



FY 2027

OPERATING BUDGET TESTIMONY

BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY

Presented by Aminta H. Breaux, Ph.D., President

House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Education &
Economic Development

Stephanie M. Smith, Chair
February 18, 2026

Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
Subcommittee on Education,
Business & Administration

Nancy King, Chair
February 23, 2026

BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY | FY 2027

OPERATING BUDGET TESTIMONY

I am pleased to provide testimony in support of the governor's FY 2027 operating budget. The governor and legislature have demonstrated each year a keen awareness of the important role that higher education plays in fueling Maryland's economy and preparing the workforce. I am grateful for the support you have shown for the University System of Maryland and Bowie State University, particularly considering the fiscal challenges facing the state.

Bowie State University recently celebrated the 160th anniversary of our founding in 1865 in the basement of a Baltimore church. The celebration was a time for reflection on our humble beginnings but also an opportunity to double down on our mission. To that end, we launched a new strategic plan, **Boldly Forward**.



The Boldly Forward FY26-29 Strategic Plan builds on our strong commitment to access, excellence and innovation. It is our call to action to embrace our role as a public comprehensive university and to lead the way in transforming lives for the public

good. We are committed to four goals: **Advancing Academic Distinction; Transforming the Student Experience; Fostering a Culture of Inclusivity, Equity, Civic Engagement & Social Justice; and Ensuring Bowie State's Future Through Growth & Innovation.**

We have made significant progress in advancing our Boldy Forward plan. With your support, BSU will continue to deliver an extraordinary return on the state's investment.



ACADEMIC DISTINCTION

Bowie State University has earned the designation 'Research College and University' in the 2025 Carnegie Research Activity Classification, reflecting our longstanding commitment to excellence in research. Building on this achievement, we created a new Division of Research & Innovation to anchor our efforts and accelerate our work toward achieving the Research II designation. Our faculty remain committed to securing external funding to support research in critical areas such as education and health sciences, as well as community engagement and global scholarship.



FACULTY EXCELLENCE, RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP

Several faculty members have been recognized by the Board of Regents for their outstanding work.

Dr. Otis Williams III, chair of the Department of Counseling & Psychological Studies, earned the Excellence in Mentoring award. Dr. Williams co-developed African-centered rites of passage for youth, founded the African Psychological Students Association, and mentors students, junior faculty and community members.

Dr. James Hyman, an assistant professor of public administration in the College of Business, received the Excellence in Public Service award. He launched Bowie State's philanthropy initiative and is developing a master's program in philanthropy and nonprofit management. BSU's philanthropy fellowship program offers graduate students hands-on experience with leading organizations.

Dr. Anne Osano, an associate professor of biology in the College of Arts & Sciences, won the Excellence in Scholarship or Research award. Her research focuses on plant metabolomics, aquaponics and hydroponics, and food security. With more than 80 scholarly publications and over \$3 million in grants, Dr. Osano leads students to Kenya for plant and food security research.

Kathryn Kawecki, an associate professor in the Department of Fine & Performing Arts, earned the Excellence in Creative Activity award. Kawecki's set design work, including for "A Song for Coretta," "Little Shop of Horrors" and "Medea," serves as a form of scholarship in theatrical design. She won a national award for "Outstanding Set" for "Pipeline" at the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival. As a theater artist and educator, Kawecki prides herself on "bringing the stage into the classroom and her classes to the stage."

Elena Velasco, an associate professor of theater and production in the Department of Fine & Performing Arts, also won the Excellence in Creative Activity award. One of the region's few bilingual directors, she inspires Latinx artists. Her productions, focused on wellness, equity and diversity, are innovative tools for teaching and social improvement. In the 2022-23 season, Velasco directed and choreographed five productions, "In the Heights," "Alma" and "Arco Iris." These works expanded representation by highlighting artists of color and migrant communities. Velasco also stages bilingual work at the GALA Hispanic Theatre, Washington, D.C.'s premier Spanish-language theater.

EXPANDING WORKFORCE-ALIGNED ACADEMIC PATHWAYS

We continue to develop new academic programs that create clear, workforce-aligned pathways to high-demand careers while strengthening institutional capacity to address critical regional and statewide labor needs. We transitioned our accounting area of concentration to a Bachelor of Science in Accounting to better align with workforce demand. Graduates with accounting degrees benefit from strong employment prospects, competitive salaries and diverse career pathways, including public accounting, corporate finance, government service and advisory roles.

