

# **College Completion Plan**

**2016-18**

**Cleveland State University**

**May 25, 2016**

## **1. University Mission**

Cleveland State University is an urban-serving university that attracts most of its students from Cuyahoga and surrounding counties. Since its creation in 1964, part of CSU's mission has been to provide access to a four-year college to students who might not otherwise be able to complete a bachelor's degree. Until fairly recently, CSU was an open admissions university, admitting any student with a high school diploma. In Fall 2008, CSU modified its admissions rules and put in place minimum criteria for eligibility for admission (ACT of 16, cumulative high school GPA of 2.3, completion of 13 core academic requirements). However, the admissions criteria remain low compared to other state institutions, and CSU continues to include access among its central objectives.

## **2. Barriers to Persistence and Completion**

Although some of the counties from which CSU draws students have residents with above average rates of college completion (e.g, Cuyahoga and Geauga Counties), CSU draws its students more from the less affluent and minority residents of the region, who typically have much lower rates of educational attainment. This means that CSU has high numbers of first-generation college students. The county from which CSU draws most of its students (Cuyahoga) also has a high poverty rate (the US Census estimated an average of 19.6% between 2010 and 2014). Thus, many CSU students have one or more risk factors associated with their demographic characteristics:

### **Student Characteristics**

- a. high percentage of first-generation students (approximately 42.5% in Fall 2015)
- b. high percentage of Pell-eligible students (approximately 40% of undergraduates received Pell grants in Fall 2015)
- c. high percentage of minority students (approximately 24% in 2015)

Students with these characteristics are known to be "at-risk" for one or more reasons:

- They are more likely to be commuter students, for whom retention rates nationally are lower than for residential students. At CSU, commuter students represent 85% of the undergraduate student population (950-1000 students live in on-campus residence halls).
- Low-income and minority students have greater chances of entering university needing remediation. At CSU, approximately half of entering freshmen placed into remedial Math, English or both.
- First-generation college students cannot rely on family for guidance in negotiating the various difficulties they encounter during their college

- careers. They are more likely to face these difficulties on their own and, thus, are at greater risk of getting off-track or becoming discouraged.
- Students from low-income families lack the economic resources to afford college easily; they are vulnerable to tuition increases, the high cost of textbooks, and other economic obstacles. They are also likely to have to work while in college, making it more difficult to devote appropriate amounts of time to studying. Economic problems are more likely to cause such students to “swirl” (stop in and out of college) or to give up on college altogether. They are also more likely to transfer from a 4-year to a 2-year institution; CSU data indicate that students who do so often wind up completing neither a 2- nor a 4-year degree.

### **Institutional Barriers**

In addition to the risk factors associated with the demographic characteristics of its students, CSU possesses several institutional characteristics that present barriers to college completion.

Primary among these is the limited number of resources available for classroom instruction. With a relatively small cadre of full-time faculty, and limited numbers of qualified graduate students who could serve as instructors, CSU is obliged to make extensive use of part time instructors in entry-level classes. Such instructors often lack knowledge of campus resources and/or programs of study so students in their classes have less access to expert advice from an instructor. CSU, like many other institutions, also is forced to offer a significant number of high-enrollment introductory courses. If taught in the traditional manner (with limited interaction and high-stakes testing), these courses have been found to be particularly likely to present problems for students who are not college-ready.

Finally, CSU has been and continues to be a university with a high-percentage of community college transfer students. Many low-income (and, more recently, students from higher economic strata) choose to begin their college education at a 2-year school to reduce the cost of earning a degree. However, transferring to a new institution involves a period of adjustment to a new setting and institutional culture (especially since CSU does not have an “in-house” community college). This can be particularly daunting for students who already possess other risk factors, such as low incomes or inadequate high school preparation.

## **3. Progress towards Completion Goals for 2014-16**

CSU’s initial College Completion Plan identified a number of goals for the 2014-16 period. Since the effects on completion of most of the initiatives identified in the original plan on degree completion would not be visible until after 2016 (cohorts admitted since the initiatives were implemented were not scheduled to graduate

until after that date), the plan focused its goals *not* on actual graduation rates but on intermediate goals that correlate with students' eventual graduation. However, it should be noted that CSU's six-year graduation rate for IPEDS cohort students had improved to 38.7% in 2015 from 29.8% in 2010.

What follows is a list of the original goals with updated information on progress made towards their completion (in italics):

