HIGHER EDUCATION: READINESS, ACCESS AND COMPLETION

ABC Associated Black Charities
PreK-12 and higher education institutional commitments, along with educational professionals’ shared belief that every student needs college preparation and can succeed, are the foundations for all improvements in college readiness, access, and completion identified by experts convened by ABC.

Newly adopted Common State Standards promise to reform Baltimore’s curriculum to better align with college standards, removing one critical barrier to college readiness, access, and completion. New Common Assessment Standard will help address another: putting data on student, school, and system progress in the hands of those who can make a difference in students’ academic trajectory. Remaining challenges include:

1) parallel investments in college counseling, advising, financial planning, student supports, and professional development for teachers and counselors at all levels;

2) increased financial aid at college entry and throughout college careers so that students can focus on learning;

3) high quality developmental education; and

4) special attention to helping BCCC realize its potential to serve as a high quality first choice for Baltimore City Public School graduates and to become a valuable partner for BCPS as it ramps up its college readiness efforts.
FOREWORD

The More in the Middle Initiative is a strategic intervention of Associated Black Charities (ABC) and its Collaborative Partners, targeted at creating an economically healthier Baltimore City and region. The initiative is focused on human capital development, specifically, creating and growing greater economic assets among Baltimore City’s largest and the region’s statistically significant population group – African Americans. The wealth of this population profoundly affects the prosperity of the region now and in the future. More in the Middle’s five strategies address:

- Homeownership and foreclosure prevention
- Workforce development/career training and advancement
- Higher education: college readiness, access, and completion
- Business and economic development
- Asset-building and financial literacy

The economic case for including higher education is clear. Baltimore’s 21st century economy is powered by brains, not brawn. The economic opportunity case is equally clear. The key to widely-shared prosperity among its citizens is education beyond high school. “Higher levels of education lead to elevated wages, a more equitable distribution of income and substantial gains in productivity. For every additional average year of schooling U.S. citizens complete, the GDP increases by about 0.37 percentage points – or by 10% – over time.”

And yet, a tragic leakage of potential economic health for the City and its residents is taking place every time a student is not able to complete high school, every time a high school graduate does not apply to college, or applies and is accepted and yet fails to matriculate, or matriculates but never earns a degree. The rates of these leakages are greater for African American students, who make up 88 percent of Baltimore City Public Schools’ population, than for white students. If the 7,481 BCPS 9th graders in 2009 are able to earn Associate’s (AA) or Bachelor’s (BA) degrees, economists at College Board estimate that the median earnings they and their families and the Baltimore economy will enjoy will be 26 percent (AA) to 60 percent (BA) higher than if they have only a high school diploma, and 68 percent (AA) to 107 percent (BA) higher than if they drop out before finishing high school. The contributions to the tax bases of local, state, and federal governments will be similarly enlarged at the same time that these citizens will need fewer tax-funded services. It is estimated that if high school dropouts in 2008-09 had graduated with their class, the Maryland economy would enjoy $5.5 billion more in resident earnings over their lifetimes.

1 Achieve (2010), “What is College and Career Ready?”
Associated Black Charities’ More in the Middle higher education work began with research funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. During the academic year 2007-2008, and later in spring/summer 2009, a consultant team assessed African American students’, parents’, and school personnel’s awareness of and perceptions about higher education preparation, access, and associated benefits. The two phases of the project focused first on schools that did not have defined college readiness programs and subsequently on high schools with established college readiness programs or foci.  

In November, 2009, ABC convened 200 preK-20 educational leaders, foundation program managers, researchers, and community-based educational access service providers for a day-long African American College Completion Summit. Plenary sessions and break-out groups addressed opportunities, barriers, and policy issues in three areas: college-going culture and attitude, college readiness and access, and college completion. Later in the spring, summit participants were reconvened to report the results of the break-out groups. Three focus groups of local experts were then held to refine and supplement the work of the summit participants and identify relevant research.  

This policy discussion paper summarizes the findings and conclusions of these meetings along with additional research and cited promising practices. It is intended to provide a shared base of information and policy issues for discussion and action by all of us who have a vested interest in enhancing the region’s economic health by removing barriers to postsecondary readiness, access, and completion by African American students.

We are deeply indebted to Citi Foundation for funding this work and grateful to participants in the African American College Completion Summit and focus groups, who shared their wisdom and knowledge about research and practice in this important field.

Diane Bell McKoy
CEO
Associated Black Charities

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4 Local education agencies in Maryland call these “non-core” and “core” schools.
5 See list of planning committee members, summit speakers and panelist, focus group members, and advisors at the end of this report.
6 Prepared by Marsha R. B. Schachtel, Senior Fellow, Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies.
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*Associated Black Charities extends its thanks and appreciation to:*

  *Citi*

  *for its continued support*
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Annenberg Institute’s study of schools that are “beating the odds” for students who begin ninth grade not on a college-going track concludes that the exemplary schools used the following key strategies: academic rigor, a network of timely supports for students and parents, school culture focused on preparation for life after high school, and effective use of data.7

Aspirations, Exposure, and College-going Culture

FINDINGS

Students learn in families, communities, and schools. However, more than 80 percent of African American parents of all income levels expressed the opinion in a 2007 Public Agenda survey that the “vast majority of qualified students do not have the opportunity to attend college.”

Early outreach initiatives seek to build student interest, motivation, and preparation for college, starting as early as middle school.

Whether planning to enter college or workforce training programs or a job after graduation, all high school students need to be educated to a comparable level of readiness in reading and mathematics.

Studies show that teachers and principals often do not believe that all students can succeed. The assessment by parents, teachers, principals, and counselors of students’ ability and potential profoundly affects their aspirations and academic performance.

Fostering a college-going culture for all students in a school requires college preparatory tools for students and parents; embracing social, cultural, and learning style differences in the environment, activities, and assessments at the school; involving leaders at all levels in establishing policies, programs, and practices; adequate financial and human resources; assessing policy, programs, and practices regularly to test their effectiveness; taking preventive rather than reactive steps; and assuring that positive youth development is understood and fostered by caring adults.

Schools in which the focus is on college-going, not just high school graduation, are better able to retain and motivate students.

Most Baltimore City public school students aspire to college educations. Over three-quarters of Baltimore City students took SATs in 2009, exceeding both state and national participation averages.

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CONCLUSIONS

We cannot afford to channel and teach students in *separate “college” or career” tracks*. Continuing to “untrack” high school education in Baltimore City will enable all students to aspire to and achieve a place in college or a career with advancement potential.

*Teachers and principals must believe that all students can succeed.*

*Community partners* – higher education institutions, faith communities, college alumni and others – can be mobilized to increase BCPS students’ exposure to college and college graduates throughout their school years.

*The task for the adults in students’ lives* – parents, teachers, school administrators, community mentors – *is to support their college-going ambitions* with affirmation, opportunities, and practical help in planning a path, overcoming obstacles, and perseverance. Many students and parents – and too many teachers and counselors – do not know what is required for college admission and success. This is a community, systemwide, and school-by-school challenge. Many college access supports are in use in Baltimore City public schools but reach only a fraction of students.

*Within the context of school-based governance, a comprehensive effort is needed to 1) assess needs and attitudes of students, parents, and school personnel, 2) use the results to repurpose each school as a college-going environment, and 3) marshall all available resources to achieve system-wide goals of college enrollment and success.*
High School Preparation, College Expectations and Access

FINDINGS

Secondary school preparation and college expectations are not now aligned.

The new states-led effort to define common college-and-career readiness standards and common core K-12 standards will propel the State into a new era of academic achievement.

The most important factors in college admission and success are the rigor of the high school curriculum, students’ course-taking, and student effort.

Advanced math is key to college and careers, and frequently screens out minority and lower income students.

Students need a network of supports in order to successfully meet requirements for rigor. These include emotional, instrumental, informational, appraisal, and structural support.

Students expect to go to college but they and their families lack accurate information and guidance on what they will need to do to get there and succeed.

Continuing professional development for teachers and counselors enables them to be effective in reaching college-going and persistence goals.

Data can be better used to improve goal-setting, instruction, and preparation.

Financial aid for students and institutions is vital. A “downpayment” on the President’s ambitious proposals for bolstering access and completion, particularly for low income students, was included in the health care reform bill signed in March.

Nationally, African American undergraduates are awarded five percent more financial aid per student on average than whites, the majority from federal sources, while the median income of African American families in the U.S. is only 62 percent of the white median and the typical African American family holds only one-tenth the wealth of the average white family.

Approximately 12 percent of African American college students nationally attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). If Baltimore City Community College were considered an HBCU, the overwhelming majority of Baltimore City public high school graduates matriculate at HBCUs. HBCUs have historical missions to provide access to higher education for African American students; 90 percent of their students nationally receive financial aid. Their tuition rates tend to be 50 percent lower than predominantly white institutions (PWI). Students typically use the benefits of lower tuition, Pell Grants – received by 46 percent of African American undergraduates – and other support and institutional aid in order to attend.
Only **four HBCUs have endowments greater than $100 million.** Endowments in all American colleges and universities returned 19 percent less in 2009 than in 2008. African American students are looking for aid from the federal government and help in identifying and accessing other non-institutional sources of financial assistance. Like their institutions, the financial pressures on students have become intense.

**CONCLUSIONS**

*Maryland has recently adopted the K-12 common core state standards and has begun implementation.* This should address the major concern of summit attendees – the lack of alignment between high school achievement and college expectations. Particular emphasis on production of high-quality curriculum and teacher support materials will be needed, as well as textbook selection.

*Federal funding can help Maryland and Baltimore’s curriculum upgrades and student achievement.* President Obama’s education budget includes a five year $3.5 billion College Access and Completion Fund; $1.2 billion over three years for Graduation Promise Grants for high schools; and $65 million for Statewide Data Systems, an increase of $6.8 million to help States improve the availability and use of data on student learning, teacher performance, and college- and career-readiness. There is no assurance that these funds will be accepted by the new Congress in 2011.

The pending reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) would support high expectations and accountability for all student groups and the closing of achievement gaps to ensure that all students, including poor and minority students, graduate from high school college- and career-ready. The reauthorization, scheduled to take place in 2009, may be considered by Congress in 2011.

*Advanced math is the key.* Because advanced math is so critical to the college prospects of African American students, the importance of an integrated course of mathematics study for all BCPS K-12 students that prepares them to successfully complete high school advanced math courses is magnified. The Common State Standards for math represent a departure point for this effort.