We have also received approval to offer our undergraduates a Bachelor of Science in Risk Management & Insurance. This program responds to a critical, industry-wide workforce need across all levels of government, as well as the private and nonprofit sectors. Developed as part of BSU's Maguire Risk Management Academy, the program

was designed in close consultation with leading industry professionals and academic experts to ensure our graduates are equipped with the technical expertise and essential soft skills required to succeed in a wide range of roles within the field.

Bowie State is committed to addressing the persistent shortage of nurses in Maryland. With a development grant and a nearly \$2.3 million implementation grant through the Nurse Support II program administered by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), we are developing a Ph.D. in Nursing Education. This will help us cultivate a diverse pipeline of highly qualified nurse educators, addressing a national shortage.

We will build on this success by expanding and enhancing academic programs and supporting our faculty in their pursuit of excellence in research and teaching effectiveness.



STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Student success is a high priority at Bowie State University. We are leveraging campus resources to support academic achievement and career development to enhance the overall well-being of our students. We are also incorporating the "8 Dimensions of Wellness" and other best practices in a holistic approach to address mental and financial health, as well as enhancing the campus environment to foster a greater sense of community and belonging.

Additionally, Bowie State recently received a transformative \$50 million unrestricted gift from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott — the largest single contribution in the university's history. Combined with her earlier \$25 million gift in 2020, Scott's total investment in Bowie State now reaches an extraordinary \$75 million. The gift will strengthen Bowie State's endowment and advance key priorities in the university's new strategic plan, including expanding scholarships to reduce financial barriers, supporting research and innovation across

disciplines, and enriching the student experience. This extraordinary gift ensures that Bowie State continues to deliver on its mission of access, excellence and opportunity for future generations.

Our efforts through the BSU Bold: The Campaign for Excellence fundraising campaign is helping the university to close the affordability gap through record level fundraising. By June 30, 2025, the campaign raised more than \$68 million, advancing the university's efforts to grow its endowment and support students in meaningful ways. The campaign's early success resulted in Bowie State increasing its fundraising goal from \$50 million to \$75 million.

With the campaign ending on December 31, 2025, we are proud to share we have surpassed that goal. This capital campaign plays a critical role in opening doors, easing financial burdens and ensuring that Bowie State University remains a place where excellence is accessible and achievement is within reach.



Bowie State University received a landmark \$6.5 million gift from Elior Collegiate Dining to transform the student experience and drive campus innovation and modernization. The unrestricted gift will support key institutional priorities, including expanding access and affordability through student scholarships and renovating student dining and learning spaces to create collaborative environments that inspire community engagement and academic excellence.



Bowie State University hosted the Google Cloud Regional Leadership Symposium, uniting students, faculty and professionals for a dynamic day of learning and connection. The event featured leaders from technology, media, sports, entrepreneurship and humanitarian fields who shared real-world insight on leadership, career development and the role of artificial intelligence in shaping the future.

STUDENT SUCCESS

Kamila Palacios, a senior government major, is taking her next step toward a career in immigration law after receiving the prestigious Fannie Angelos Scholarship to attend law school. Palacios is a participant in Bowie State's government concentration, which supports students pursuing careers in law, public service and civic leadership.



Zaire Bond, an undergraduate student majoring in education with a history concentration, launched a new club called the Black Male Educators and Leaders Alliance. Open to all undergraduate and graduate students regardless of an individual's major, the club encourages Black men on campus to become leaders.



Taylor Payton, a senior business administration major with a marketing concentration, has been designated as an AT&T Rising Future Maker, a distinction the telecommunications giant confers on bright, up-and-coming talent. Payton will receive a \$5,000 scholarship, mentorship connections and invites to exclusive networking events and programming with business executives.



Tanviban Patel, a recent Doctor of Science in Computer Science graduate, has secured a prestigious Predoctoral Fellowship with the National Institute of Health. Her passion for web development and artificial intelligence drives her aspirations to build software and websites that push technological boundaries.



Bowie State's Jared Achuff was selected as the 2024-2025 CIAA Male Scholar-Athlete of the Year. He excelled both on and off the field, earning All-Conference honors as an offensive lineman while maintaining a perfect 4.0 GPA.



The Bowie State University's softball team won the 2025 Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) softball championship. The Bulldogs have now won three consecutive CIAA titles.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & SOCIAL JUSTICE

As a public institution and Maryland's oldest HBCU, Bowie State University has a strong history of civic engagement among its students. We empower students to be active participants in societal and civic matters with a strong emphasis on community service, voter engagement and social justice.