- Improve Fall-to-Fall persistence of CSU students so that at least three quarters of degree-seeking students are either retained or graduated each year. *Fall to fall persistence for the IPEDS cohort admitted in Fall 14 was 70% (up from 65% three years earlier). Fall-to-Fall persistence rates for undergraduate students at all levels was 85% in Fall 2015.*
- Improve the median number of hours passed in the freshman year from the current 27 hours to 30 hours by Spring 2016.. *Median hours earned by freshmen was 27 in AY 2013-14 and 26 in AY 2014-15<sup>1</sup>*
- Improve the percentage of first-year students who complete their first semester in good academic standing from current 73% to 85% by the end of Fall 2016. *The percentage of first-year students who completed their first semester in good academic standing was 74% in Fall 2015.*
- Increase the percentage of students who complete 67% of the credits for which they register from the current 84.4% (Fall 13) to 88% by Spring 2016. *The percentage of students who completed 67% of the credits for which they registered was 84% in Fall 14 and 82.2% in Fall 15.*
- Raise the percentage of students who successfully complete developmental Math to 70% of those who attempt it by Spring 2016. *Overall pass rate in MTH 87 improved from 66% in AY 12-13 to 68% in AY 14-15. For the IPEDS cohort, the pass rate improved from 66.5% in Fall 13 to 72.7% in Fall 15.*
- Create a transfer intake center to assist transfer students in locating advising services, degree maps, etc. *Transfer Center established in January 2015; full-time coordinator hired in June 2015.*
- Increase Starfish use by faculty:
  - *Early alert participation for faculty teaching 100-200 level courses increased from 29% in Fall 2014 to 37% in fall 2014 – this fell short of the goal of 50%*
  - *Percentage of faculty using Starfish for attendance records increased from 33% in Fall 14 to 36% in Fall 16 for ASC, MTH, and ENG—this fell short of the goal of 50%*

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<sup>1</sup> Conversion of the curriculum from a 4-credit to a 3-credit system may have affected AY 2014-5 – e.g., students taking 16 hours in a 4 credit system (4x4 credit hours may have shifted to 15 hours (5x3 credit hours).

- 30% of undergraduate instructors created office hours in Starfish in AY 13/14. The goal is to raise this to 50% by Spring 2016. *Due to a reporting change in the Starfish system, we are now unable to assess the creation of office hours by instructors. We are, however able to assess student adaptation to the system. The number of appointments scheduled in Fall 2013 was 23,821, of which 14% were scheduled by the students themselves. In Fall 2015, more than twice as many service appointments were made in Starfish (56,027), 55% of which were self-scheduled.*

#### **4. Updated Completion Goals for 2016-18**

CSU has established the following goals for the 2016-18 period:

- Increase IPEDS cohort six-year graduation rate to at least 45% by 2018 (from current 38.7%)
- Increase fall-to-fall retention rate for IPEDS cohort freshmen to 73% by Fall 2018 (from current 70.6%)
- Improve the median number of hours passed in the freshman year from the current 26 hours to 30 hours by Spring 2018
- Improve the percentage of first-year students who complete their first semester in good academic standing from current 74% to 80% by the end of Fall 2017
- Increase the percentage of students who complete 67% of the credits for which they register from the current 82.2% (Fall 15) to 88% by Fall 17.
- Increase the percentage of freshman admits who return for a second Fall who complete the freshman writing requirement in their first year to 65% from current 49% by the end of AY 2018
- Raise the percentage of freshman admits who place into developmental math, then successfully complete developmental Math in their first year from the current 64% to 75% by the end of Spring 2018
- Reduce time to graduation for transfer students who transfer with 60 or more hours completed from current 2.8 years to 2.5 years by end of AY 2018
- Improve retention of transfer students as follows:
  - Those who transfer with <30 hours: from 60.8% to 65%
  - Those who transfer with 30-59 hours: from 66% to 70%
  - Those who transfer with 60+ hours: from 77.3% to 80%
- Increase Starfish early alert participation for faculty teaching 100-200 level courses from current 37% to 50% by 2018

## 5. Completion Strategies

Cleveland State University's original College Completion Plan noted that the University had been working for several years to address the problems that have historically led to low retention and completion rates. The plan described initiatives already in place and others planned for the immediate future. These initiatives were intended to address the obstacles to completion identified above:

- Overcome the negative consequences of developmental coursework (low success rates, low numbers of college credits earned after the first year)
- Provide support for students whose high school preparation for college is weak
- Provide careful oversight for students who are at risk of going off track and who lack access to sources of advice and support
- Ease the transition of transfer students as they enter a new institution
- Identify, support and encourage pedagogical approaches that match the needs of students
- Address the problem of student financial need

The various initiatives implemented prior to and during the period covered by the original plan have resulted in significant improvements in retention and completion rates at Cleveland State University. For example, Fall-to-Fall retention rates for first-time, full-time freshman admits improved from 63.7% for the Fall 2009 cohort to 70.6% for the Fall 2014 cohort. Graduation rates have also trended up; six-year graduation rates for first-time, full-time freshman admits have risen from 29.8% for the class admitted in Fall 2004 to 38.7% for the class admitted in Fall 2009.

In recognition of the breadth of its initiatives, and the measurable success that resulted, Cleveland State received an Excellence and Innovation Award in the Student Success and College Completion category from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities in Fall 2015.

