level learning. (MSP Goal 1). We are aware that for the 2014 cohort some key indicators have declined. However, our metric for students earning credit outside of the traditional classroom has increased by 4%. Experiential Learning is considered an important element of both undergraduate and graduate degree programs in support of UB's *Knowledge that Works* mission UB students participate in many out of classroom learning experiences. Of note is UB’s Service Learning project to West Virginia, which is a hallmark of the university’s co-curricular leadership program. These out-of-class opportunities support explicit student learning outcomes at either the course or university level.

Community Engagements programs that immerse students in civic issues such as community reentry from prisons, sustainability, homelessness, immigration rights, design learning, and the Chesapeake Bay project touch over 500 students each year. In 2014, over 250 students worked on Applied Research projects and 450 enrolled in an Honor's Enhanced Course, all of which have an experiential learning component. Nearly 400 were involved in an internship or practicum. There are approximately 100 different Experiential Learning opportunities that take place each year for students at the University of Baltimore to conduct research, work on community projects, have internships, participate in study abroad/global field study, and give back to the community and many students earn credit while participating.

One key metric to assess Law School performance is bar pass rates. Potential students look for this when deciding where to attend or stay. Bar passage rates at UB, in Maryland and across the country have declined in the past two years.

The law school has taken three steps in response. First, the Dean has appointed a Bar Passage Task Force to investigate the reasons for the decline at UB and propose strategies to address it. The Task Force gathered information and met with bar preparation professionals during the spring semester and presented a preliminary report to the faculty. Based on faculty input, the Task Force is continuing to evaluate both curricular and non-curricular interventions to support students in their bar preparation and expect to report final recommendations this academic year. Second, a Special Assistant to the Dean for Bar Readiness has been appointed. The Special Assistant is a member of the Task Force and is working with the Task Force to develop and implement recommendations. Third, the law school is offering Strategies for the Bar, a course that had been part of the law curriculum in the past but had not been offered for several years.

Strategic efforts in the Law School such as the Fannie Angelos Program and Charles Hamilton Huston Program as well as targeted recruitment initiatives have resulted in larger increases in minority students from 16% in 2007 to 28% in 2015. For example, the Fannie Angelos Program selects eight Baltimore Scholars from HBCU's to attend the UB school of Law with full tuition. The LSAT Award Program helps prepare underrepresented students build strategies to score higher on the LSAT. While the percent of Hispanic students remains small, it has more than doubled since 2.4% in 2011 to 5.5% in 2015. Interestingly, the percentage of students identifying as two or more races increased to 4.2% in 2015, making it nearly as prevalent as the Hispanic and Asian races.

While we do see a decline in both second year retention and graduation rates for all students, student progress to degree has begun to rebound. We are also mindful that only 17% of our students began as first-time full time freshman and because a large majority of our students work, they take longer to graduate. We see these success indicators rising again, and attribute this to our strong first-year programs and improved pass rates of students in developmental courses. Also, senior's response to our most recent National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) indicates high levels of satisfaction with UB, which will support graduation numbers in the near future.

**Goal 2. The University of Baltimore will increase student enrollment in response to state and regional demand. MSP Goal 2 objectives, 2.1 and 2.2 and The 2013 Maryland State Plan Goal 2: Access, Affordability and Completion**

The student body is diverse in all schools. In particular, UB is increasingly diverse with 48% of our undergraduates being African-American and 66.4% economically disadvantaged. There is a growing priority in securing need-based support for a diverse student body. The *2013 Maryland State Plan* notes that institutions of higher education “play an important role in meeting the (State’s) completion goal and must work together to create an educational environment that supports all students’ attainment of education goals” (**MSP Goal 2**). As the demographics of the State change and the number of first-generation college student increases, the University understands that there is a growing need to assist families in supporting them through the admission process and financial aid. While there is a drop in the percentage of economically disadvantaged students from the previous year, 66.4% is still a significant number. This is supported by data from the 2014 CIRP (Cooperative Institute Research Program) Freshmen Survey. UB students responded at much higher levels than students at our comparison institutions that financial assistance and affordability of tuition were primary reasons for choosing UB.