Faculty in our Center for Law, Civic Engagement & Social Justice are leading the way by integrating civic learning into the curriculum as the university works to achieve the Carnegie Classification for community engagement.



GROWTH & INNOVATION

ECONOMIC IMPACT

According to the United Negro College Fund 2024 HBCU Impact Report, Bowie State University generates more than \$351 million in total economic impact for its local and regional economies. With 80% of our graduates remaining in Maryland, we are a major contributor to the state's prosperity.



We are working in partnership with the Maryland Department of Transportation and Prince George's County Revenue Authority to redevelop more than 90 acres surrounding the campus, including a transit-oriented development around the Bowie State MARC station. This transformational project will spur even more economic development. It supports BSU's growth and long-term viability and will provide greater opportunities for the university to connect with the community as an anchor institution.



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship is a major focus at BSU. Our goal is for every student to graduate with an entrepreneurial mindset, be able to pivot throughout their careers and pursue their own business endeavors. We proudly host an annual entrepreneurship conference bringing together HBCUs from all over the country. Our Entrepreneurship Innovation Center is the first HBCU to receive the Highly Commended Award from the Global Consortium of Entrepreneurship Centers for advancing innovation and economic development.



Strengthening the university's national leadership, Senators Cardin and Van Hollen announced \$3 million in federal funding to establish the Bowie Business Innovation Center (BIC) Center of Excellence for 8(a) Government Contracting at Bowie State University.

Bowie BIC expands the university's role as a gateway into the federal marketplace, preparing students, entrepreneurs and small businesses to compete successfully for government contracts through:

- Federal acquisition and compliance training
- SBA 8(a) certification readiness
- Contract-readiness bootcamps
- Proposal development and capture strategy
- Technical assistance for minority-owned and emerging firms

This investment positions Bowie State as a national destination for government contracting education and entrepreneurial acceleration. Bowie State also trains faculty and staff at peer HBCUs nationwide to identify federal contracting opportunities and build 8(a) readiness, extending its impact far beyond campus.

Bowie State further advances its entrepreneurship ecosystem through a targeted partnership with TEDCO, connecting students and faculty innovators to statewide commercialization expertise and venture-building pathways — particularly in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, data analytics and defense-sector innovation.

Home to a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education and located along Maryland's defense corridor, Bowie State leverages this collaboration to expand high-demand STEM pipelines and early-stage startup development.

Together, these assets anchor Bowie State as a launchpad for regional growth and national competitiveness.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Bowie State is proud to partner with Anne Arundel County in its effort to transform the former Crownsville Hospital site into a space that promotes healing, wellness and generational change. The university is collaborating with Gaudenzia, a nonprofit that serves people in need of treatment for substance abuse and co-occurring disorders, in a unique internship program that provides our students with meaningful, hands-on experience across critical fields, including healthcare, mental and behavioral health, social work and criminal justice.

A partnership with Saxbys, a coffee and social impact company, provides aspiring student entrepreneurs with the opportunity to learn firsthand what it's like to run a successful business through the innovative Saxbys Experiential Learning Platform (ELP). Students manage real café operations and oversee teams of up to 45 peers, allowing them to earn academic credit and graduate with executive-level operational experience.



BGE's partnership with Bowie State awards scholarships to full-time STEM majors as part of its BGE Scholars program. The funding includes support for student and faculty-led innovation and research projects. BGE is also committed to leading student enrichment and career development activities and events, such as the Black Excellence in Energy speaker series, as well as summer internship prioritization, mentorship and job shadowing opportunities.

The Truist Data Analytics Research and Technology (DARTT) Lab is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills they'll need for jobs that are increasingly centered around data. The lab is an important resource for students across all disciplines, introducing them to large data sets, software and technology resources that can be the catalyst for innovative research projects. The interdisciplinary lab is focused on solving large-scale data analytics problems that arise in different domains, including social networks, healthcare, science, retail, economics, finance and business.



Bowie State is one of four HBCUs designated as an Adobe Creative Campus, expanding digital fluency across disciplines by integrating Adobe Creative Cloud into teaching and learning with free access for all students, faculty and staff. As an inaugural member of the Adobe Anchor School Program, BSU is further strengthening pathways to careers in technology and creative industries through scholarships, training, internships and digital tools that enhance opportunities in data science, analytics, cybersecurity and digital media — advancing the university's commitment to innovation and entrepreneurship.