Although much progress has been made, much work remains to be done. In recognition of this reality, CSU has added a number of new initiatives to the ongoing work described in the previous plan. The sections that follow summarize ongoing initiatives and identify and describe both new and planned initiatives for 2016-18

### Current Completion Strategies

Cleveland State University has *already* undertaken a number of steps to enhance student success and to speed progress towards degree completion:

#### a. Increase Success in Developmental and First Year Mathematics Courses

- a. **Developmental Mathematics:** For students with an ACT Math score of less than 22 or for students who place into Developmental Mathematics (MTH 87 Basic Algebra), CSU has adopted a Mathematics Emporium Model. With a \$700,000 investment of CSU funds, CSU has converted stacks on the second floor of the university library to a 130-station computer lab. Here students use software and videos to work through a 14-module curriculum that allows students to take a pretest and pass quickly through material with which they already are familiar. To move to the next module requires a score of 80% or higher on the post-test of each module. Thus students who complete the course have mastered *EACH* component before moving on. Students who do not complete all 14 modules take the course again and start where they left off. This approach allows students who need a quick refresher to move very quickly through the curriculum. Students with less knowledge can take more time on each module. This program was launched in Summer and Fall 2013.
- b. **Precalculus Mathematics:** Students whose degree program requires calculus, but who are not calculus ready as deemed by the placement test, begin their mathematics coursework in MTH 167 (Precalculus I). With \$875,000 funding from the National Science Foundation STEP program, CSU's Operation STEM program recruits 35 students for a two week summer bridge program that provides mathematics review, study skill training, campus orientation, and STEM career information. Additionally, in the fall and spring semesters, *ALL* students taking Precalculus I & II are instructed with mandatory supplemental instruction lead by student peers (called STEM Peer Teachers) utilizing a Project Based Learning (PBL) approach. This program was launched in Summer and Fall 2013.
- c. **Calculus Mathematics:** For students whose degree program requires calculus and who place into Calculus I (MTH 181), CSU has begun to replicate the efforts described above for precalculus. With funding from an NSF LSAMP grant, CSU will run a 35-student summer bridge program in Summer 2015 & 16. Starting in Fall 2015, mandatory supplemental instruction for Calculus I and Calculus II will begin for two sections a term; this will include STEM Peer Teachers and a Project Based Learning component.

**Objective:** to increase the number of students who complete the required mathematics courses for their degree program without repeating a course.

**Strategy:** Several strategies are being implemented for students who begin their mathematics coursework at different levels:

**Leadership:** The Chair and Faculty of the Department of Mathematics, aided by the Operation STEM program coordinator Susan Carver and the new LSAMP coordinator to be hired will take the lead in maintaining, revising, and implementing these initiatives.

Outcome/Measure of Success: For all three initiatives described above, the pass rates of the course will be *one* measure of success; but more importantly, the success rate in the subsequent course will serve as the primary indicator of success. Since the Calculus program has only just started, outcomes data are not yet available. Pass rates in developmental math have increased from around 50% to greater than 70%; a similar improvement has been achieved in pass rates in both Pre-calculus I and Pre-calculus II. Data on subsequent course success are now available for students who complete developmental math: there has been an improvement of 16% in pass rates in the subsequent, college-level math course since the advent of the Math Emporium.

Timeline: The reforms have already been implemented. Additional innovations in first-year math programming are described in a subsequent section of this College Completion Plan.

#### **b. Integrate Remedial and College-level Freshman Writing Education**

Objective: to decrease the numbers of students whose college careers are delayed by having to complete non-credit-bearing remedial English courses in their first semester.

Strategy: Instead of enrolling in remedial coursework, qualifying students who place into remedial English should enroll in ENG 100. This course combines the curriculum of ENG 101 with remedial coursework. Students enroll in a 4-credit hour course that has the potential to result in their earning 3 hours of college credit. The ENG 101 syllabus is supplemented by remedial work and mandatory assistance from the Writing Center (with which students must meet on a regular basis). Students who earn a C receive 3 hours of credit and place into the second semester of Freshman English (i.e., ENG 102)

Leadership: The Director of the Freshman Writing Program and the English Department, with the support of the Writing Center, have been in charge of implementing the program.

Outcome/Measure of Success: Success will be measured by the numbers of students who successfully complete ENG 100, move on to ENG 102 and successfully complete the second course. Comparisons with students who place into ENG 101 then take ENG 102 will also be used. Data indicate that completion rates in ENG 100 are good (overall pass rates for students who take the course average 80%) and that students who complete ENG 100 successfully complete ENG 102 at almost the same rate as students who begin in ENG 101 (in 2014, 84% of students who passed ENG 100 in Fall passed 102 in Spring, compared to 88% of students who passed ENG 101, then took 102 in Spring).

Timelines: The reforms have already been implemented.



**c. Implement Intrusive Advising for Freshman Students with Early Warning System/Student Retention Software**

Objective: To provide close monitoring of first-year students as they transition to University, to facilitate communication between students and advisors, and to allow faculty to warn advisors about students having academic problems before the appearance of midterm or final grades.

Strategy: Recruit a cadre of freshman advisors trained to engage in intrusive advising. They will have reduced caseloads, enabling them to monitor students more closely and to intervene with them in the event that they experience academic difficulty. They will be equipped with communication tools (e.g., cell phones) to promote easy communication. They will be provided with guidance as to which courses students should take to stay “on-track” and to increase the likelihood of academic success (Freshman Foundations advising protocols). They will be supported by a student retention software system (Starfish) that will allow students to make appointments with advisors on-line, that will promote communication among advisors, professors and students, and that will provide a place for the easy storage and communication of notes about student progress. In addition, the system will enable faculty to raise “flags” regarding students who are not attending consistently or are in academic difficulty and will prompt advisors to intervene with students who are flagged. Holds are placed on all freshman students and withdrawals are discouraged by requiring students to receive advice prior to withdrawal and by new academic standing policies that sanction failure to make Satisfactory Academic Progress, not just low GPA.

