

OSA State Grant Awards

FY 2018 Awards

Bowie State University

Project Title: One Step Away Initiative

Project Director: Becky Verzinski, Ed.D. and Lynn Harbinson

Award: \$41,488.50

Project Abstract: The need to raise college completion rates of students is a priority for Maryland and Bowie State University (BSU). The University was awarded One Step Away (OSA) grants from MHEC in 2013, 2014, 2016, and 2017 to raise college completion rates. During this time, the OSA program increased the number of graduates during each grant cycle by 1%, graduating 24 students total. It is anticipated that BSU will be able to expand on this success by graduating five or more students by May 2019. Based on experience with previous grants, the OSA program will have a target of 15 participants in the fall and four in the spring. BSU will focus on three objectives:

1. Continuing/expanding existing outreach strategies to inform and encourage near-completers to re-enroll in college;
2. Enhancing student support systems (concierge service) to include academic, financial and/or advising and support that facilitate smooth re-entry into the educational environment and retention through degree completion before and;
3. Increasing re-enrollment rates of near-completers by offering new campus-based sustainable financial aid options using campus or other financial aid resources for support such as textbook cost waivers and/or tuition discounts. A part-time concierge staff member, who is a recent OSA graduate, was hired by the director, and will have primary responsibility for the OSA administrative functions and project outcomes.

Carroll Community College

Project Title: One Step Away: Finish What You Started

Project Director: Dr. Kristie Crumley

Award: \$53,568.00

Project Abstract: To support degree completion, Carroll Community College plans to graduate 20% of its near-completers (~225), for a total of 50 graduates in a 14-month span. Carroll Community College (CCC) was a proud recipient of the One Step Away Grant in 2014 and was able to help 97 students earn a degree.

From the lessons learned during that project, the institution identified three critical barriers to near-completers: math course completion, science course completion, and total credit completion. In the time since the grant ended, CCC shortened the transitional math pathway, introduced new non-laboratory science offerings, and decreased the total number of credits needed for AA and AAS degrees. With the funds and resources from the One Step Away grant, the leadership team proposes to contact 255 near-completers to offer incentives to come back to earn their degree.

These incentives include fewer transitional math course requirements before a credit-level math course, fewer total credits needed for some degree programs, financial incentives that cover tuition and textbook assistance, and gift card at the point of degree attainment.

The project leadership team will include a part-time academic advisor who will serve as the point of contact for returning students. This advisor will lead the communication and outreach to students, serve as the academic advisor and degree auditor as well as the liaison to other student services such as financial aid and academic support.

Community College of Baltimore County

Project Title: One Step Away from a College Degree

Project Director: Debra M. Baker

Award: \$56,267.55

Project Abstract: Family and work responsibilities often lead community college students to “stop out” of school for an extended period, even if they have completed most of the requirements for an associate’s degree. The purpose of this project is to encourage “near-completers”—students who have earned at least 45 of the 60 needed credits—to return to school and graduate.

The CCBC Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation has compiled a list of more than six thousand near-completers, including hundreds who have already earned at least sixty credits and only need to satisfy administrative requirements in order to graduate. Also on this list are more than a thousand near-completers who first enrolled in 2012 or later, meaning that they might be able to graduate within six years, a standard benchmark.

An Outreach Specialist position within the Registrar’s Office will contact eligible near-completers who have earned 45 credits, encouraging them to enroll in CCBC, and assisting them in earning their degrees with special incentives. Returning near-completers, especially the veterans among them, will be assisted in applying for college credit based on Prior Learning Assessment.

Special incentives include partial-tuition scholarships, waivers of graduation fees, and vouchers at the college bookstore for purchase of textbooks. The Registrar’s Office will continue working with the returning students, helping with course selection to insure that the students can graduate in the shortest possible time, and providing referrals to other resources that can also assist the returning students.

Goucher College

Project Title: Goucher One Step Away Program

Project Director: Dr. Kathryn Doherty

Award: \$51,000.00

Project Abstract: The Goucher One Step Away Program is a near-completer program that will serve returning students who left Goucher College prior to graduation, have at least 90 credits completed toward their degree, and are in good academic standing with the institution.

Building on existing student support services that have a solid track record with student success and tailoring those programs to the One Step Away cohort, designated advisors will work with Goucher One Step Away students to develop and implement degree completion plans, facilitate mentor partnerships, and provide ongoing intentional advising and support. Small Goucher One Step Away scholarships and book awards will serve as an incentive to return to school, and Goucher One Step Away workshops and events will further support these students toward completing their degree.

The existing adult undergraduate degree completion program, Goucher II, will offer multiple degree options for returning students. Progress of students through the three-semester program, with an additional fourth semester if required, will be assessed at the beginning and end of each semester, and beginning and end of the program. Assessment data, related project objectives, and outcomes will measure the impact of the program on completion and graduation rates, student success and satisfaction, and academic performance.

The college will sustain the program beyond the grant period through in-kind support services as well as foundation and financial aid sources.

Harford Community College

Project Title: One Step Away 2018

Project Director: Patrick Elliott

Award: \$57,214.60

Project Abstract: The Harford CC One Step Away (OSA) Program focuses on reaching out to former students who have completed a substantial number of college credits toward but not earned an associate degree. The program provides the services needed to facilitate and expedite completion. This 2018 project is a continuation and enhancement of the program launched in 2014 with grant funds.

The program identifies “Degree-Eligible” student who has completed all degree requirements but never applied to have their degrees awarded. These students will receive a letter from the College President encouraging them to accept their earned degree. We will assign a specialized Concierge Advisor to the “Degree-Potential” students. Concierge Advisors will complete individualized degree completion plans and use various means of recruiting to reach these students using a variety of methods. Providing meaningful scholarship funding to incentivize re-enrollment is an effective strategy to recruit and re-enroll students, and it will continue to be a key focus. The “concierge services” provide specialized and individualized academic advising for completion, assistance with appeals, financial aid, registration assistance, transfer credit evaluation, prior learning assessment, and tutoring.

The program also includes continued development of the DegreeWorks Student Planner functionality by updating student plans for degrees and certificates for 2018-2019. The Planner component of Degree Works will help OSA students and advisors develop individualized roadmaps and plans for completion.

The program’s goal is to award 36 associate degrees to “Degree-Eligible” students by December 2018 and an additional 25 associate degrees to “Degree-Potential” students by August 2019, for a total of 61 graduates during the grant period.

University of Maryland University College

Project Title: University of Maryland University College (UMUC) One Step Away Program

Project Director: Thomas Porch

Award: \$51,552.60

Project Abstract: The proposed project in this grant will target undergraduate students who have earned or transferred more than 90 credits with satisfactory academic standing, enrolled at University of Maryland University College (UMUC) in Fall 2011 or later, and who have stopped out for at least one year.

This initiative, which will target both degree-potential and degree-eligible near-completers, will offer specialized academic advising and provide additional student support services and incentives to improve graduation rates. This One Step Away Maryland Grant Program provides an opportunity for UMUC to take a concierge, condition-based approach by targeting a specific population of students and creating customized plans for completing their degrees, including appropriate financial assistance.

Resources for students will include an evaluation of credits and individual review of options for earning credits. As part of the project, the university will develop a streamlined and sustainable infrastructure for identifying eligible near-completer students with an automated query in lieu of its current manual, resource intensive process. This will allow for strategic outreach to near-completers every term after the grant period.