*Weekly advisories or other cohort-based strategies can be used to build peer support and connections with caring adults throughout high school.* Many summit participants recommended requiring an individual postsecondary plan of all graduates, built over the four years of high school.

*Step-by-step information is needed by all parents and students* to enable them to navigate timelines, and learn how to investigate colleges, college application procedures, financial aid, college selection, college matriculation, college placement tests, and college course selection. Maximizing the use of online resources will reserve counselor time for one-on-one customized college/career advising, which should be available in all high schools. Principals who are being held responsible for the college-going and persistence of their graduates will need to allocate a healthier share of their budgets – for both dedicated staff and external providers – to this function.

*The availability of financial aid for college-going students needs a dramatic boost,* making sure that as many Baltimore families benefit from recent federal increases as possible. Students and families also
need help with financial planning that allows students to fulfill or find substitutes for family obligations for income production or child care and to continue to make efficient use of funds available. Maryland community college and public four-year institution students with the largest amounts of unmet financial need had the lowest retention rates. This was particularly evident among students in the lower income categories.”

**Education and continuing professional development centered on college advising** will be increasingly important for teachers and school counselors, whose ranks need augmentation as the pace of college readiness efforts picks up.

Making **college entry, need for remediation, and college completion key components of public school metrics** is a critical component of infusing a “college-going culture” throughout the BCPS System. The common state assessment systems are under development and Maryland has pledged to use them. Data should allow students and their parents to know exactly where they are on the college-readiness path at every point in their high school careers. Teachers and administrators need the same information in real time so that they can take appropriate steps to ensure mastery. Data on schools and districts should also be available to policymakers and the public. Data, including attendance, on students throughout the K-12 system should be used for early identification of students who are at risk of failure in ninth grade and dropping out.

Student and school assessments should focus on **incentives** and assistance for improvement **rather than sanctions** whenever possible.

**College Completion**

**FINDINGS**

**In Baltimore City:**

- 43 percent of African American public high school graduates enrolled in college
- Half of the BCPS college-going graduates enrolled in two-year institutions and half in four-year institutions
- Of the graduates of Baltimore’s selective college-preparatory high schools, 37 percent required math remediation upon college enrollment, as did 69 percent of graduates from “non-core” (the remainder) schools. Ten percent and 36 percent, respectively, needed English remediation; and 16 and 40 percent, respectively, needed reading remediation.
- Of all BCPS graduates, 8.7 percent earned a two-year degree and 1.7 percent earned a four-year degree.
- Of BCPS graduates who ever enrolled in a postsecondary institution, 15 percent earned two-year degrees, and three percent earned four year degrees.
Predictors of college success are those identified in the college readiness and access discussion, most notably academic achievement. Race and gender also had influence on college performance in a Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) analysis.

First generation college students say that their challenges are academic, financial, and social/emotional.

Many college academic, financial, and social/personal problems stem directly from inadequate academic preparation and college counseling – including financial planning – in high school.

Effective practices for helping students succeed in college include the same set of emotional, informational, instrumental, appraisal, and structural supports that they need to prepare for college. Examples include SuccessBoston College Completion Initiative, On Point for College (Syracuse, NY), Gates Millennial Scholarship Program, Meyerhoff Scholars Program (UMBC), and University of Washington’s Dream Project. They highlight key requirements for keeping students in college: academic success, engagement with advisors, faculty, fellow students, others in the school community; and financial stability. Once again, the critical role played by staff and faculty has been highlighted.

High impact educational practices are known and can be adopted by institutions of higher education that want to improve African American student retention. They are: first year seminars and experiences; common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, service learning/community-based learning, internships, and capstone courses and projects.

Promising examples in Baltimore include: longtime intentional retention efforts at University of Maryland Baltimore County and more recent initiatives at Towson State University, Johns Hopkins’ Baltimore Scholars, University of Baltimore’s new undergraduate program, the recent announcement of a $2.5 million fund to support degree completion by University System of Maryland students, and CollegeBound’s college retention program.

“Swirling” has become more common as students “consume” higher education. The proportion of undergraduate students attending more than one institution during their academic careers has grown from 40 percent in the 1970s to over 60 percent today. Students swirl among colleges and universities to maximize time in lower cost institutions and to accommodate scheduling preferences. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely than economically advantaged students to swirl with breaks in schooling. Engaging in this type of swirling is negatively associated with timely bachelor's degree completion.

Developmental (remedial) education at both the high school and college levels can benefit from research-based improvement. The Getting Past Go initiative of the Education Commission of the States is compiling a comprehensive set of policy research and data, and convening advisory team meetings, online dialogues among a community of practice, and case studies that can be tapped as they are produced.
The largest share by far of Baltimore City public school graduates enroll at Baltimore City Community College. It is clear, however, that they are not succeeding there – after four years, only one percent of African American students had graduated with a two-year degree, and seven percent had transferred to four-year institutions.

CONCLUSIONS

Administering the Accuplacer test in 10th grade along with PSATs would familiarize students with the tests and enable school personnel to target areas that need focused attention for each student before they graduate.

Formulas and budgets for higher education institutions need to be revisited to ensure that adequate resources are available and being dedicated to providing the student supports necessary for successful retention of students and advancement toward a degree.

Well-designed, research-proven high-impact college retention practices that have had their most positive impact on minority students are available from higher education peers for Maryland higher education institutions that want to make a concerted effort.

Swirling needs direct attention. Sara Rab (2004) and other education researchers recommend that policymakers improve the portability of credits and articulation agreements among institutions to increase completion rates of swirling students, and focus on creating a more integrated system of higher education that retains students of all backgrounds to full degree completion.

Developmental instruction quality improvements in both public schools and colleges will help Baltimore City students who have lagged to catch up and achieve success in college.

Public school, higher education, business, philanthropic, government, and community resources could be usefully focused on helping Baltimore City Community College realize its promise as a high quality first resort for Baltimore City Public School graduates and to become a valuable partner for BCPS as it ramps up its college readiness efforts.
FINDINGS

- Policymakers, parents, and students agree that higher education for African American students is the key to both Baltimore’s economic prospects and economic opportunity for its citizens.
- The situation today is dire. For every 100 students entering high school in 9th grade:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{BALTIMORE CITY}^8 & \\
67 \text{ will finish H.S.} & \\
29 \text{ will go to college} & \\
2 \text{ will ever earn an AA degree} & \\
9 \text{ will ever earn a BA or BS} & \\
\text{UNITED STATES}^9 & \\
67 \text{ will finish H.S. in 4 yrs} & \\
38 \text{ will go to college} & \\
18 \text{ will earn AA or BA/BS} & \\
6 \text{(BA/BS) yrs} & \\
\end{align*}\]

This track record represents a tragic leakage of potential economic health for the City and its residents.

WORK TO BE DONE IN 2011 AND BEYOND

• Forcefully defend existing budgets and advocate the President’s proposals for expansion of federal funding for African American higher education preparation, access (including financial aid), and completion. All of these monies are at risk in the new Congress.

• Invest in a cadre of professionals who support student and parent aspirations for higher education, and mobilize community resources to extend their reach
  o Share the belief that all students can realize their aspirations
  o Expose students to higher education
  o Mentor/counsel students and parents about all aspects of preparation for and completion of college: academic, financial, and emotional

• Actively support Baltimore City Public Schools efforts to meet college and employer expectations of all their graduates as now required by the common core state standards adopted by Maryland. A BCPS diploma should be a powerful signal that Baltimore students are ready and reduce the need for “developmental education” post high school.

• Support the leadership of Baltimore City Community College in transforming the school into a high quality first resort for BCPS graduates. Improve the portability of credits.

• Support the leadership of Morgan State University, Coppin State University, and Baltimore County Community Colleges – among the top four educational institutions chosen by Baltimore City students) in their efforts to decrease college dropout rates and increase college completion.

• Advocate the adoption of proven retention practices by all higher education institutions that receive public funding.
INTRODUCTION

A 2007 random survey\(^\text{10}\) by Public Agenda (2007) found that 87 percent of Americans believe that a college education improves job prospects. The number of people who agree that college is the key to success has risen nearly 20 percentage points since 2000. Parents of high school students are even more likely than the public as a whole to think that college is necessary. Their impressions are validated by data computed by College Board.

**Median Earnings and Tax Payments* of Full-Time Year-Round Workers Age 25+**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational attainment</th>
<th>Median earnings</th>
<th>Tax payments</th>
<th>After tax income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>$25,500</td>
<td>$74,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>$79,400</td>
<td>$19,900</td>
<td>$59,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>$61,300</td>
<td>$14,700</td>
<td>$46,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>$50,900</td>
<td>$11,900</td>
<td>$39,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>$40,600</td>
<td>$9,100</td>
<td>$31,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>$37,100</td>
<td>$8,100</td>
<td>$29,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>$31,500</td>
<td>$6,600</td>
<td>$24,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a high school graduate</td>
<td>$23,400</td>
<td>$4,600</td>
<td>$18,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Federal income, Social Security, and Medicare taxes; state and local income, sales, and property taxes.


However, the College Board reported in 2006,\(^\text{11}\) for every 100 students in the U.S. who begin 9\(^\text{th}\) grade, 67 will finish high school in four years, 38 will go to college, and only 18 will earn associate degrees within three years or bachelor’s degrees within six years.

The Public Agenda survey cited above also found that all minority parents—even high-income ones—are disproportionately concerned about lack of opportunity for qualified students. Eighty-four percent of African American parents of all incomes expressed the opinion that the vast majority of qualified

\(^{10}\) With oversampling of African American and Hispanic parents of high school students.

\(^{11}\) “CollegeEd Creating a College-Going Culture Guide.”

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*African American Higher Education Readiness, Access, and Completion  
Associated Black Charities’ More in the Middle Initiative*
students do not have the opportunity to attend college and minority students were more likely than young whites to doubt whether a qualified student could find financial aid.

Baltimore City Public Schools’ (BCPS) Accountability Officer Benjamin Feldman reported at ABC’s African American College Completion Summit in November 2009 that 43 percent of City Schools’ 3,638 African American graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution in the fall following their high school graduation in 2008, half at two-year institutions and half at four-year institutions. Three-quarters of all the 1,962 college-bound graduates of traditional high schools enrolled at two-year institutions, while two-thirds of the 1,020 graduates from schools with entry requirements, and 40 percent of the 82 innovation/ transformation/charter school graduates enrolled at four-year schools. Of the 733 graduates of career and technology high schools, 31 percent enrolled at two-year institutions and 29 percent in four-year institutions. Over half of African American City Schools graduates enroll at postsecondary institutions at some time in their lives.