Leadership: The Vice-Provost for Academic Programs, assisted by the Director of Student Success Programs and the Director of Freshman Advising, is responsible for the implementation of Intrusive Freshman Advising and the Student Retention software. Implementation of the software requires collaboration with IS&T; collaboration with college advising offices is also important to the implementation of intrusive advising.

Outcome/Measure of Success: Success will be measured by analyzing retention rates in the freshman cohort and course completion statistics. Efforts are under way to develop assessment mechanisms allowing the Division of Academic Programs to assess the effectiveness of particular types of intervention by advisors and faculty.

Timelines: Intrusive advising has been in place for Developmental students for more than two years and for the entire freshman class for more than one year. Seven freshman advisors are now employed in the Division of Academic Programs for this purpose. The Starfish student retention system was purchased approximately three years ago and is now used by all advising offices on campus. Over the past year, more aggressive efforts have been made to encourage faculty to make use of the system’s early warning capability and to develop effective protocols to guide advisors responding to flags. The system has additional capabilities,

including the ability to implement “success plans” for students in difficulty and, perhaps, to monitor student progress/completion of degree plans. Staff in the Division of Academic Programs are working with the vendor to learn more about the system’s capabilities and to increase the numbers of functions it performs at CSU.

**d. Convert General Education Courses from 4 to 3 credit hour standard, reduce minimum degree requirement to 120 hours.**

Objective: to reduce the total number of hours required for graduation.

Strategy: develop a predominantly 3-credit hour standard for CSU courses. Mandate that 120-hour degree programs be the norm. Conversion to three credit hour courses reduces the number of credit hours students are required to complete for general education courses. For example, although the general education requirements specify 6 credit hours of mathematics, no math general education courses had been offered that totaled 6 hours, so students had to take 8 hours to complete the requirement. This change helps make possible the reduction in the graduation minimum to 120, since, in most cases, the general education and major requirements can be completed in 120 hours under a predominantly 3 credit-hour model.

Leadership: The Provost’s office, assisted by the University Curriculum Committee, took the lead in implementing the Curriculum Conversion. A Transition Team was established in Fall 2013 to support the Provost’s office and to help facilitate implementation.

Outcome/Measure of Success: Success will be measured by monitoring the numbers of credit hours students earn in the process of completing their degrees. The goal is to increase the numbers of students who graduate with as close to 120 hours as possible.

Timeline: The curriculum was converted in Spring 2014, with implementation in Fall 2014. This conversion is now complete

**e. Implement a Student-Centered Scheduling Model**

Objective: To provide registration options and produce a schedule of courses that supports student academic needs and removes barriers to degree completion.

Strategy 1 - Multi-term Registration

This model, the first in Ohio, allows students to plan ahead by posting the course offering and allowing degree seeking students to register for an entire academic year at one time. This is particularly important for Cleveland State students who

balance taking courses with extensive family and work obligations. This long-term scheduling model allows students to schedule their academic courses for an entire year without altering the due dates for payment, which remain one week prior to the start of each term.

An important component of implementation was having a mechanism to monitor pre-requisites and remove students from future terms if pre-requisite courses were either dropped or not passed. For example: Registration for the academic year opens in March and a student registers for ENG 101 in the Fall term and ENG 102 in the Spring term. In October the student withdraws from ENG 101 for the Fall term. This student is no longer qualified to take ENG 102 in the Spring term, so must be removed from the course.

**Leadership:** The Office of the University Registrar is responsible for implementation of multi-term registration. Implementation required coordination with Information Systems & Technology (IS & T) and collaboration with the academic units.

**Outcomes/Measure of Success:** Since implementation, an average of 80% of students have taken advantage of the option to register for multiple terms. Both faculty and student feedback concerning the program has been overwhelmingly positive.

**Timeline:** Multi-term registration was implemented in March of 2012.

## Strategy 2 – Course Waitlists

Course waitlists were implemented to provide a fair, systematic means for students to seek entry into courses that have reached capacity. Students can add themselves to waitlists for closed courses and are admitted, in order of their place on the waitlist, as space in the desired course becomes available. Course waitlists also provide the University with a better metric to monitor course demand. Weekly reports are generated for courses that have 10 or more waitlisted students and distributed to the academic departments. Where warranted and possible, additional sections are added to meet student demand.

**Leadership:** The Office of the University Registrar is responsible for implementation of course waitlists. Implementation required coordination with Information Systems & Technology (IS & T) and collaboration with the academic units.

**Outcomes/Measure of Success:** The total number of waitlist “joins” (students can join multiple waitlists, so this number is larger than the total number of students who participated in waitlists) has grown from 3543 in Fall 2012 to 11705 in Spring 2016. In 2016, 92% of the students on waitlists eventually were offered a place in the class for which they were waiting; of these, 49% eventually enrolled in that class.

Timeline: Course waitlists were implemented in March of 2012 for the Fall 2012 term.