Through its partnership with the Adobe Foundation, Bowie State is also advancing social justice initiatives, expanding faculty development and enhancing student career readiness. The investment



supports technology access, fellowships and workshops for faculty, entrepreneurship and career preparation through the EIC, continued support for the endowment and athletics, and hands-on cybersecurity internships that provide professional development and real-world experience.

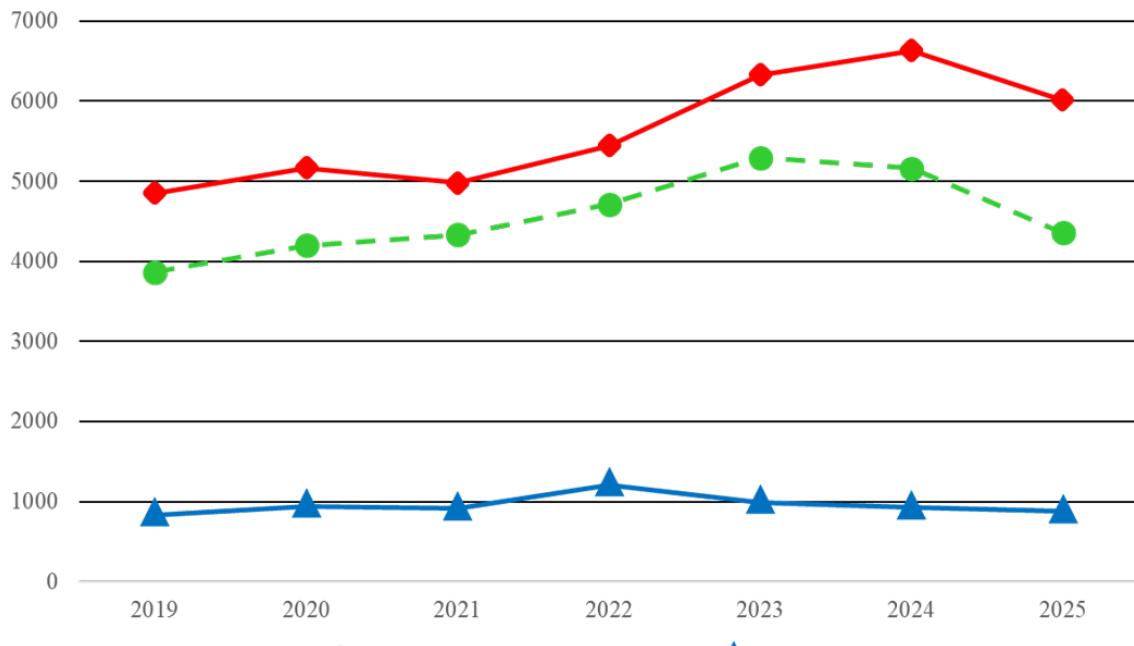


RESPONSES TO DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The President should comment on what led to the year-over-year decline in the number of applications and acceptances in fall 2024 and how BSU improved each of these for fall 2025.

The apparent reduction in the number of fall 2024 applications and acceptances is not the result of fewer applications but rather a data reporting error. The fall 2024 admission data extract was not updated to include the new first-time student category for new students with advanced standing. The extract was corrected for fall 2025. The corrected fall 2024 numbers are 6,631 for applications and 5,163 for admitted.

Exhibit 1 (Revised)
Undergraduate Applications, Accepted & Enrolled
Fall 2019-2025