BCPS graduates enroll in greatest numbers at Baltimore City Community College, followed by Community College of Baltimore County, Morgan State University, Coppin State University, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, University of Maryland College Park, Towson University, Bowie State, and Frostburg State. The schools at which the vast majority of BCPS graduates matriculate have very low African American student retention rates. Of the 622 African American students who entered Baltimore City Community College in 2004, over two-thirds had disappeared by 2006 without graduating or transferring; after four years, 16 percent were still enrolled, three percent had graduated and not transferred, and 15 percent had transferred to a four-year college. At the Community College of Baltimore County, after four years, 13 percent of the 756 African American students in the 2004 cohort were still enrolled, three percent had graduated, and 16 percent had transferred.

Trends in Retention and Graduation Rates for African American Students,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th># of students</th>
<th>% retained Yr 1</th>
<th>% retained Yr 2</th>
<th>% retained Yr 3</th>
<th>% graduated 4 years</th>
<th>% graduated within 6 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morgan State Univ</td>
<td>1,166</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coppin State Univ</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Univ of MD Eastern Shore</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Univ of MD College Park</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towson Univ</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowie State Univ</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frostburg State Univ</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of all 3,687 2004 BCPS graduates, only 1.7 percent earned two-year degrees, and 8.7 percent earned four-year degrees. Of all 2004 graduates who were ever enrolled at a postsecondary institution (2,175), 2.9 percent were awarded an associate’s degree and 14.7 percent earned a bachelor’s degree—approximately one in seven BCPS graduates earned a college degree (compared to the state average of 65 percent). Of those who actually enrolled in a post-secondary institution, one quarter earned a degree; the statewide average completion is 48 percent. Nationally, approximately 23 percent of high school freshmen eventually earn bachelor’s degrees.12

There are positive signs in both the college preparation domain and, in select pockets, in the college retention domain. In Baltimore City Public Schools, 65 percent of kindergarteners arrived at school fully ready to learn, approaching the statewide average of 73 percent and attributed to aggressive expansion of pre-k services. First through eighth graders have shown gains on national and state assessments and racial gaps have narrowed. While these students are not yet in high school, they look to be on track to grapple with increasingly demanding secondary school curricula.

Most promising, high school students are experiencing greater academic success in schools that 97 percent of them chose to attend. Nearly 1,000 fewer dropped out over the past two years, producing an all-time low dropout rate of 6.2 percent, and 4,272 received diplomas in the first year of High School Assessment requirements for graduation, pushing the “true” graduation rate (including dropouts who were brought back to complete high school) to 67 percent. More students are taking advantage of college preparation opportunities – 28 percent more AP courses have been offered in the past year with a 21 percent increase in enrollment, and 3,390 students took the SATs, an increase of seven percent. Seventy-nine percent of students took the test, significantly higher than state or national rates. Growth in college preparation participation was greatest among African American students and at traditional high schools. College application, enrollment, and persistence are beginning to be included in BCPS success metrics.

Described later in this paper, several universities have had success with intentional, systemic retention efforts that are beginning to bear fruit. This paper provides consensus thinking about how to build upon these promising trends and examples to expand opportunities for all BCPS students to prepare for and succeed in college.

The paper represents the accumulated wisdom of local and national experts gathered by Associated Black Charities’ More in the Middle Initiative for the African American College Completion Summit on November 3, 2009 and a follow-up session on March 16, 2010, the public-private-nonprofit planning committee and a similar mix of 200+ attendees, three focus groups, and expert advisors. Both public PreK-12 education and higher education institution representatives participated, as well as advocates, student and family support services providers, and employers. Names of all leaders are included at the end of the report narrative.

What We Know About African Americans in Higher Education:

**Secondary school preparation and college expectations are not now aligned.** The latest ACT National Curriculum Survey® (January 2010) concludes that “U.S. high school learning standards are still not sufficiently aligned with postsecondary expectations.”\(^{13}\) High school standards have long required students to accumulate enough credits in specified subject areas in order to graduate. States and school districts are moving toward requirements for demonstrations of mastery such as the High School Assessment in Maryland. Still, the Maryland General Assembly’s research arm wrote in an issue paper for the 2010 session, “Graduation from high school does not equal college or career readiness.”\(^{14}\) Achieve’s Postsecondary Connection\(^{15}\) website reveals that only 35 percent of Maryland 8\(^{th}\) graders are taking algebra I and that most of its P-20 alignment policies are under development. States with advanced efforts to achieve “a common vision of a well-integrated educational system extending from birth through postsecondary education” include Georgia, California (California State University System), Kentucky, and Indiana.\(^{16}\)

**Financial assistance is vital for African American college access and completion.** In its review of trends in African American higher education, the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)\(^{17}\) notes that almost half of African American students considering college state that the need to work is “extremely” or “very” important, compared with their peers. They are also more likely to have remaining financial need after scholarship grants and to borrow to meet that need than their peers.\(^{18}\)

Analysis by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) confirmed that “at both public two- and four-year campuses, those students with financial need who received the largest amounts of financial aid regardless of the source consistently experienced the highest second year persistence rates. This pattern was especially and regularly pronounced for students with lower EFCs [expected family contributions, a proxy for income]. **Students at both the community colleges and public four-year**

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\(^{14}\)Maryland Department of Legislative Services (2009). ‘Issue Papers 2010 Legislative Session.”

\(^{15}\)Postsecondary Connection is a one-stop resource for faculty and administrators, state higher education officials and P-20 council representatives from all sectors of higher education with the resources they need to engage effectively in K-16 education reform on the local and state levels.


\(^{17}\)IHEP is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing access and success in postsecondary education around the world.

institutions with the largest amounts of unmet need had the lowest retention rates. This was particularly evident among students in the lower EFC categories.\textsuperscript{19}

Nationally, African American undergraduates are awarded an average of five percent more financial aid per student than whites,\textsuperscript{20} the majority from federal sources, while the median income of African American families in the U.S. is only 62 percent of the white median and the typical African American family holds only one-tenth the wealth of the average white family.\textsuperscript{21}

Approximately 12 percent of African American college students nationally attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). In Baltimore, if Baltimore City Community College were considered an HBCU, the overwhelming majority of high school graduates matriculate at HBCUs. HBCUs have historical missions to provide access to higher education for African American students; 90 percent of their students nationally receive financial aid. Their tuition rates tend to be 50 percent lower than predominantly white institutions (PWI).\textsuperscript{22} Students typically use the benefits of lower tuition, Pell Grants – received by 46 percent of African American undergraduates – and other federal support and institutional aid in order to attend.\textsuperscript{23} Adelman’s careful analysis found that the only form of financial assistance positively related to college degree completion at a four-year institution after the first year of enrollment is employment – college work-study and campus-related work,\textsuperscript{24} the type least frequently used by African American students.\textsuperscript{25}

In its 2010 review of trends in African American higher education, the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) summarized the situation (Maryland/Baltimore statistics from MHEC’s SOAR data\textsuperscript{26} are highlighted in bold italic):

Enrollment

- In 2007, the percentage of recent high school completers who enrolled in college was 67 percent for all, 56 percent for African Americans.

In Maryland, 48 percent of recent African American public high school graduates enrolled in college.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[26] Maryland Higher Education Commission, Student Outcome and Achievement Report
\end{footnotes}
In Baltimore City, 43 percent of African American public high school completers enrolled in college the fall after their graduation.

- African-American students enroll in all types of universities, with 39 percent enrolling in public two-year colleges. In Maryland, 30 percent of African American full-time undergraduates enrolled in community colleges, 58 percent in public four-year institutions, and 12 percent in independent four-year institutions.

In Baltimore City, half of the new undergraduates enrolled in two-year institutions and half in four-year institutions.

- Compared to other racial groups, African-Americans are over-represented in the private-for-profit sector [postsecondary institutions]. Low-income, African-American women were more likely than any other group (race/ethnicity, economic status) to enroll in these institutions.

College Experience

- In 2007–08, 49 percent of African-American students were first-generation college students and 46 percent had taken remedial courses, reinforcing the need for academic and social supports such as bridge programs, first-year experience courses, learning communities, and financial literacy programs.

In Maryland, 49 percent of African American “core” (college prep) students needed remediation in college math at initial college enrollment, and 66 percent of those in “non-core” (traditional) courses of study needed remediation. Percentages for English remediation were 22 percent and 36 percent, respectively, and for reading remediation were 28 percent and 40 percent, respectively.

In Baltimore City, 37 percent (core) and 69 percent (non-core) of all students needed math remediation; 10 percent and 36 percent, respectively, needed English remediation; and 16 percent and 40 percent, respectively, needed reading remediation.

- With respect to “high-impact practices” that prompt greater student engagement and success, African-American students report participation in learning communities and research with faculty at rates comparable to White students, but indicate less frequent participation in study abroad and senior capstone experiences.

- Despite the proliferation of diversity programs, African-American students continue to report, at a higher rate than both White students and other minority populations, “guarded, tense, and threatening” interactions with other students.
Degree Attainment

- Thirty-nine percent of first-time African-American students who started at a public four-year college graduated with a bachelor’s degree in six years, compared to the overall rate of 53 percent.
  
  In Maryland, 43 percent of African American students graduated from a four-year public Maryland university, compared to the overall rate of 81 percent.

  In Baltimore, 8.7 percent of BCPS graduates were awarded a two-year degree and 1.7 percent were awarded a four-year degree. These percentages rise to 15 percent and 3 percent of BCPS graduates ever enrolled at a postsecondary institution.

- If first-time African-American students earned degrees at a rate similar to White students, there would be 16,000 more with bachelor’s degrees from public four-year institutions and 11,000 more from private nonprofit institutions.

- Within the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines—key areas for meeting national workforce needs—the bachelor’s degree completion gap is even wider than overall: nearly 70 percent for White students compared with 42 percent for African Americans and 49 percent for Hispanics.