Institutional data guide our decision to both recruit and retain students. Marketing materials reflect our affordability, and Admissions and the Office of Financial Aid work together to support enrollments. According to a 2014 University of Baltimore Student Success Survey, financial reasons are why a high percentage of our students stop-out or leave UB, in addition to competing family and job responsibilities. A strategic priority moving forward is to identify ways to secure additional need-based financial aid. Recent initiatives include working with the University of Baltimore Foundation to award UBF scholarships earlier to students. UBF scholarships historically have been awarded around mid-summer to students who were already committed to attending UB in the fall. This cycle, the admission office offered awards to admitted students who had yet to accept their offer of admission in hopes of recruiting them to UB.

As reflected in our data, UB has experienced an 8% decrease in second year retention for all students as well as an 11% decrease for African-American students. Recent data trends suggested a reversal. Again, while we cannot directly correlate this with the unrest in Baltimore this decline is possibly related. While we may have lost students in this 2014 cohort, satisfaction with key indicators has increased as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Index (SSI). Of note is that the SSI was administered before the unrest. In 2004, the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Index (SSI) was administered to undergraduates only and in 2014, the survey was administered to all UB students. On the SSI, students indicate both the level of importance they place on specific components of the institution and their level of satisfaction with these components. While it is impossible to compare SSI data for both undergraduates and graduates for 2004 and 2014, an extrapolation and comparison of undergraduate SSI indicates an increase in satisfaction on all factors from 2004 to 2014.

Moving forward, the University of Baltimore is committed to re-prioritizing resources towards the graduation of transfer students, understanding the reasons why some student enrollment

patterns change from full time to part time, and increasing graduate assistantships and financial support for students at all levels. While the graduation of freshmen continues to be of singular importance, the success of the new transfers students, and students in graduate and professional programs is fundamental to the overall success of the University. UB is also keenly aware of the need to support part-time students. Of significance is also the fact that UB's institutional definition for Closing the Achievement Gap reports, consistent with USM requirements, is first time, full-time freshman in three groups—African American, Hispanic, and Pell-eligible. While these students fare well in their first years, it appears that when enrollment intensity drops, so does persistence. Of concern is the drop from full-time to part-time status for students at the undergraduate level. UB is aware that retention for part-time students lags far behind that of full-time students. One strategic enrollment priority will be to understand what is driving the drop in enrollment intensity and intervene where possible. We will continue to enhance initiatives.

**Goal 3 The University of Baltimore meets community, business, government and not-for-profit needs in the Baltimore metropolitan area and Maryland. (MSP Goal 3). Objective 3.1. The 2013 Maryland State Plan Goal 5: Economic Growth and Vitality.**

In the midst of the unstable climate in the city, UB's entrepreneurial revenue declined only slightly, but the number of federal awards and percentage of research dollars from federal sources remained stable. The University for Baltimore, takes seriously it's commitment to the greater needs of the region and state and continue to strive towards engagement and entrepreneurial opportunities particularly in the city. If UB succeeds, so does Baltimore.

### **Commission Request**

*Objective 1.6: Through 2015, UB will exceed the national benchmark for similarly selective institutions on six-year graduation rates for first-time, full-time, degree-seeking undergraduate students and African-American students.*

### **Compassion Comments and Requests**

“The University provided a thoughtful and thorough response to the Commission's 2014 request for greater explanation as to what institutional data informs the University's benchmark and an analysis of the trends in the institution's six-year graduation rates for all students generally and African American students specifically.

In its 2015 Performance Accountability Report response, the University stated that a number of initiatives have been put in place to help with retention and completion of all undergraduate students, including revising developmental courses, implementing a new advising system, altering financial aid practices, and changing programs targeting specific at-risk populations.

Please provide examples of evaluation data collected regarding the efficacy of these initiatives. Specifically, please provide any evaluation data collected (e.g. tracking outcomes of participants

over time [with or without use of a comparison group], pre-and post-program survey) or other quantitative or qualitative data used to assess these endeavors.”

## **UB’s Response**

### **Revising Developmental Courses**

Support for writing and math has been reassessed in recent years and revisions made to provide support in more effective ways. For instance, the 2014 first-year Writing program revisions involved replacing the old remedial prerequisite structure with a new First-year Composition structure. It features Directed Self-Placement into portfolio-assessed, co-requisite instruction (remedial and for-credit courses taken simultaneously), with embedded Accelerated Learning Program components focusing on non-cognitive strategies. The new placement structure and curriculum has contributed to a significant increase in both achievement and progression. Prior to 2014, an average of 52% of students completed their remedial writing coursework in their first year at UB; one year later their average cumulative GPA was 2.74. By contrast, since 2014, an average of 84% of students completed their foundational writing coursework in their first semester at UB; one year later, their average cumulative GPA was 2.92.