### Strategy 3 –Time Grid/ Course Scheduling Policy

Cleveland State has contracted with Ad Astra Information Systems to conduct a strategic scheduling check-up to analyze instructional capacity and historical course offerings and to recommend changes that would affect students' enrollment behavior and success rates and promote the effective use of teaching resources. As a result of this report, CSU put in place several policies for the 2014-15 academic year:

- 60% policy that will spread course offerings across the standard scheduling week, decreasing the possibility of students' encountering course scheduling conflicts.
- Implementation of a new time grid and enforcement of standard time grid to prevent negative impacts on student scheduling options and classroom availability.

Leadership: The Office of the University Registrar proposed the new time grid and scheduling policy with approval from Faculty Senate. The Registrar's Office and the Vice Provost for Academic Programs, in consultation with the academic units, monitor for compliance.

Outcomes/Measure of Success: Academic departments will schedule no more than 60% of their total offerings on Monday/Wednesday/Friday and no more than 60% of total offerings on Tuesday/Thursday. Academic departments will schedule no more than 60% of their total offerings during "prime time" hours. Courses approved for "Off grid" scheduling exceptions will not exceed 8%.

Timeline: The new time grid and policies became effective Fall 2014; targets have been enforced and met.

### **f. Provide Support for Academic Success in Entry-level Courses**

Objective: to address the low success rate among freshman students by providing advice and support services.

Strategy: The University has invested in the expansion of academic tutoring on campus. Students now can receive tutoring in a range of subjects in TASC, the Math Learning Center, and the Writing Center. Many of these offices are linked to Starfish, enabling students to make on-line appointments. In addition, advisors can refer

students who struggle to “success coaches” recruited and trained by TASC. Low success rate courses have been identified and provided with SI (optional) and SLA (mandatory) components led by student leaders who have regularly scheduled meetings outside of regular class time to supplement the instruction students obtain from the professor.

**Leadership:** The Vice-Provost for Academic Programs oversees TASC and the Writing Center. The Chair of the Math Department coordinates the Math Learning Center.

**Outcome/Measure of Success:** the success of the strategy will be measured by improved success rates in traditionally low-success rate courses and pass rates in Freshman English and Math courses.

**Timeline:** TASC was established in 2008 and SI/SLA supported was initiated in 2008-09. Success Coaching has been offered since Spring 2012 and was expanded significantly in AY 14-15 in response to increased demand. Analysis of data on the first five years of SI/SLA support shows that students who attend SI/SLA sessions score one average letter grade higher than those who do not. Withdrawals were also reduced by 10-25% in sections supported by SI/SLA.

#### **g. Transfer Center/Coordinator**

**Objective:** To assist prospective transfer students seeking information about degree planning in the event that they transfer to CSU (evaluation of transcripts, exploration of degree options based on previous coursework and prior learning) and initial advising for new transfer students who either have not yet declared a major or are unsure about where to seek advice about the program they have selected.

**Strategy:** A Transfer Center will be created in the Division of Academic Programs to work with prospective and new transfer students at CSU. Prospective transfer students often have difficulty getting reliable, timely evaluations of their previous coursework, so they have difficulty deciding whether to transfer, at what point to do so, and what major to select upon transferring. The Transfer Center would be staffed by personnel able to evaluate transfer credits, assess their prior learning, and advise students about degree options. This would complement the existing efforts in Enrollment Services to recruit students interested in transferring to CSU.

In addition, students who transfer to CSU often wind up self-advising, either because they are unsure about their major program or have difficulty identifying the appropriate college office from which to seek advice. The Transfer Center would provide a central, highly visible “first stop” for students, who could get advice about which majors to pursue, assistance with understanding general education requirements that apply to them, and help in identifying the appropriate college or faculty advisor, once they have selected a major program. The Transfer Center

could also provide “intrusive advising” for first-semester transfers (following up on flags raised in the Starfish early warning system) to ensure that students adjust effectively to CSU and their major program. Finally, once a graduation completion plan procedure is in place, the Transfer Center would provide incoming students with a graduation completion plan form that they would be required to complete in consultation with a college or major program advisor, once they have declared a major.

**Leadership:** The Vice-Provost for Academic Programs will direct the creation of the Transfer Intake Center, in consultation/collaboration with Enrollment Services/Admissions.

**Outcome:** The success of the program will be measured by surveying transfer students about their experience in making the transition to CSU, monitoring the numbers of transfer students who maintain regular contact with an academic advisor, and monitoring trends in course completion and graduation numbers among transfers.

**Timeline:** The Transfer Center was established in January, 2015; a full-time Coordinator was hired in June 2015.

#### **h. Educate Students About Financial Literacy**

**Objective:** To provide students with the financial education and tools for them to make informed financial decisions. To help students develop basic life skills that will guide them in budgeting and managing funds, including student loans and loan repayment.

**Strategy:** In an effort to provide a more coordinated set of financial literacy programs, the Division of Enrollment Services now provides a number of outreach events in conjunction with Student Life and targets the ASC 101 classes each semester. These include efforts to educate students about the importance of making satisfactory academic progress. Students who withdraw from courses or fail to complete a semester add to their debt burden and are at risk of not graduating, reducing their chances of repaying their debt. Students also are required to create a PIN, which gives them access to an online financial literacy program (Great Lakes Higher Education Access Ready Program) where students and families can self-educate.

**Leadership:** The Director of Financial Aid with the assistance of All-in-1 and collaboration with other student services offices and academic departments has led the implementation of campus-wide financial aid literacy training.