- African-American high school seniors more often aspired to earn master’s degrees than their peers in other racial categories. Of African-American seniors who graduated with a bachelor’s degree in 2000, about 22 percent enrolled in a master’s degree program one year later.\(^27\)

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Ann Coles’ review of retention research included a Boston study which found that 77 percent of students who enrolled continuously on a full-time basis were on track to finish college in 150 percent time, compared with only 29 percent who enrolled part-time after first semester. Completing 20 credits during the first year substantially increases the likelihood of a student earning a bachelor’s degree. Participating in a high-impact learning experience such as small learning communities increases college success for low-income students to a greater degree than it does for middle-income students.28

“Swirling” has become more common as students “consume” higher education. The proportion of undergraduate students attending more than one institution has grown from 40 percent in the 1970s to over 60 percent today. “Greater Expectations,” a 2002 report on the future of higher education from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) cited new enrollment patterns—including multiple-institution attendance—as one of the key pressures higher education will face in the 21st century. The report found that 58 percent of bachelor’s degree recipients attended two or more colleges.29

Consecutively or concurrently attending multiple schools allows students to save money by taking courses at community colleges while taking advantage of convenient schedules and preferred professors at other institutions to fulfill requirements.30 However, it is tricky to execute and gaps in enrollment can endanger degree attainment. A University of Pennsylvania doctoral student used national longitudinal postsecondary

SUCCESSBOSTON COLLEGE COMPLETION INITIATIVE

Getting Ready: The Boston Public Schools (BPS) are committed to preparing all students for college by expanding Advanced Placement and dual enrollment opportunities and offering new academic programs such as International Baccalaureate and credit recovery courses.

Getting In: Area nonprofit partners are helping Boston’s high school students make the transition to two-year and four-year colleges. Beginning with the class of 2009, nonprofit partners are providing summer preparation for college, ongoing financial aid advising, and year-long transition coaching and mentoring. Nonprofit partners include ACCESS Boston, the Boston Private Industry Council (PIC), Bottom Line, Freedom House, Hyde Square Task Force, and The Education Resources Institute (TERI).

Getting Through: Boston area colleges and universities are offering BPS graduates the support they need to earn a higher education degree, including setting measurable goals and encouraging students to use on-campus service that are known to be effective in helping them get through college. Higher education partners include University of Massachusetts Boston, Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology, and the Boston Area Advanced Placement and college credit students.

More in the Middle Initiative to the traditional student path,” Monitor on Psychology 34(11), American Psychological Association, December.

30 Bailey, Deborah Smith (2003), ““Swirling’ changes to the traditional student path,” Monitor on Psychology 34(11), American Psychological Association, December.

African American Higher Education Readiness, Access, and Completion
Associated Black Charities' More in the Middle Initiative
transcript data from the National Education Longitudinal Survey to identify and clarify a set of postsecondary pathways of “multi-institutional attendance with discontinuous enrollment.” Her dissertation data showed that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely than economically advantaged students to swirl. In addition, engaging in swirling was negatively associated with timely bachelor’s degree completion. “Thus, swirling helps to perpetuate the lower degree completion rates of disadvantaged college students.”

A contrary and cautionary view by Adelman reminds us that although only 26 percent of students in his longitudinal study who began their undergraduate careers at community college formally transferred to four-year institutions, when they did so, 70 percent completed their bachelor’s degree.

What Role Can Universities Play?

Effective practices for helping students succeed in college include the same set of emotional, informational, instrumental, appraisal, and structural supports that they need to prepare for college (see page 23). In particular, the trusted, caring adults who were vital to college preparation are needed to support students’ transition to college and ongoing success. Exemplars include the SuccessBoston College Completion Initiative galvanized by results of the study, Getting to the Finish Line: College Enrollment and Graduation, which tracked the seven-year outcomes of every Boston Public School (BPS) who graduated from high school in June, 2000. The study highlighted the dismal rates of college enrollment and completion and worse results for low income and minority students.

SuccessBoston provides an excellent example of mobilization of nonprofits and the private sector in efforts to prepare and support students in their transition to college. Commitments by the higher education institutions that BPS students are most likely to attend to reach out to students to link them to on-campus supports addresses an often-cited reticence of African American students to seek help. In Maryland, UMBC seeks to overcome this hurdle by retaining contact for first year students with the admissions officers who interviewed them, and by promoting the fact that at UMBC, the winners pursue tutoring.

In Syracuse, New York in 1999, Ginny Donohue left her professional position, incorporated On Point for College as a nonprofit and began meeting with young people on street corners and

youth centers, working from the trunk of her car. Ten years later, over 2,800 young people, 98 percent of whom are first in their families to go to college and 20 percent of whom have no parent, actively participate. The program has enrolled 2012 students in over 190 colleges and universities, and 275 have earned college degrees. 160 volunteers support the program on all levels, from mentoring to transportation to fundraising. Students have received more than 1,242 "last dollar” grants, totaling $168,372, for housing and enrollment deposits, textbooks, and basic needs. More than 85 percent of all funds raised go directly to student services and for every dollar in aid awarded to its students. On Point for College leverages an additional $33 in aid from federal, state and private sources.

Once again, the Syracuse example highlights the importance of consistent support by caring adults for the transition from high school to college, which CollegeBound has begun to do, pairing college retention counseling with its “last dollar” grants. The Syracuse program appears to reach deeper to focused on out-of-school youth as well as those in high schools, and most importantly, uses the social networks of its volunteers to connect college students and graduates to jobs.

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**ON POINT FOR COLLEGE, Syracuse, NY**

- Provides one-on-one counseling - choosing a college, financial aid, and college applications
- Takes students on college visits
- Connects students with mentors
- Helps with clothing, bedding, backpacks and college supplies
- Offers transportation to college
- Provides an orientation workshop before the first day of college.
- Offers limited “last dollar” grants for expenses such as enrollment deposits, textbooks, fees, housing etc.
- Follows up with advocacy and support for students on college campuses (i.e. financial aid, diversity issues, tutoring services, getting along with roommates, etc.)
- Offers transportation to and from college for major holidays and semester breaks
- Also offers an On Point for Jobs program to help our first generation college students and graduates make the transition to the workforce
In 1999, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced the formation of the largest private scholarship initiative to date, the Gates Millennium Scholars program (GMS). With more than $1 billion pledged to fund scholarships for high-achieving, low-income minority students, the program is committed to increasing minority access to higher education in general and in particular to disciplines in which the targeted groups have been historically underrepresented.

After being nominated by a teacher or counselor, students, who must have at least a 3.3 GPA, are required to compose essays that provide insights into their personal characteristics. The essays are scored using a set of noncognitive criteria, such as leadership and citizenship qualities, positive self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, availability of a strong support network, and ability to handle racism. These qualities are believed to help students overcome the many challenges they will face in their pursuit of postsecondary education.

While the Gates Millennial Scholarship Program is primarily a scholarship program, it is one that takes to heart the research findings that the most generous package of financial aid is most closely linked to college completion. Gates scholarships are administered by the United Negro College Fund in partnership with Hispanic, Native American, and Asian/Pacific Islander scholarship funds. The program is also targeted on the most motivated students with good grades and those who intend academic or professional careers in technology-intensive businesses or the Foundation’s vital interest, public health. Despite the narrow targeting, the initiative is large enough to be attainable by ambitious Baltimore City youth interested in math, science and technology, or public health.
Begun in 1988 with a gift from Robert and Jane Meyerhoff, the Meyerhoff Scholars Program at the University of Maryland Baltimore County has been at the forefront of efforts to increase diversity among future leaders in science, engineering, and related fields ever since. The UMBC Meyerhoff family is now more than 800 strong, with 600 alumni across the nation and 300 students enrolled in graduate and professional programs.

The Meyerhoff program embodies the array of supports that research has shown is effective in enhancing college success and completion – academic, emotional/social, and relationship-building. It is having a dramatically positive impact on the number of minority students succeeding in STEM fields; Meyerhoff students were 5.3 times more likely to have graduated from or be currently attending a STEM Ph.D. or M.D./Ph.D. program than those students who were invited to join the program but declined and attended another university.

### MEYERHOFF SCHOLARS PROGRAM: 13 Key Components

**RECRUITMENT:** The Meyerhoff Scholars Program currently receives approximately 2,000 nominations and enrolls approximately 50 new students each year. The top 100-150 applicants and their families are invited to attend an on-campus selection weekend where faculty, administration, program staff, and current Meyerhoff Scholars meet with the applicants in both formal and informal circumstances. This in-depth screening process helps identify students who are a good fit for UMBC—students who are not only academically prepared for a science, engineering, or math major, but also are genuinely committed to a postgraduate research-based degree and career.

**FINANCIAL AID:** Meyerhoff Scholars receive a comprehensive, four-year financial-aid package, including tuition, and room and board; Meyerhoff finalists receive somewhat more limited support. Continued support is contingent upon maintaining a B average in a science or engineering major.

**SUMMER BRIDGE:** Once selected for the program, each cohort of incoming Meyerhoff Scholars attends a mandatory pre-freshman six-week Summer Bridge Program, during which they take courses in math, science, and the humanities. They also learn time management, problem-solving, and study skills and take part in social and cultural events. Summer Bridge prepares scholars for the new expectations and requirements of college courses, and helps develop a close-knit peer group.

(cont.)
**PROGRAM VALUES:** Beginning at the recruitment phase, the Meyerhoff Scholars Program emphasizes the goal of achieving a research-based Ph.D. Other values consistently emphasized include striving for outstanding academic achievement, seeking help (tutoring, advising) from a variety of sources, and supporting one’s peers. Scholars are also expected to participate in community service projects.

**STUDY GROUPS:** Studying in groups is strongly and consistently encouraged by program staff, as it is viewed as an important part of succeeding in a science, math, or engineering major. Meyerhoff Scholars consistently rank study groups as one of the most positive, beneficial aspects of the program.

**PROGRAM COMMUNITY:** The Meyerhoff Scholars Program provides a family-like, campus-based social and academic support system for students. Students live in the same residence hall during their first year and are required to live on campus during subsequent years. Staff regularly hold group meetings—called “family meetings”—with students.

**PERSONAL ADVISING AND COUNSELING:** A full-time academic advisor, along with the program’s executive director, director, and assistant director, regularly monitors and advises students. Counselors are not only concerned with academic planning and performance, but also with any personal problems students may have.

**TUTORING:** All Meyerhoff Scholars are encouraged to take advantage of departmental and university tutoring resources to maximize academic achievement—students are expected to excel, and are encouraged to seek not just As, but high As. Many Meyerhoff Scholars serve as peer tutors, working with both Meyerhoff and non-Meyerhoff students.

**SUMMER RESEARCH INTERNSHIPS:** All Meyerhoff Scholars are exposed to research early on in order to gain hands-on experience and to develop a clearer understanding of what studying science entails. Program staff use an extensive network of contacts to arrange summer science and engineering internships, opportunities that maintain intrinsic interest in science, math, or engineering careers and create mentoring relationships.

**MENTORS:** Each scholar is paired with a mentor, recruited from among Baltimore- and Washington-area professionals in science, engineering, and health. In addition, scholars have faculty mentors in research labs both on and off campus, across the nation, and in other countries.

