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Bowie State University

Fiscal Year 2021

Operating Budget Response to

Department of Legislative Services Budget Analysis

Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

Education, Business and Administration Subcommittee

Senator Craig J. Zucker, Chair

January 30, 2020

House Appropriations Committee

Education and Economic Development Subcommittee

Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair

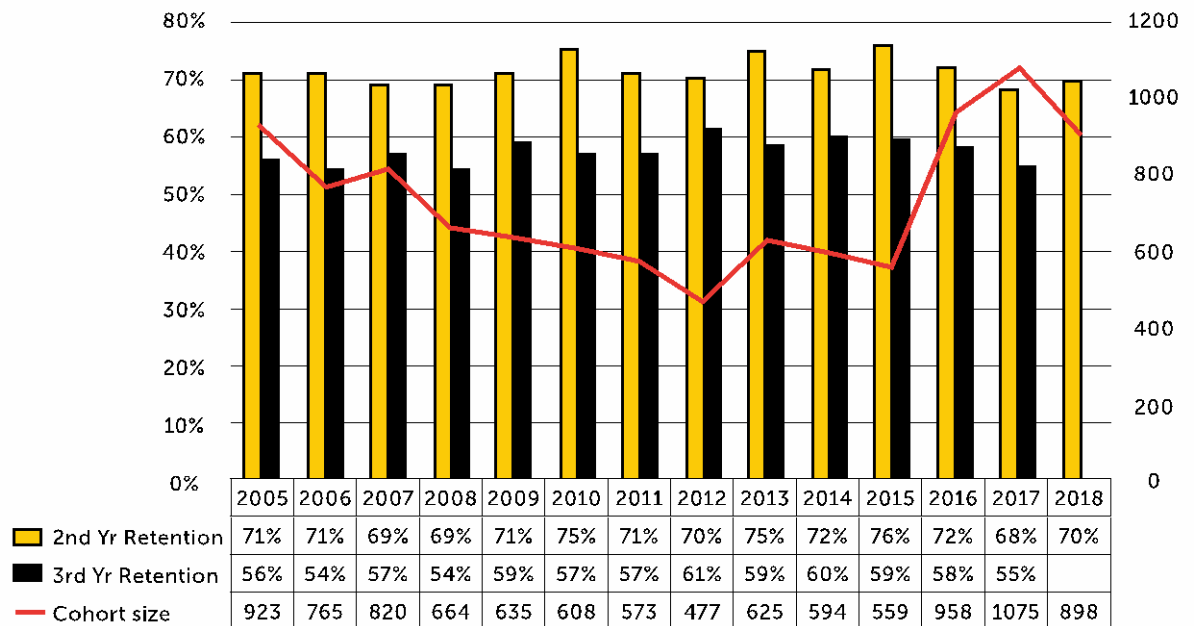
February 3, 2020

Bowie State University | FY 2021

Responses to DLS Recommendations and
Requests for Comment

Page 6: The President should comment on the 20-year low, second-year retention rate, and what steps are being taken to retain first-year students. The President should comment on whether the institution grew too quickly with the decision to more than double the first-time, full-time (FT/FT) undergraduate enrollment from fall 2015 to 2017 and if that is a major factor on [sic] the decreased second-year retention rate.

Second- and Third-year Retention Rates and Cohort Size First-time, Full-time 2005–2018 Cohorts



There are several factors that affected the 2017 cohort second-year retention rate, including recruitment, academic planning, academic support services and housing. Bowie State University entered into an agreement with Royall/EAB to assist with the recruiting of students beginning with the fall 2016 class. The initial focus of this partnership was attracting a larger number of students to apply and enroll at the university. The Royall/EAB partnership resulted in a 300-percent increase in the number of first-time undergraduate applicants between 2015 and 2017 (fall 2015: 2,671/fall 2017: 10,830). The first freshman class from the Royall/EAB partnership (fall 2016) was 958. While the fall 2016 class was significantly larger than the freshman classes for the previous 10 years, the campus was able to support these students with existing personnel and fiscal resources.