**Outcome/Measure of Success:** The success of the financial literacy efforts will have to be measured by surveys provided by participants in increments. Students’ level of knowledge of personal financial concepts (budgeting, credit-card use, student

loan borrowing), students' change in attitude related to these issues, and changes in their behaviors in personal finance matters all need to be measured.

Timeline: Beginning in 2014, all students were required to create a PIN giving them access to the on-line financial literacy program; approximately 50% of ASC 101 sections receive a presentation on financial literacy from representatives of the Financial Aid office. Beginning in Fall 2016, *all* sections of ASC 101 will include a financial literacy session. In addition, the session is being modified to make it more interactive; rather than listening to a presentation, students will engage in a hands-on activity designed to strengthen their financial literacy skills.

### **i. Pathways for Adult Students**

Objective: to ensure that adult students have easy access to efficient pathways to graduation.

Strategy: CSU has in place a number of mechanisms by which adult students obtain credit for prior experience. For Veterans, CSU honors ACE recommendations for awarding credit to veterans and CSU staff are trained in reading joint services transcripts for the purposes of determining whether credits can be awarded. Veterans (and others) can also earn credit through the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and DSST exams. In addition, Veterans (and others) can receive credit for prior experience by enrolling in a portfolio assessment program in the College of Urban Affairs. A goal for the future is to expand portfolio assessment to programs outside Urban Affairs.

Since most adult students are admitted to CSU as transfer students, programs that support transfer student success are particularly relevant to this population. CSU participates fully in the TAG and Ohio Transfer Module programs that benefit all transfer students in Ohio. Beyond that, however, CSU has been actively collaborating with community colleges in the region to develop efficient pathways for transfer students. CSU offers several BA and BS programs on site at Lakeland and Lorain County Community Colleges, eliminating the need for students to commute to the main downtown campus. In addition, CSU is engaged in a two-year project to align its degree maps with those used in Associate's degree programs. The goal is to develop joint degree maps showing students how they can complete an Associate's and Bachelor's degree in eight full-time semesters (thereby reducing excess credit hours taken by transfer students). Ten aligned degree maps have been developed for CCC/CSU programs and more than a dozen others are in preparation. Work has also begun on several degree map alignments with Lorain County Community College. This is an ongoing project that will be augmented in the next biennium (see Enhanced Completion Strategies section below for future plans).

Leadership: The effort to align degree maps is being led by the Vice Provost for Academic Programs in collaboration with the office of the Registrar. Expanded prior learning assessment (e.g., expanded portfolio assessment) is being discussed as part

of the University's Pathway to 2020 project: leadership is currently under discussion.

Outcome/Measure of Success: Reducing the number of "excess" credit hours taken by adult students and transfers will be the most important measure of the success of this strategy.

Timeline: As indicated, the mechanisms for awarding credit to Veterans, portfolio assessment in Urban Affairs, and awarding credit through CLEP are in place. Some aligned degree maps are in place; a full range of aligned maps with CCC will be completed by the end of AY 16-17. Aligned maps for Lorain Community College will be completed by the end of AY 17-18, with Lakeland to follow in AY 18-19.

## **Enhanced Completion Strategies**

In the 2016-18 period covered by this document, Cleveland State University plans to implement several *new* strategies designed to enhance student success and speed progress towards degree completion:

### **a. Identify Pedagogical Methods that Promise to Improve Student Success in High Enrollment, "Gatekeeper" courses.**

Objective: To incentivize faculty teaching high enrollment classes with poor success rates to explore alternative pedagogies that will enhance student success.

Strategy: The Gardner Institute and others have emphasized the disproportionate role played in student success by a small number of classes in the curriculum. At most universities, there is a group of courses (perhaps as few as 30) that are taken by very large numbers of students, some of whom struggle to complete them successfully. Improving student performance in these courses can have a very significant impact on overall student retention and graduation rates across the university.

With this in mind, the University is repurposing its Teaching Enhancement Awards to target this subset of courses. Beginning in Spring 2016, small teaching enhancement grants will be offered to groups of faculty teaching high enrollment/low success rate courses. Successful proposals will identify innovative teaching practices that promise to improve success rates in those courses. Grantees will receive a small portion of the grant at the outset, with the balance to be distributed once the teaching innovation has been piloted at least twice. The first round of awards was made in Spring 2016 (two faculty teams received awards), with a second round planned for AY 16-17.



**Leadership:** The Center for Teaching Excellence and the office of Academic Programs to which it reports will oversee the program, with a faculty committee evaluating proposals. Funding comes from the budget of the Center.

**Outcome/Measures of Success:** Successful proposals must include a plan for assessing the efficacy of the innovation being piloted. So, measures of success will be specific to each program and developed by the faculty team itself.

**Timeline:** The first round of awards was made in Spring 2016; the two teams will develop and implement their plan during the 2016-18 period covered by this College Completion Plan. New awards will be made in each of the next two academic years.

## **b. Completion Grants**

**Objective:** to provide financial support to students who are near completion but lack the resources to afford their final two semesters of academic work.