**FACULTY INVOLVEMENT:** Department chairs and faculty are involved in all aspects of the program, including recruitment, teaching, mentoring research, and special events and activities. Faculty involvement promotes an environment with ready access to academic help and encouragement, fosters inter-personal relationships, and raises faculty expectations for minority students’ academic performance.

**ADMINISTRATIVE INVOLVEMENT AND PUBLIC SUPPORT:** The Meyerhoff Scholars Program is supported at all levels of the university, one factor researchers have cited as important for the success of any intervention program. Funding partners to date include the National Science Foundation, NASA, IBM, AT&T, and the Sloan, Lilly, and Abell foundations.

**FAMILY INVOLVEMENT:** Parents are kept informed of their child’s progress, are invited to special counseling sessions if problems emerge, and are included in various special events. The parents have formed the Meyerhoff Parents Association, which serves as a fundraising and mutual support resource.

The *University of Washington’s Dream Project* is a student-initiated high school outreach
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

DREAM PROJECT

• A sponsored outreach program at the University of Washington involving the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs, the Office of the Vice Provost for Student Life, and the Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity and the combined efforts of over 200 UW students

• The UW class meets twice a week — once as an entire class as part of the UW course and once with their smaller group at one of the eight partner high schools to work with the students. In the classroom, students focus readings and discussions on social justice and empowerment and the relationship between the two; questions related to civil society, poverty and inequality, class disparities, social dimensions (race, ethnicity, class, gender, immigration status, disability, age, sexual orientation and family structure), the role of historical oppression, individual versus structural explanations for poverty, and solution-focused and strengths-based perspectives for upward mobility. The academic theoretical approach of the class focuses on the relationship between educational opportunity and social mobility and the relationship between volunteerism and civic engagement. The Dream Project marries the understanding that one has of educational opportunity and social mobility to the experiential learning that one receives from their work in the high schools.

• Since the Dream Project is a UW course as well as an outreach program, participating students can receive up to two credits per quarter.

• At the high school, Dream Project students meet with the high school students to work on that week's focus area. Depending on the school, these meetings may occur multiple times during the week. The goal is to provide as much access as the students need.

General outline of annual schedule:

Junior Year of H.S., Spring

• Acquire new cohort of WU students and meet students
• Conduct new parent orientation meetings
• Make sure students have taken the necessary classes for college admission
• Make sure students are participating in extra-curricular activities
• Choose some college possibilities
• Prepare for the SAT/ACT tests
• Find and research scholarships
• Brainstorm personal statement topics

Summer

• Prepare for the SAT/ACT tests
• Take an SAT/ACT prep class from EAN
• Visit prospective colleges

Senior Year of H.S., Fall

• Choose the colleges students will apply to
• Gather necessary information and materials for each application
• Fill out applications
• Write personal statement(s) or essay(s)
• Complete other written sections (short responses, activity lists)
• Submit student applications
• Start submitting scholarship applications

Senior Year of H.S., Winter/Spring

• Complete and submit financial aid applications
• Finish submitting applications to other colleges
• Continue submitting scholarship applications
• Accept admission to the college of choice
• Accept the financial aid award
• Figure out how to pay for other expenses
• Learn about and choose a
Additional Events: The Dream Project also conducts additional events throughout the year to build community, celebrate student success, and acquaint the high school students with the UW campus. This includes a spring barbeque (accompanied by a visit to a UW class and a campus tour) and the fall Admissions Workshop Weekend, where students can work with writing tutors and Dream Project students to compete and polish their college essays and applications. Other events for both scholars and Dream Project team members have included a fall social and a Martin Luther King Day of service.

The University of Washington’s Dream Project is a student-initiated high school outreach program that partners UW students with first-generation and low-income students in Seattle area high schools to assist in the college admissions process (including SAT prep, applications, writing essays, applying for financial aid, and finding scholarships). The program has a dual-focus: one, to give these college-bound high school students the assistance that they may not be able to receive at home or from other areas of their lives; and two, to simultaneously teach UW students about educational opportunity and social mobility and examine these ideas in the context of the University of Washington.

The University of Washington Dream Project is an unusual vehicle for extending public schools’ college counseling resources, expanding social networks and building a web of continuing support for first-time low-income college applicants and their families, and helping U of W undergraduates confront issues of privilege and structural racism and poverty in theory and reality. After further investigation of the results it has achieved for all the students involved, it is worth exploring the interest of one or more Baltimore area colleges/universities in piloting a replication of this model.

These exemplary programs highlight the key requirements for keeping students in college: academic success; engagement with advisors, faculty, fellow students, others in the school community; and financial stability. The challenge raised repeatedly in summit and focus group deliberations was the paucity of resources to provide the supports needed to meet these requirements.

Once again, the critical role played by staff and faculty advisors has been highlighted. The title “advising” needs to be demystified for students, translated as “connections” – the exchange of information in a way that influences decisionmaking. Advisors help break down student isolation and allow them to save face by privately asking the “dumb questions.” Orientation can help reduce the reluctance many students have about asking for help. Sadly, current capacity to deliver the needed help is limited.

High impact educational practices are known and can be adopted by institutions of higher education that want to improve African American student retention. George Kuh, the architect of the National Survey of Student Engagement at Indiana University, and his colleagues at the American Association of
Colleges and Universities have identified ten strategies\textsuperscript{34} that, if pursued effectively, have the greatest impact on retention of all students, but most powerfully on minority students. Research shows that rates of student engagement and retention are increased through the following high-impact practices, many of them being executed in the Meyerhoff Scholars program.\textsuperscript{35}

FIRST-YEAR SEMINARS AND EXPERIENCES: Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students’ intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members’ own research.

COMMON INTELLECTUAL EXPERIENCES: The older idea of a "core" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes-e.g., technology and society, global interdependence-with a variety of curricular and co-curricular options for students.

LEARNING COMMUNITIES: The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with "big questions" that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link "liberal arts" and "professional courses"; others feature service learning.

WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSES: These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice "across the curriculum" has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

COLLABORATIVE ASSIGNMENTS AND PROJECTS: Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one’s own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.


\textsuperscript{35} Brower, Adam. Summary of Kuh’s “High Impact Educational Practices” monograph, online at https://tle.wisc.edu/solutions/engagement/summary-high-impact-educational-practices-monograph
UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH: Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

DIVERSITY/GLOBAL LEARNING: Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore "difficult differences" such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

SERVICE LEARNING, COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING: In these programs, field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both apply what they are learning in real-world settings and reflect in a classroom setting on their community experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

INTERNSHIPS: Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

CAPSTONE COURSES AND PROJECTS: Whether they're called "senior capstones" or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of “best work,” or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.

Promising signs in the Baltimore area include outstanding results of longtime intentional African American student retention efforts at University of Maryland Baltimore County, and more recent initiatives at Towson State University, Johns Hopkins’ Baltimore Scholars program, University of Baltimore’s undergraduate program, and the May 13 announcement by University System of Maryland
Chancellor Brit Kirwan of the establishment of a $2.5 million fund to support degree completion by USM students, kicked off by a $500,000 Carnegie Corporation Academic Leadership Award presented to Dr. Kirwan in recognition of his commitment to excellence in higher education. Despite straitened budgets, Maryland has committed to freezing undergraduate tuition levels for the past four years, putting the state in the middle of affordability rankings rather than the bottom where it dwelt at the beginning of this century. CollegeBound’s retention program operates in nine public four-year schools in Maryland, marrying financial aid to retention casework.

Formulas and budgets for higher education institutions need to be revisited to ensure that adequate resources are available and being dedicated to providing the student supports necessary for successful retention of students and advancement toward earning a degree. Effective practices for helping students succeed in college include the same set of emotional, informational, instrumental, appraisal, and structural supports that they need to prepare for college.

Well-designed, research-proven high-impact college retention practices that have had their most positive impact on minority students are available from higher education peers for Maryland higher education institutions that want to make a concerted effort.

Swirling needs direct attention, first by documenting students’ academic trajectories and secondly by carefully designed interventions engaging all players in the higher education constellation in the Baltimore area. Sara Rab (2004) and other education researchers recommend that policymakers improve the portability of credits and articulation agreements among institutions to increase completion rates of swirling students, and focus on creating a more integrated system of higher education that retains students of all backgrounds to full degree completion. Adelson recommends tracking the “DWI Index” (ratio of drops/withdrawals/incompletes to total courses attempted) from transcript records to help determine whether a student is part-time or full time.

Uninterrupted financial aid and financial planning is needed to keep students in college. A recent Gates Foundation-funded study that included the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) found that students drop out because of personal and family financial challenges. In area colleges and universities, there is ample evidence of students “cycling” in and out of two and four-year institutions, buffeted by academic and financial challenges. CCBC loses 35 percent of its students after their first semester and 50 percent before the start of their second year.

Facing similar dilemmas, Oregon State University and Linn-Benton Community College established a “Dual Enrollment Program” in 1998. Designed to achieve higher rates of college persistence and awards of bachelor’s degrees, the Dual Enrollment Program (DEP) is a comprehensive partnership designed to enable students to tailor educational programs that meet their personal needs and aspirations. Specific aspects of the Dual Enrollment Program include: 1) joint admission with a single application form and fee; 2) eligibility to enroll concurrently at both institutions; 3) electronically-shared student information to facilitate transmission of student transcripts (through Electronic Data Interchange or EDI) and student financial aid data (through a specially designed system among Oregon institutions); and combination of credits earned concurrently to achieve full-time status for financial aid purposes. Dual students take credits in all conceivable combinations that may change from semester to semester, depending on work schedules, family commitments, finances, and class availability. Preliminary (in 2005) results suggest that the dual enrollment partnership is a viable approach to reaching persistence and completion goals.38

*Developmental instruction quality improvements in both public schools and colleges* will help Baltimore City students who have lagged to catch up and achieve success in college. The goal should be to minimize the necessity for this remedial instruction and to accelerate developmental learning to move students through the necessary courses successfully and faster.