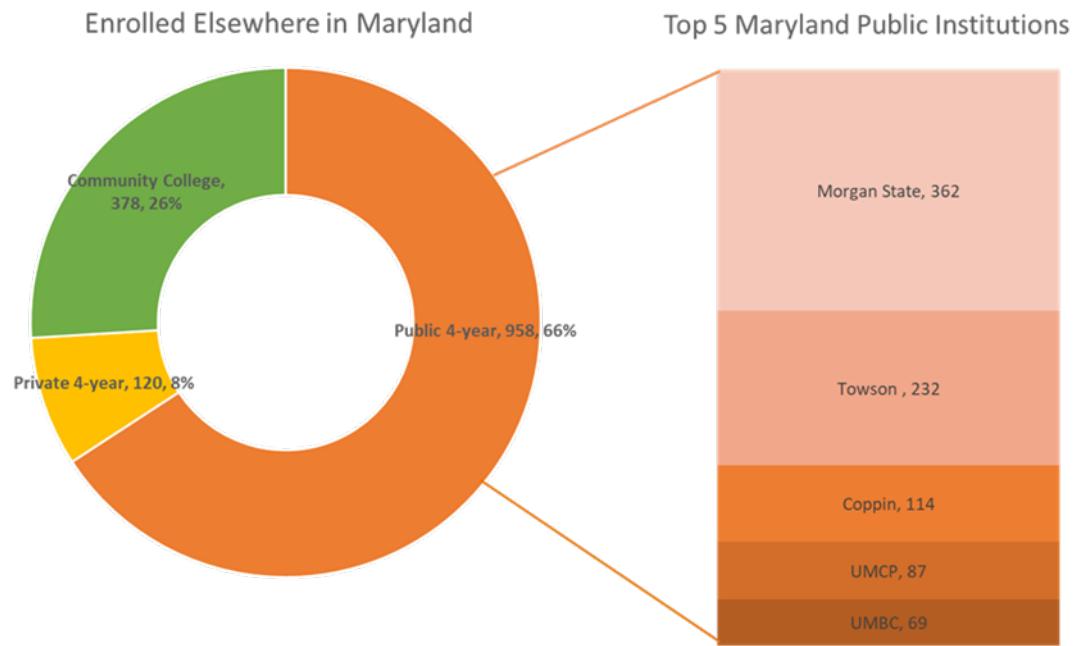
Source: Bowie State University

The President should comment on factors contributing to an increase in enrollments from new applicants, but a decline in the number of FT/FT students during the same time frame.

Over each of the past three years, Bowie State University has attracted on average 11,120 applications with more than 6,000 completed first-time freshmen applications. After the fall enrollment snapshot, the university did a deep dive into factors impacting new freshmen enrollment and concluded that declining FT/FT enrollment has been impacted by a combination of increased competition and affordability.

Sixty-six percent of admitted students who enrolled elsewhere in Maryland went to public, four-year institutions. Twenty-six percent went to community colleges, and the remaining eight percent attended a private institution. The top five Maryland four-year public institutions attracting Bowie State's new freshmen are Morgan State University, Towson University, Coppin State University, University of Maryland College Park, and University of Maryland Baltimore County. There was a 57% increase between fall 2024 and fall 2025 in the number of students who attended one of these five institutions (from 551 to 864).

Exhibit 2
Fall 2025 First-time Freshmen Applicants
Who Enrolled Elsewhere in Maryland



Source: Bowie State University

Affordability remains a major concern at our institution. Despite efforts to provide financial support, many students and their families are hesitant to take out loans to bridge financial gaps (i.e., due to negative messaging that has been projected nationally regarding student debt), which has limited their ability to enroll or remain enrolled. Also, the reduction of approximately \$1.4 million in Educational Assistance (EA) grants from MHEC over recent years has further compounded this issue, reducing the financial aid resources available to prospective and current students. Gap funding is essential to the student population at Bowie State University given the fact that less than 50% of our students receive PELL (i.e., less than the national average at HBCUs).

Most recently, in fall 2025, we experienced the highest number of first-time student melt in August. This was largely due to other larger institutions (i.e., with larger endowments) offering more scholarship dollars at the very end of the enrollment cycle process, making them more attractive options for prospective students who are sensitive to financial aid offers. We experienced a melt of over 250 first-time students in August due to this issue.

All these factors have significantly impacted our undergraduate population, and addressing these challenges require a strategic, multifaceted approach focused on enhancing affordability, increasing financial aid resources, enhancing retention strategies and improving the enrollment processes to better compete with other institutions. To this point, Bowie State University has recently closed the largest fundraising campaign in our history. Scholarships and affordability remain the top priority for the additional private funds achieved from the campaign.

The President should discuss the university's recent creation of online programs and how much of the enrollment growth in online, regional centers, or other off-campus locations is due to online students compared to the other locations.

Bowie State University revised the indicators in our Managing for Results Report (MFR) last cycle to align with our new Boldly Forward FY26-29 Strategic Plan. One of the indicators added was the number of students enrolled in an online program, regional center or other off-campus locations. This key performance indicator is used to monitor our commitment to providing educational opportunities in locations and modalities that meet today's workforce needs. Currently, we offer courses/programs at The Universities at Shady Grove, the University System of Maryland at Southern Maryland, Laurel College Center and the Eastern Shore Higher Education Center.