**Strategy:** CSU received a grant from APLU to launch a completion grant program, entitled “The Last Mile.” The grant will support the hiring of a graduate student worker to help coordinate the program in its initial two years. Under the program, students who are within two full-time semesters of graduation and who can demonstrate financial need may apply for support up to \$1200 per semester to help them pay remaining tuition costs. Students who receive awards will also receive additional advising support and will be closely monitored to ensure that they stay on track for graduation.

**Leadership:** The Last Mile is administered through the office of the Vice-President for Enrollment Services, in collaboration with the Division of Academic Programs.

**Outcome/Measures of Success:** this program will be assessed by monitoring the numbers of students awarded who successfully complete their degree programs within one or two semesters.

**Timeline:** The Last Mile will be in place for Fall 16 – students who apply by July 1 will be eligible to receive awards for the Fall 16 semester.

## **c. Reimagining the First Year**

**Objective:** to increase Fall-to-Fall retention by creating a more engaging experience for entering freshman students and by overcoming known obstacles to retention during the first year.

**Strategy:** Cleveland State University is one of 44 universities selected by AASCU to participate in its “reimagining the first year” initiative. This is a three-year project

designed to help participating universities to redesign their first year programming, to implement best practices, and to learn from one another about effective ways of improving the first-year experience. The project was initiated in June 2015 when 16 universities (of which CSU was one) participated in a planning meeting to help AASCU design the project; participating universities are expected to complete their redesign between 2016 and 2018.

CSU has assembled a team, led by the Vice-Provost for Academic Programs, and including the Vice President for University Engagement, Vice-President for Student Affairs, Director of Student Success Programs, Chair of the Math Department, Director of the First-year Writing Program, and Coordinator of the First-Year Experience. The group is developing CSU's project plan, which is due by June 2016. Elements on which the group has already agreed include:

**i. Learning Communities:** grouping entering freshman students by “meta-major” (broad disciplinary groupings, rather than specific majors) and designing their schedules so they take all or most of their classes together with other students in the same grouping. The objective is to promote community and to discourage students from prematurely focusing too narrowly on a specific major (since many students change majors at least once, resulting in their taking courses that they wind up not needing).

**ii. Revised ASC 101:** Linked to the Learning Communities initiative, the required Introduction to University Life course is being revised. The common reading has been put on hiatus to create room in the course for alternative materials. Some modules have been put on-line so that the class does not require 15 face-to-face meetings (students complained that the course interfered with their preparation for final exams). Introductory materials on career-exploration will also be included in the course and students will be engaged in exploring their “meta-major” in the context of Cleveland and its surrounding region. Instructors will be encouraged to adapt the course to the meta-major of the participating students so that it will serve as a keystone course in the learning community of which it forms a part.

**iii. Corequisite English:** The corequisite course ENG 100 has been very successful in enabling students who place into developmental English to complete developmental and college-level work simultaneously, enabling them to complete their Freshman Writing requirement more promptly. However, not all students place into ENG 100. The First-Year Writing program is developing a plan to enable students who place into ENG 99 to simultaneously complete ENG 100, so that they, too, could earn college-credit during their first semester at CSU.

**iv. Corequisite Math:** To date, CSU has not experimented with corequisite coursework for students placing into developmental Math. Instead, students complete developmental math in the Math emporium, following a self-paced curriculum. Significant numbers of students complete the developmental coursework rapidly, in the first few weeks of the semester. Currently, they have to

wait until semester 2 to begin college-level work. The Math department is piloting an experimental model in which students who complete developmental work quickly can proceed immediately to a compressed version of the first college-level math course, that can be completed during the remainder of the first semester. This will allow them to earn college credit for Math during their first semester and progress more rapidly towards completion of their degree.

The project team is considering a variety of other elements for the project plan, including initiatives, to be proposed by Student Life, to enhance the first-year experience outside of the classroom. These (and other elements) will be added to the plan before the final plan is submitted to AASCU at the beginning of June.

**Leadership:** The first-year initiative is being led by the Vice Provost for Academic Programs, in consultation with the project team described above.

**Outcome/Measures of Success:** The various elements of the plan will have their own success measures (e.g., accelerated completion of college-level work in English and Math for the corequisite courses); more broadly, the key measure of success will be the Fall-to-Fall retention rate for first-time, full-time freshman students.

**Timeline:** The Project Plan is in development and is due by June 1, 2016. The AASCU project time line calls for implementation of the project plan during the 2016-18 period.

#### **d. Implement Degree Maps with Milestones**

**Objective:** to increase the number of students who complete their program in 4-6 years *and* to decrease the numbers of students who are “stuck” in majors they are unlikely to complete.

**Strategy:** The Student Success Committee and the Provost’s office have endorsed the idea of using degree maps and milestones as a central tool in advising students. Currently, degree maps exist, but are not widely used in most programs and are not disseminated widely to students, advisors and faculty.

The plan is to post degree maps in a prominent place and to encourage students, faculty and staff to utilize them consistently in planning academic schedules. In addition, programs will be asked to identify milestone courses in each semester/year of the program. Students who have completed these courses in the specified period of time will be said to be “on track.” Students who have not will be required, after a specified interval, to seek advisement and, if they fall far enough behind, will be prevented from continuing further in that major (and advised to pursue an alternative major).