**What Can Baltimore City Publics Schools Do to Help?**

*Teachers and principals must believe that all students can succeed.* The assessment by parents, teachers, and counselors of students’ ability and potential profoundly affects their aspirations and academic performance. The 2009 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher39 revealed that while 82 percent of high school students expected to go to college, only 50 percent of their teachers and 57 percent of their principals expected them to do so. In schools with high proportions of low income students, only 31 percent of teachers believed that their students had the ability to succeed academically, and only 13 percent believed that students were motivated to do so. These attitudes are doubly damning, because students get this message (only 44 percent of the student respondents in the same survey felt that all their teachers wanted them to succeed), and in the case of first generation

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college applicants, teachers are often among the few sources of college-going inspiration and information in their acquaintance. ABC’s 2009 study of college readiness and access found that the level of expectation, the distribution of information, and opportunity for college preparation in Baltimore is inadequate and inequitable, with significant differences in city schools with a college preparatory component and those without.\(^{40}\)

**Most Baltimore City public school students aspire – many in an uninformed way -- to college educations.** Over three-quarters of BCPs students took SATs in 2009, exceeding both state and national participation averages. The task for the adults in their lives – parents, teachers, school administrators, community mentors – is to support these ambitions with affirmation, opportunities, and practical help in planning a path, overcoming obstacles, and perseverance. This is a community, systemwide, and school-by-school challenge. CollegeEd®, College Summit, CollegeBound, AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination), and federal TRIO and GEAR-UP (Gaining Early Awareness for Undergraduate Programs) programs offer models, technical assistance, and professional development support for school leaders. Many are in use in Baltimore City public schools but reach only a fraction of students.

**Continuing professional development for teachers and counselors enables them to be effective in reaching college-going and persistence goals.** Many school counselors and others who advise students are not trained to take on the specific responsibilities of college counseling and postsecondary advising. Especially for students who are first generation college applicants, counselors need to be leaders of a school and community team, engaging all members who serve as motivators and sources of accurate information and sage advice for students.

**Fostering a college-going culture for all students in a school,** according to College Board’s CollegeEd®, also requires “provision of high-quality, college preparatory tools for students and families; embracing social, cultural, and varied learning styles when developing the environment, activities, [and assessments] at the school; involving leaders at all levels in establishing policies, programs, and practices; maintaining sufficient financial and human resources for this mission; and assessing policy, programs, and practices regularly to determine their effectiveness.”\(^{41}\) It also includes establishing and maintaining an enriching and respectful environment in which students and their differences are embraced, preventive rather than reactive actions are taken, and positive youth development is understood and fostered by caring adults.

**Schools in which the focus is on college-going, not just high school graduation, are better able to retain and motivate students.** In a recent survey of high school dropouts, respondents indicated that they felt alienated at school and that no one noticed if they failed to show up for class. High school dropouts also complained that school did not reflect real-world challenges. More than half of the respondents said that the major reason for dropping out of high school


was because they felt their classes were uninteresting and irrelevant. Others leave because they are not doing well academically, with low reading capabilities that handicap their chances of mastering high school content in all subjects.42

Whether planning to enter college or workforce training programs after graduation, **high school students need to be educated to a comparable level of readiness in reading and mathematics.** Further “untracking” high school education in Baltimore City will enable all students to aspire to and achieve a place in college or a career with advancement potential.

*Within the context of school-based governance, a comprehensive effort is needed to 1) assess needs and attitudes of students, parents, and school personnel,43 2) use the results to repurpose each school as a college-going environment, and 3) marshall all available internal and external resources to achieve systemwide goals of college enrollment and success.*

**The most important factors in college admission and success are the rigor of high school curriculum, students’ course-taking, and student effort.** Rigorous course-taking matters for all students, but more particularly for low income students. The academic rigor of the curriculum is more important than grades or test scores.44 “Taking a challenging high school curriculum reduces by 50 percent the gap in college completion rates between high-income and low-income students. In addition to language arts (including technical writing, applied communications, and research skills) and math (see below), college preparation requires science, social studies, and foreign languages.45 Successful schools (Annenberg) are those in which standards for curricular rigor and student work across all disciplines are shared by all faculty in the schools, and Advanced Placement courses and/or opportunities to earn credit46 at nearby colleges are available to all students. “Rigor is further reinforced through a culture of mutual respect between adults and students, including ground rules for both academic effort and behavior.”47 Another review of research concluded that the strongest predictor of academic success was academic discipline, defined as “the skill component of motivation,” exhibited in the amount and quality of effort students devote to schoolwork and the degree to which students engage in learning new things.48

**Advanced math is the key to college (and careers) and screens out minority and lower income students.** All students need advanced math. Children of parents who lack higher education who take

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advanced math courses in high school double their chance of being accepted to and attending college. Completing advanced math courses in high school has more impact on whether students will graduate from college than any other factor, including family background. Also, students who take advanced math have higher incomes ten years after graduating, regardless of family background, grades, and college degrees.  

Higher level math courses function as filters that screen low income and minority students from the paths to success — only forty percent of African American high school graduates have completed math beyond Algebra II, even though a national survey reveals that minority students expressed the same level of interest in advanced math courses as white students. Often the courses are not available or students are discouraged by teachers from selecting them. Maryland graduation requirements, on which the High School Assessment test is based, include Algebra I, geometry, and one other math course. An Algebra II exam pioneered through the multi-state American Diploma Project which is better aligned with college math standards was piloted last year — only 15 percent of the 90,000 students in Maryland and the other 13 states who took the test passed it. Higher education institutions require mastery of at least Algebra II for students to register for credit-bearing courses. Of the BCPS graduates entering college in 2006-2007, 37 percent of the college preparatory school students needed math remediation and 69 percent of the traditional high school graduates were required to enroll in non-credit but tuition-bearing remedial classes. Nearly all BCPS graduates who enter Baltimore City Community College fail to score 45 or better on College Board’s Accuplacer College Level Math Test, the single cut-off score used by most Maryland community colleges. Many of the students do not understand that a poor Accuplacer score will require them to take noncredit courses, often a three-course sequence.

**Equal attention must be given to supports needed by students in order to successfully meet requirements for rigor.** As the alignment with entry into credit-bearing college coursework proceeds and standards are raised, the need for student support of all kinds increases exponentially. Researchers who have studied Chicago Public Schools conclude that “qualifications will not translate into [college] enrollment if high schools do not provide strong structure and support for students in the college search, planning, and application process.”

*Emotional support* includes individual counseling, group and peer support (their college-going intentions carry more weight than parents), mentoring, and activities that develop strong, supportive interpersonal connections among student, parents, faculty, and school staff. Only about half of high school students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I am an important part of my high school community.”  

*Instrumental support* includes adding skills in

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49 Achieve Math Works, “All Students Need Advanced Math.” Achieve is a 15 year-old independent organization founded by governors and business executives advocating for school reform and assisting states in achieving it.


test-taking, time management, studying; summer transition programs; tutoring; need-based financial aid; college testing fee waivers; and admissions test preparation. **Informational support** includes educational plans for achieving college entrance and success goals, advisories during the school day, academic advising, job shadowing and internships, college application and financial aid application and financial planning guidance for students and parents, career exploration and placement, early college awareness programs, and campus visits. **Appraisal support** includes feedback to students about their progress toward meeting academic standards (and support for those who are struggling), diagnostic practice of college entrance and placement exams to identify strengths and areas for improvement, mid-semester progress reports, and academic achievement recognition events. **Structural support** includes formal and informal structures that embed support into social institutions or programs such as learning centers, ninth grade academies, small learning communities, and student support services aligned with instruction.53

**Data can be better used to improve goal-setting, instruction, and preparation.** The participants in the Common Core State Standards initiative have now turned to the design of common state assessment systems. They have succeeded in coordinating the work of several consortia of states seeking U.S. Department of Education Race to the Top funding for high quality assessment. Applicants have agreed to collaborate on developing systems that 1) are fully aligned with the new Common Core State Standards, measuring students’ college and career readiness at the end of high school and their progress toward this goal throughout their school careers; 2) are comparable across states at the student level, 3) meet internationally rigorous benchmarks; 4) support valid assessment of student longitudinal growth, and 5) serve as a signal for good instructional practices – inform, support, and improve classroom instruction rather than continuing to rely on one annual test.54

**Weekly advisories or other cohort-based strategy can be used to build peer support and connections with caring adults,** scheduled during the school day and staffed with a consistent set of advisors. A college-preparation sequence might include a focus in ninth grade on adjustment to high school, future planning, attendance, study skills, interpersonal issues; in sophomore year on college exposure; junior year on college matching; and senior year on college and financial aid and employment applications. Many summit participants

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recommended requiring an individual postsecondary plan of all graduates, built over the four years of high school.

**Making college entry, need for remediation, and completion key components of public school metrics is a critical component of infusing a “college-going culture” throughout the BCPS System.** The common state assessment systems are under development and can be used to inform Maryland state assessments. The common state standards will provide an opportunity for engaging in multi-state, multi-district data and cost sharing to track students’ longitudinal accomplishments. Data should allow students and their parents to know exactly where they are on the college-readiness path at every point in their high school careers. Teachers and administrators need the same information in real time so that they can take appropriate steps to ensure mastery. Data on schools and districts should also be available to policymakers and the public.

**Data, including attendance, on students throughout the K-12 system should be used for early identification of students who are at risk of failure in ninth grade and dropping out.** For example, in Baltimore City, one-third of eighth graders were chronically absent, while 56 percent of ninth graders are chronically absent. Needed are data-driven interventions, led by the principal and activating a network of available school and community supports, from the first quarter of ninth grade.

**Predictors of college success are those identified in the college readiness and access discussion, most notably academic achievement.** The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) used SOAR data to identify factors that influence and might help to predict college success. A multiple regression analysis was conducted that related students’ high school experiences and their demographic characteristics to their performance in college. Whether looking at first college math grades, first English grades, or college GPA, the strongest influence was students’ GPAs in high school, followed by SAT scores. Race and gender had a statistically significant influence on all three college performance (dependent) variables, even after controlling for other demographic characteristics and high school experiences variables.55

Senior U.S. Department of Education research analyst Clifford Adelman’s rigorous longitudinal analysis of factors that have statistically significant effects on bachelor’s degree completion reveals that the intensity and quality of high school curriculum is the dominant determinant of bachelor’s degree completion. Adelman writes, “if we are disappointed with uneven or inequitable outcomes of postsecondary education, we must focus our efforts on aspects of student experience that are realistically subject to intervention and change. We do not have tools to change intentions or perceptions, or to orchestrate affective influences on students’ decisions. The events of students’ life

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course histories through their 20s lie largely beyond the micromanagement of collegiate institutions. But we do have the tools to provide increased academic intensity and quality of pre-college curricula, to assure continuous enrollment, to advise for productive first-year college performance, and to keep community college transfer students from jumping ship to the 4-year institution too early.” He reminds policymakers that “[i]nstitutions may “retain” students, but it’s students who complete degrees, no matter how many institutions they attend. So follow the student, not the institution.”