The Math coordinator continues to gather detailed data on student performance and assess the redesign. As a result of this ongoing assessment, continual improvements have been made to placement, program structure and curriculum delivery, including a standardized course syllabus for all sections, renaming the course as Math 100 (thus linking it to a discipline rather than to remediation) and a new initiative to offer variable credit for second-semester Math100 students who have only a limited number of modules to complete. Moreover, faculty development efforts were initiated in AY 2015 to provide math pedagogy workshops for student success strategies. Faculty now work more closely with advisors (through a new Math100 success-tracking database as well as “Early Alert” monitoring) to help in any needed intervention. To support progression, students receive weekly class announcements and emails about upcoming deadlines, study sessions, and access to the Math Learning Center resources. These ongoing improvements in response to assessment have contributed overall to a significant improvement in progression. Before 2014, only 43% of students needing remedial math completed it during their first year at UB. Since fall 2014, 60% of students needing foundational mathematics completed it during their first year at UB.

### **Implementing a new advising system**

In 2013, the University contracted with Educational Advisory Board (EAB) Student Success Collaborative (SSC) to enhance our understanding of risk factors impacting student success. This online tool allows more targeted and proactive advising. It was adopted to provide additional support for academic advisors and help make their work more efficient and effective, particularly given their high caseloads. The SSC combines technology, research, process improvement and predictive analytics to help institutions find at-risk students, conduct targeted outreach campaigns aimed at various groups of students, and develop success plans for these students.

In Spring 2015, UB piloted the SSC. This pilot found that the tool was effective for streamlining the work of advisors and allowing them to make more targeted interventions with students. Thus, in Fall 2015, all undergraduate advisors and program directors were brought on board. The SSC identifies students at risk based on predictive analytics using UB's own student data. The advisors can then reach out to these students in an effort to help them get back on track towards success. The EAB steering committee continues to meet monthly to discuss the utilization and advisor experiences with the software. In addition, UB has an advisor user group that meets as needed to discuss experiences and share best practices.

### **Altering financial aid practices**

The Office of Financial Aid made one major change. The change was to package continuing students for aid at the same time new students are being packaged. In the past, continuing students were packaged the summer before the start of the term. Earlier packaging has helped students plan their finances better. This program has not yet been fully assessed, and there are limited data on the specific correlation between financial aid and student success at UB; however, the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Services reports that as of spring 2016 a higher rate of continuing students were accepting their financial aid packages early. In addition, UB received a Near Completer Grant from USM to support students who had financial holds and had completed at least 110 credits. Assessment results indicate that 88% of students receiving this grant (up to \$1,500) either graduated or were still enrolled. In fall 2016, additional monies for near completer grants were secured. The grant was provided to student with at least a 3.00 GPA and who had sufficient credit that completion of a degree program was likely within one to two semesters.

### **Changing programs targeting specific at-risk populations**

The Brotherhood, Mentorship, Achievement, Leadership and Enterprise Academy (*B.M.A.L.E. Academy*) was created in 2014 to inspire high academic achievement among UB's male students of color. The program supports, embraces and engages men of color in an effort to close the achievement, retention and graduation gaps. Program participants are assigned mentors from among UB faculty, staff and students. The combination of high touch professional and peer mentoring is a program hallmark. In collaboration with other campus offices, students are provided with supplemental academic advising, tutoring support, social and community engagement, cultural immersion, professional and academic programs and opportunities to provide community service. This program directly serves the university's mission to "serve the needs of a diverse population in an urban setting."

The program grew by 200% from 15 participants in 2014 to 45 participants in 2015. The average semester GPA of program participants improved from 2.52 in spring 2015 to 2.72 in Spring 2016. BMALE participants are also active on campus and at the national and local level. Two well-attended campus and community town halls have been presented, *Policing the Community: Know Your Rights* and *Destroying the School to Prison Pipeline*. Several students attended the 2015 White House Youth Policy Hackathon where student leaders from across the country participated in policy discussions around the "It's On Us" sexual assault prevention campaign, dismantling the school to prison pipeline, and increasing the presence of underrepresented populations in STEM fields.