To put this in perspective, the number of students engaged in regional centers or online programs represents 10% of Bowie State's total fall 2025 enrollment. Two years ago, it was six percent. The number of regional center or online students has grown from 388 in fall 2023 to 603 this past fall. In fall 2025, 351 of the 608 students (58%) were enrolled at regional centers.

The President should comment on the steps being taken to improve third-year retention rates.

Academic Care Model

As part of a comprehensive and integrated Academic Care Model, the Academic Recovery Program (ARP) is a supportive initiative designed to help students placed on academic warning, probation or dismissal to regain

good academic standing. Our trained coaches work closely with students to identify academic barriers to academic performance, develop a personalized recovery plan, monitor progress, and celebrate achievement.

Stop-out Outreach

Student Success Coordinators conduct outreach campaigns targeting third-year students who have not registered for the upcoming academic semester to ascertain needed support for enrollment conversions. Once the barriers are identified, the Student Success Coordinators triage and refer the students to the relevant offices and/or resources.

Supplemental Instruction (SI) Leaders

Modeled after the University of Missouri-Kansas City Supplemental Instruction program, SI Leaders are trained peer academic facilitators embedded directly within targeted courses to support student learning and success. They attend class regularly and interact with students by modeling effective notetaking, encouraging engagement and guiding active learning in class sessions. SI Leaders facilitate one structured group study session each week focused on collaborative learning, concept mastery and exam preparation, and they also provide individualized academic support as needed. They are intentionally integrated into course design and work closely with faculty to align sessions with course objectives, assignments and assessments.

SI Leaders are also embedded in the Learning Management System (Blackboard) course shell, where they share resources, post session information and communicate with students. This integrated model strengthens academic performance, promotes effective learning strategies and fosters supportive peer-learning communities.

SI/Embedded Courses

Embedded Tutoring has been implemented in 300-level courses including Sociology, Psychology and Computer Technology, which has been critical in strengthening academic performance for students needing individualized attention in the classroom.

The President should discuss efforts being taken to improve the four- and six-year graduation rates.

Credit Momentum to Degree Completion

Credit momentum is the leading indicator of retention and persistence and the strongest predictor of four- and six-year completion. Efforts are underway to advise students to enroll in no less than 15 credits per semester as indicators show that students earning 30 credits in Year 1 are significantly more likely to be retained to Year 2 and persist to graduation. The Office of Planning, Analysis & Accountability has developed a data dashboard that will provide the Retention & Student Success team data to map credit momentum and persistence, as well as credit momentum and degree completion. Such mapping will guide the interventions needed to support students' four-year graduation rates.

Pre-graduation Clearance

As part of our ongoing efforts to support timely degree completion and improve the graduation process, pre-graduation clearance audits have been implemented by departments for students who have earned 90 credit hours by their junior year. The purpose of the audit is to proactively identify and resolve any academic issues that may delay graduation.

Academic Support Resources

Various academic support initiatives are conducted by the Student Success Center, the Academic Advising Center and Student Success Coordinators who are assigned to each of the colleges. Those initiatives include:

1. Implementation of Early Alert system interventions for gateway and high-risk/DFW courses
2. Discipline-specific Supplemental Instruction (SI) sessions, tutoring and workshops for key courses (e.g., College Algebra, Intro Biology and English Composition)
3. Academic Success Plans (ASP) with major sequencing guidance for all at-risk students
4. 24/7 online AI tutoring support for all BSU students accessible via their Blackboard courses, enhancing access to academic resources, and personalized learning support

The Engage Center

The Engage Center at Bowie State University improves retention and graduation by integrating experiential learning, career readiness and employer partnerships into one coordinated hub of student support. Through early career coaching, the center helps students secure at least one paid internship, enabling them to reduce excessive work hours — an important factor since working more than 20 hours per week is linked to lower academic performance. By providing early, targeted support — especially for BSU's 39% first-generation students — The Engage Center creates clearer pathways from enrollment to degree completion while helping students offset college costs through higher-paying experiential opportunities.

BSU should work with USM to update its database with correct institutional aid figures for fiscal 2023.

We have discussed with USM the challenges with the trend data in USM IRIS Dashboards. Since the source of the data is the annual MHEC Financial Aid Information System (FAIS) file, there are concerns that there would be two different sets of information in the public domain that would lead to further confusion. We will continue to work with USM to see if additional explanatory language could be added to the dashboards to reflect the FY 2023 misalignment.