First generation college students say that their challenges are academic, financial, and social/emotional: academic culture shock, managing college costs, balancing family responsibilities and college studies, and caring for personal needs. The Baltimore Collegetown Network’s 2009 triennial student survey reveals that one-third of African American students chose their college or university because of proximity to family or because it was in Baltimore. These factors were of less importance to the majority of respondents. African American students also weighted the influence of financial aid more heavily than their peers — it ranked first among their decision factors, while program quality motivated the majority of all those surveyed. Only five of the 413 African American respondents were community college students and 88 percent were full-time students, compared to 92 percent of all respondents. Seventeen percent (72) lived with family or relatives, compared to 11 percent of all respondents, and 50 percent of them were living in Baltimore before matriculating, compared to 30 percent of the respondent group as a whole.

College academic, financial, and social/personal problems stem directly from inadequate academic preparation and college counseling in high school. The Abell Foundation’s 2002 and 2003 studies of the barriers to student success at Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) are heartbreaking. Forty percent of college-goers among BCPS graduates enroll at BCCC. Most were unaware that BCCC uses College Board’s Accuplacer test as the sole determinant of whether students can enroll in credit-bearing classes or must take remedial math, English, or reading and had never been exposed to the test before. They found that especially in the case of math, the test included material that had not been part of their high school curriculum, even though 87 percent of the students interviewed had taken algebra II. All of the interviewed Baltimore City public school graduates were placed in remedial classes at BCCC, which bear tuition costs but carry no credit.

Adding these courses to the time and finances needed to obtain an associate’s degree or transfer to a four-year school places students in a deficit position from the start. For students who have been given passing grades for required and even advanced classes in high school and been awarded a diploma, it is a shock to encounter an unfamiliar set of standards and to fail. Compounding the blows to self-image is

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the likelihood that the developmental (remedial) math classes they must take are often not well taught and they may fail again – 88 percent of the interviewees failed one of the remedial math classes.

The attrition begins when students receive their acceptance letters from colleges. In this transition gap, as many as 15-20 percent of students are lost – they fail to appear for registration. Other dangerous transitions include first-to-second year, and two-year to four-year transfers.

**Special area of focus: developmental education.** Until our aspirations for a well-articulated, high quality PreK-16 system are realized, the poor quality of developmental (remedial) education in public schools and higher education institutions requires attention. By reputation, Towson University has excellent capabilities in this domain that can be tapped and promulgated. A series of Hawaii reports that provide detailed data on the efficiency and effectiveness of developmental education programs at community college have been suggested as a model for how other states might use data to improve their programs.59

The participants in the Getting Past Go initiative of the Education Commission of the States and its partners are compiling a comprehensive set of policy research and data that add knowledge to the field of developmental studies, including the impact and implications of specific state policies. Advisory team meetings, online dialogues and development of an online community of practice, conduct of case studies, and examination of program evaluation approaches are included in the project design. Maryland’s planning for an integrated system of college readiness and completion, and the role that developmental education plays in expanding access and success, could benefit from the findings of this effort.

Senior Research Analyst Clifford Adelman at the U.S. Department of Education has researched and written extensively on remedial education and its effects on college completion. He concludes that the amount and the type (math, English, reading) of remediation matters. Consequences are serious for those taking more than one remedial class, but can be addressed in the long run by improving the rigor of students’ high school curriculum and in the short run by well-designed remedial classes. “But when reading is at the core of the problem, the odds of success in college environments are so low that other approaches are called for [at the pre-college levels]. For example, every college and community college can establish a community technology center in its service area, where high school students can come after school, in evenings and on weekends to work with intelligent systems or CDs delivering reading tutorials at computer workstations. And total immersion summer programs employing group reading of dramas also would prove a productive approach.” 60

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59 Getting Past Go blog, posting March 11, 2010 by “Mary.”
Special area of focus: Baltimore City Community College. The largest share by far of Baltimore
City public school graduates enroll at BCCC, and yet it is not clear that they are succeeding
there, the result of academic and advising inadequacies on the parts of both the public school
and the college. Most of the African American students are enrolled in remedial classes and
after four years, only one percent had graduated with a two-year degree and seven percent had
transferred to four-year institutions. The statewide rates for all community colleges are nine
percent graduated and 28 percent transferred. Until the students who attend BCCC as their
default option are accorded the priority attention of all members of the community and
provided better options or a better school, they will continue to represent a major source of
potential human capital leakage. Many in the community who must be mobilized have been
part of previous attempts to bolster BCCC, and will need to be reenergized. There is great
potential for collaborations between BCPS and BCCC that identify student preparedness
challenges earlier and collaboratively address them before students arrive at BCCC.

Administrering the Accuplacer test in 10th grade along with PSATs would familiarize students
with the tests and enable school personnel to target areas that need focused attention for each
student. The El Paso Community College partnered with local school districts to provide early
assessments for high school juniors and to work with the schools to close gaps before the
students matriculated at any higher education institution. (Adelman 1998).

Where Do Students and Parents Fit In?

Students expect to go to college but they and their parents lack accurate information and guidance on
what they need to do to get there. Researchers found that only 41 percent of Chicago Public Schools
graduates who aspired to complete a four-year degree took a series of key steps and enrolled in college.
Students too often fail to make the connection between the courses they choose in high school and the
degree of effort they expend, and their opportunities to go to college. A Gates Foundation study found
that less than one-third of low-income students ultimately enroll in a college preparatory curriculum.

61 The Abell Foundation (2003). “Set Up to Fail? The First Year Student Experience at BCCC,” and
“Baltimore City Community College at the Crossroads: How Remedial Education and Other
Impediments are Affecting the Mission of the College.”
Rates - by Racial/Ethnic Background.”
63 King, J (1996). Improving the Odds: Factors that Increase the Likelihood of Four-Year College
Attendance Among High School Seniors, New York: College Board.
Students and parents need to be part of a carefully tailored process – a combination of technology-assisted and personal – that informs and guides them in finding the best student-college matches and preparing high quality applications.

**Financial assistance is vital for African American college access and completion.** In its review of trends in African American higher education, the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)\(^{64}\) notes that almost half of African American students considering college state that the need to work is “extremely” or “very” important, compared with their peers. They are also more likely to have remaining financial need after scholarship grants and to borrow to meet that need than their peers.\(^{65}\)

Analysis by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) confirmed that “at both public two- and four-year campuses, those students with financial need who received the largest amounts of financial aid regardless of the source consistently experienced the highest second year persistence rates. This pattern was especially and regularly pronounced for students with lower EFCs [expected family contributions, a proxy for income]. **Students at both the community colleges and public four-year institutions with the largest amounts of unmet need had the lowest retention rates.** This was particularly evident among students in the lower EFC categories.”\(^{66}\)

**Step-by-step information is needed by all parents and students** to enable them to navigate timelines, and learn how to investigate colleges, college application procedures, financial aid, college selection, college matriculation, college placement tests, and college course selection. Maximizing the use of on-line resources will reserve counselor time for one-on-one customized college/career advising, which should be available in all high schools. A combination of College Summit in grades 9-11 and CollegeBound in grade 12 may be a workable model but will require significant enlargement to reach more students. Principals who are being held responsible for the college-going and persistence of their graduates will need to allocate a healthier share of their budgets – for both dedicated staff and external providers – to this function.

**Early outreach initiatives seek to build student interest, motivation, and preparation for college, starting as early as middle school.** Online KnowHow2Go charts a path from middle school through high school. The Gates Foundation-funded University of Chicago Urban Education Institute’s national 6to16 project aims to increase the number of urban students who are accepted to college and persist to graduation. Piloted in one Chicago middle school in 2008 and four schools in 2009, the program will be made available to schools nationwide. Students participating in the online and classroom 6to16 program have a personal network of support consisting of a teacher/adviser, community members, and

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\(^{64}\) IHEP is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing access and success in postsecondary education around the world.


friends and family, as well as college and career mentors based on student interests. Like Baltimore, eighth graders have choices for high school, and the students are helped to evaluate their choices and prepare academically to successfully enroll at the school they select. GEAR-UP also targets middle school students. The Double the Numbers campaign of the District of Columbia College Success Foundation for sixth through 12th graders hosts an entertaining and information-packed website that enables students and families to navigate the college-going process, including a self-diagnostic, “What kind of life do you want,” that helps students estimate how much income they must have to afford the lifestyle they select. It is complemented by a listing of “hot jobs” in DC, with average salaries and educational requirements for each. Higher education campus initiatives include college visitations, tutoring programs, and mentoring.

Public Officials and Community Leaders, We Need Your Help.

Community partners – higher education institutions, faith centers, college alumni and others – can be mobilized to increase BCPS students’ exposure to college and college graduates throughout their school years.

Within the context of school-based governance, a comprehensive effort is needed to 1) assess needs and attitudes of students, parents, and school personnel, 2) use the results to repurpose each school as a college-going environment, and 3) marshal all available internal and external resources to achieve systemwide goals of college enrollment and success.

Secondary school preparation and college expectations are not now aligned. The latest ACT National Curriculum Survey® (January 2010) concludes that “U.S. high school learning standards are still not sufficiently aligned with postsecondary expectations.” High school standards have long required students to accumulate enough credits in specified subject areas in order to graduate. States and school districts are moving toward requirements for demonstrations of mastery such as the High School Assessment in Maryland. Still, the Maryland General Assembly’s research arm wrote in an issue paper for the 2010 session, “Graduation from high school does not equal college or career readiness.” Achieve’s Postsecondary Connection website reveals that only 35 percent of Maryland 8th graders are taking algebra I and that most of its P-20 alignment policies are under development. States with advanced efforts to achieve “a common vision of a well-integrated educational system extending from

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69 Maryland Department of Legislative Services (2009). ‘Issue Papers 2010 Legislative Session.”
70 Postsecondary Connection is a one-stop resource for faculty and administrators, state higher education officials and P-20 council representatives from all sectors of higher education with the resources they need to engage effectively in K-16 education reform on the local and state levels.
birth through postsecondary education” include Georgia, California (California State University System), Kentucky, and Indiana.\footnote{Achieve annual survey of 50 states, www.postsecconnect.org/state-state.}

The new states-led effort to define common college-and-career readiness standards and common core K-12 standards will propel the State into a new era of academic rigor; Maryland’s School Board recently adopted the standards. Forty-eight states, two territories, and the District of Columbia committed to the common core standards initiative, developing standards in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and expert researchers, with feedback and endorsements from higher education and business representatives and the public. The criteria for the standards, for which the comment period ended on April 2, 2010, are that they be:

- Fewer, clearer, and higher, to best drive effective policy and practice;
- Aligned with college and work expectations, so that all students are prepared for success upon graduating from high school;
- Inclusive of rigorous content \textit{and} applications of knowledge through higher-order skills, so that all students are prepared for the 21st century;
- Internationally benchmarked, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- Research and/or evidence-based.