During this time, the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management reported to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Even though enrollment management units were in the same division as academic units, there was limited advanced academic planning related to number of course sections, academic support services and classroom availability for a freshman class of over 1,000 students. Academic support services had higher student/staff ratios, which affected the quality of the service. Classes were being held in rooms typically not used for instruction. Simply put, the analyst’s observation was correct – Bowie State University did not have the capacity to effectively serve the needs of 1,075 new freshmen.

To address this issue and provide a more strategic approach to planning enrollment growth, I created an Enrollment Management Division and hired its first Vice President, who reports to me. The initial charge for the division was to create a holistic onboarding approach to bringing on new students consisting of admission standards that recognize our core access mission and admission’s best practices, coupled with strategic financial aid awarding. The first step in the process was to

assess instructional, academic support and housing capacities with varying freshman class sizes. After cross-divisional discussions, we determined that the university had the capacity to handle a new freshman class of 900-950 students with its current resources. Beginning in fall 2018, the new freshman onboarding approach coordinated within enrollment management offices and with academic departments, student support services and housing for a better student experience. The impact of these efforts are student success measures returning to previous levels. The fall 2018 cohort second-year retention rate is 70 percent. Average credits earned in the first year was 21.4. Average number of credits earned to credits attempted ratio was 70.1 percent. First-year cumulative GPA was 2.51.

Another factor in retaining students is financial aid. Bowie State offers an affordable, high-quality education yet many students struggle to pay their tuition. Only 49 percent of our students qualify for Pell grants. That is down from 58 percent two years ago. So we have middle class students who simply cannot afford to enroll or stay in school. Just this past fall we had 249 students who met academic standards but had to be dropped from their classes due to non-payment of tuition and fees. We have to do more to provide financial assistance to help our population of students. In that regard, we are working to increase our endowment so that we can fill in the gap with scholarships to help retain more of our students. This is a top priority for our fundraising efforts.

The availability of on-campus housing continues to be a challenge. The demand for housing by new and returning students exceeds current capacity. The Entrepreneurship Living-Learning Community, set to open in fall 2021, will add 500+ beds to address current demand and to allow for future renovation and/or replacement of current residence halls.

Through the use of data and a strategic enrollment plan, the university is continuously monitoring and adjusting new student onboarding and retention strategies across units to properly balance the need to attract new students with the capacity to retain students.

Page 8: The President should comment on what actions are being taken to increase the ratio of degrees per 100 FTES.

MHEC reports annually undergraduate degree productivity using the following calculation:
 number of
 FY bachelor’s degrees awarded divided by the institution’s IPEDS reported undergraduate
 FTE/100 (IPEDS 12-Month Enrollment Survey). Bowie State’s productivity levels in MHEC’s
 2019 report are below:

Table 1: Bachelor’s Degrees Per 100 Students in Maryland Public Four-Year Institutions, 2008–2017										
Institution Name	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17
Bowie State University	16.3	16.4	16.0	17.9	18.1	19.8	19.6	20.5	22.1	15.3

More recent data show that the ratios are trending up towards previous levels.

Year	Rate
2017-18	16.52
2018-19	17.42

In addition, Bowie State University’s contribution to the State’s 55% Completion Goal has far exceeded MHEC projections during each year since 2011:

Trends in BSU Degrees Awarded Compared to MHEC Degree Projections									
Fiscal Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
BSU Actual Bachelor’s Degrees	683	688	739	741	801	833	713	783	826
MHEC Degree Projections	618	630	643	656	669	682	696	710	724
Actual minus Projection	+65	+58	+96	+85	+132	+151	+17	+73	+102

Our enrollment has fluctuated in the past and this accounts for some of the lower ratios. As noted above, we are taking a much more deliberate, data-driven approach to growing our enrollment, and the ratios are trending upward. We expect this trend to continue as we implement our strategic enrollment management plan.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Bowie State University Nursing Program Update

The university accepts this recommendation. A plan has been developed and presented to the Maryland Board of Nursing to help us stay on course with improvements to the program. Among the key action items was to recruit a new chair for our nursing department, which we have done after a national search. We look forward to providing an update on our nursing program and efforts to improve the NCLEX pass rate as required by the Maryland Board of Nursing.