States are being asked to adopt the Common Core State Standards in their entirety, and the core must represent at least 85 percent of the state’s standards in English language arts and mathematics.\footnote{www.corestandards.org} In June, 2010, Maryland became one of the first States in the nation to adopt the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts.\footnote{Alaska, Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wyoming have yet to adopt the standards. Virginia and Texas declined to join in their development.} The State Board of Education adopted the standards by unanimous vote. Maryland has launched a broad-based year-long process to revise its curriculum to align with the new document. Hundreds of classroom educators, instructional leaders, administrators, and higher education representatives will help State officials review, refine and align the current Maryland State Curriculum with the Common Core. The new State Curriculum is expected to be ready for State Board adoption in June 2011, an accelerated process made possible by the State’s previous work in this area.

\textbf{Only four HBCUs have endowments greater than $100 million — Howard University (\textasciitilde$400 million), Spelman College ($351 million), Hampton University (\textasciitilde$185 million) and Morehouse College (\textasciitilde$110 million).} Sample Maryland institutional endowments include Johns Hopkins University ($2 billion), University System of Maryland and Foundations ($608 million), University of Maryland College Park ($168 million), Goucher College ($149 million), Washington College ($132 million), Loyola University of...
Maryland ($123 million), and Towson University ($28 million). Endowments in all American colleges and universities returned 19 percent less in 2009 than in 2008.74 These funds are used to pay operating costs not covered by tuition, and to offer institutional student financial aid; the stock market declines and the largest decline in private contributions to colleges and universities in 50 years75 have forced institutions to make hard choices between laying off personnel and cutting financial aid.76

Students and parents often believe that they cannot afford college. In one sense, they are correct – as the economy has soured, more families than ever need financial aid for college. Between February 2008 and October 2009, the waiting list for Maryland’s Educational Excellence Awards, the State’s largest financial aid program, grew eightfold.77 However, college access experts say that there is at least as much unused funding available for college scholarships as funding awarded.

**The keys are larger funding pools and information and access.** In Baltimore, CollegeBound Foundation provides online connections to sources of financial aid and places College Access Program Specialists (CAPS) in 22 of Baltimore City’s public high schools to provide one-on-one and group advising that assists students with: college selection, help filling out financial aid forms appropriately, awarding, those eligible, critical last-dollar funding, encouragement to take the SAT, providing waivers for college access tests and applications, funding, arranging, and chaperoning day and overnight campus tours. College Summit trains teachers in the building of a college-going culture in four Baltimore schools. Greater Homewood Community Corporation has licensed the College Opportunity and Career Help (COACH) program and in 2008, 15 Johns Hopkins University volunteers worked with 150 students in three area high schools. COACH volunteers helped students locate scholarships that totaled $588,571. The program continues this year.

The federal government has recently simplified the process of preparing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form that is required for almost all financial aid applications. The President’s 2011 budget for Pell Grants proposed adding $30 million in Maryland and maintaining Federal Work Study ($15 million), Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants ($10 million), and College Access Challenge Grants ($1.5 million) at 2010 levels. The increase in direct federal student loans and elimination of federal family loans through banks would result in a net increase in loans of $206 million, to a total of $3.3 billion in Maryland.78 The Institute for Higher Education Policy has recommended targeting the Work Study and Educational Opportunity grants to institutions with higher proportions of lower income students, as the President proposed to do with Perkins student loans.79

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77 Maryland Department of Legislative Services (2009). “Issue Papers 2010 Legislative Session.”
78 U.S. Department of Education (current as of April 10, 2010), www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/statetables/11stbystate.pdf
The Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act (SAFRA) was included in the health care reconciliation bill that passed on March 21, 2010 by a vote of 220-211 and signed into law on March 30, 2010. It will invest savings realized by making college loans directly rather than through private banks to make college affordable and help more Americans graduate. Specifically, the legislation makes available:

**SAFRA 2010**

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<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Maryland</th>
<th>3rd Cong’l District</th>
<th>7th Cong’l District</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pell Grant scholarships</td>
<td>Preserved, maximum grant raised to $5,550 in 2010, rising to $5,975 by 2017; CPI indexing starting in 2013</td>
<td>$36 B (over 10 yrs)</td>
<td>$418.4M</td>
<td>$45.6M</td>
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<td>College Access Challenge Grant program</td>
<td>Increases funding for Challenge Grant program, funds innovative programs in states &amp; institutions that focus on increasing financial literacy &amp; retaining &amp; graduating students</td>
<td>$750 M (5 yrs)</td>
<td>$7.5M</td>
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<td>Income-Based Repayment program</td>
<td>Caps maximum federal student loan payment at 10% of discretionary income, down from 15%</td>
<td>$1.5 B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historically Black Colleges and Universities &amp; Minority-Serving Institutions</td>
<td>Support for students that helps them stay in school and graduate</td>
<td>$2.55 B</td>
<td>$65.1 M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Colleges</td>
<td>Competitive program to support development of educational or career training programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Student Loans</td>
<td>Converts all new federal student lending to Direct Loan program</td>
<td>$3.3 B (net incr= $206 M)</td>
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Remaining budget proposals await consideration by the new Congress in 2011.

Maryland has the opportunity to adopt the K-12 common core state standards and begin implementation in the 2011-2012 school year. This will address the major concern of summit attendees – the lack of alignment between high school achievement and college expectations. Particular emphasis on production of high-quality curriculum and teacher support materials will be needed; states may have a cost incentive to work together on the core materials. As an educator was recently quoted, “Teachers should not be expected to be the composers of the music, as well as the conductors of the orchestra.” The U.S. Department of Education’s Institute for Education Sciences’ “What Works Clearinghouse” is a valuable source of research-proven approaches/curricula. New teacher training standards, methods, and certification options will be required to deliver higher level content. Textbooks will need review, and recommended texts selected for purchase.

Federal aid may help Maryland and Baltimore adapt to new standards. President Obama’s education budget included a five year $3.5 billion College Access and Completion Fund to develop, implement, and evaluate new approaches to improving college enrollment, success and completion, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and to grow and bring to scale programs that are proven to be successful. Only $750 million was included in the education portion of the health care and education reconciliation legislation that was enacted in March 2010. In addition, the budget includes $1.2 billion over three years for Graduation Promise Grants, a new program to strengthen high schools. Continuing and expanded funding for these initiatives may be in jeopardy as the new Congress takes up the President’s budget proposals in 2011.

Because advanced math is so critical to the college prospects of African American students, the importance of an integrated course of mathematics study for all BCPS K-12 students that prepares them to successfully complete high school advanced math courses is magnified. BCPS’ Director of Math (now Director of Teaching and Learning) has spread math teaching techniques honed in a middle school in a poor neighborhood of Baltimore City to teachers systemwide and is integrating math across the curriculum. Test scores have proven the value of the approach.

The availability of financial aid for college-going students needs a dramatic boost, making sure that as many Baltimore families benefit from recent federal increases as possible. Vigorous advocacy will be required to protect current federal funding sources and to augment them as the new Congress grapples with the budget in 2011. Students and families need help navigating the financial aid process and with financial planning that allows them to fulfill family

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obligations for income production or child care and to continue to make efficient use of funds available.

_The pending reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) would support high expectations and accountability for all student groups_ and the closing of achievement gaps to ensure that all students, including poor and minority students, graduate from high school college- and career-ready. No action was taken in the 111th Congress on reauthorization of ESEA, which was due to be renewed in 2009, which means that legislation must be drafted and passed in the new Congress in 2011. To help States and LEAs close these achievement gaps, the President’s 2011 budget request includes $14.5 billion for a reauthorized and renamed Title I, Part A College and Career Ready Students program to support statewide accountability systems linked to college- and career-ready standards (CCR) and assessments that set the expectation that all students graduate high school college- and career-ready, measure schools based on progress towards this goal, reward schools and LEAs making significant progress and closing achievement gaps, and carry out rigorous interventions in the lowest-performing schools. The President’s 2011 budget also includes $65 million for Statewide Data Systems, an increase of $6.8 million to help States improve the availability and use of data on student learning, teacher performance, and college- and career-readiness through the development of enhanced data systems that track student progress, from early childhood to participation in postsecondary education and the workforce. The budget proposals will be considered by the new Congress in 2011.

The 112th Congress, beginning in January, 2011, may consider the proposed $10.6 billion over 10 years for the President’s American Graduation initiative, to strengthen and support community colleges, focus on college completion, and graduate 5 million more students by 2020.  

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EXPERT RESOURCES

We are grateful to the following individuals who served on the planning committee for the College Completion Summit, as speakers and panelists during the Summit, as members of focus groups and as advisors for the policy discussion paper.

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Reginald Avery, Ph.D., Coppin State University
Lisa Bishop, Fund for Educational Excellence
Alberto Cabrera, Ph.D., University of Maryland
Kristen Campbell, Baltimore Collegetown Network
Sheldon Caplis, Citibank
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Donna Fleming, College Summit
Andrea Foggy-Paxton, Gates Foundation
Beth Green, CollegeBound Foundation
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Erin Hodge-Williams, Higher Achievement
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Brianna McMullen, Fund for Educational Excellence
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Dean Richburg, Baltimore City Public Schools
Mavis G. Sanders, Ph.D., Johns Hopkins University
Michael Sarbanes, Baltimore City Public Schools
LaMarr Darnell Shields, Urban Leadership Institute
Barbara Smith, Ph.D., AVID Center
Craig Spilman, CollegeBound Foundation
Jane Sundius, Ph.D., Open Society Institute-Baltimore
Jimmy Tadlock, CollegeBound Foundation
Michael D. Thomas, Baltimore City Public Schools
Samuel Walker, Playing With a Purpose Foundation
John T. Wolfe, Ph.D., University System of Maryland
John Sylvanus Wilson, Jr., Ph.D., White House Initiative on HBCUs
Lisa Wright, Fund for Educational Excellence

Special thanks to the university interns who supported the Summit:

Coppin State University – Shvilla Rasheem

Johns Hopkins University - Kelly Biscuso and Sarah Jordan
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Associated Black Charities

With Appreciation and Thanks

Associated Black Charities extends its thanks and appreciation to:

Citi for its continued support

Associated Black Charities is a public foundation that facilitates the creation of measurably healthier and wealthier communities throughout the State of Maryland through responsible leadership and philanthropic investment.