Leadership: The Vice Provost for Academic Programs, aided by the Student Success Implementation Committee, will take the lead in implementing the degree map program

Others: The Senate Admissions and Standards Committee expressed its general support for the development of such a program in Spring 2014. Department faculty will need to verify the accuracy of existing degree maps and identify the milestone courses for each program. Starfish (or another software package) will need to be programmed to incorporate the degree maps and to signal when students fall “off track” (requiring assistance from Registrar, IS&T, the Starfish staff). Advising offices will need to be trained in the use of the protocols associated with the milestones and in how to intervene when students fall off track. A plan specifying appropriate interventions will need to be developed in consultation with the Student Success Committee (and approved by Senate).

Outcome/Measure of Success: the success of the strategy will be measured by monitoring the four- and six-year graduation rate in all programs that identify milestones (increased rates will signify success). In addition, a decrease in the numbers of students in majors but ‘off track’ will indicate that the program is succeeding in moving students out of majors in which they are not likely to succeed.

Timeline: Degree maps now exist for all undergraduate major programs. Evaluation of software options is ongoing; funding for the software is among the requests made by the Strategic Enrollment Group in the Pathway to 2020 Project. Implementation will begin once funding is authorized and software has been selected.

**e. Implement Graduation Plan Requirement for all students**

Objective: to reduce average time to degree completion.

Strategy: Each student should have a plan for graduation at every point throughout their academic career at the university. As entering first year students, the plan will be less specific. Students will enter into a first year program that is consistent with a group of related majors. Once they are more sure of what field they wish to major in, they will complete a more specific plan. The university has developed degree maps for each academic program that show a generic route to degree completion in four years. The graduation plan requirement would have each student develop his or her own plan for graduation. The graduation plan might be identical to the standard degree map for his or her academic program or it may vary based on different choices for general education requirements, a different placement level or differing test or course credits transferred in.

For the student, the purpose of the graduation plan requirement is to make it easy for them to judge where they are within their academic program and to see the consequences of dropping or withdrawing from a course, taking an overload or

taking courses out of sequence. For academic departments and the university, the graduation plan will facilitate scheduling, allowing departments and the Registrar to see how many seats are required in various courses.

**Leadership:** The Vice Provost for Academic Programs, aided by the Student Success Implementation Committee, will take the lead in implementing the graduation plan program.

**Others:** The plan has already been endorsed by Faculty Senate. Software support for implementing such a system is under consideration. Advising offices will need to be trained in the use of the protocols associated with the graduation plan requirement.

**Outcome/Measure of Success:** the success of the strategy will be measured counting the number of students with valid graduation plans on file. Ultimate success will be reflected in improved graduation rates.

**Timeline:** Implementation will begin once degree mapping software requested in the Pathway to 2020 project has been funded and selected.

## **f. Transfer Pathways**

**Objective:** to develop collaborative advising and use data to facilitate seamless transfer from area community colleges to Cleveland State.

**Strategy:** Following a model pioneered by universities such as Arizona State and the University of Central Florida, CSU is working to build collaborative advising relationships with CCC and other local community colleges and to use data to inform the articulated degree maps being developed to guide students transferring across institutions.

- i. Collaborative Advising: Advising at 2 year and 4 year schools typically takes place in isolation, with the result that transfer students often receive different advice from the sender and receiver institutions. The solution is to develop collaborative advising, in which advisors at 2-year and 4-year institutions are in regular communication, both about general policy and specific students. In addition, the plan includes enabling the 4-year school to communicate with potential transfer students well before transfer, making BA-level advising available off-site at the community college, and providing advisors with resources that clearly explain policies, transfer equivalencies, etc.
- ii. Using Data: Historical data on students who transfer provide valuable insights into predictors of successful transfer. These data can be used to identify courses (and grades in those courses) that are important milestones marking successful (or unsuccessful transfer) – predictive

information of this type can be used to advise students and to determine which students need support services when they transfer to CSU. Additionally, data can be used to identify student enrollment patterns and achievements that predict likely transfer; this information can help advisors at both 2- and 4-year institutions to identify potential transfer students early so that they can be advised as to the most efficient path to transfer.

**Leadership:** The effort to build collaborative advising and data-informed transfer advising is being led by the office of the Vice-Provost for Academic Programs, in collaboration with the Vice-President for Enrollment Management at CCC.

**Outcomes/Measures of Success:** The primary measure of the success of this initiative will be a reduction in the number of excess credit hours taken by students transferring from CCC to CSU.

**Timeline:** Discussion of collaborative advising has been under way since Summer 2015, supported by a small grant from Complete College America in collaboration with CCC and the Higher Education Compact. An advising summit, to be attended by approximately 50 advisors, is scheduled for late Spring 2016. The goal is to agree on and implement collaborative advising practices by Fall 2018. The data analysis required to create data-informed degree maps likely will require external funding. Discussions among CSU, CCC and Civitas Learning have been initiated and a proposal to be submitted to funding agencies is in development. The goal is to finalize the proposal by the end of Summer 2016 and to seek national funding for the project (with the actual data analysis to be undertaken in AY 17-18).

#### **g. KeyBank Scholars**

**Objective:** to improve retention and graduate rates for graduates of the Cleveland Municipal School District who attend CSU

**Strategy:** A grant from the KeyBank Foundation has enabled the development of a targeted program to support CMSD graduates attending CSU – the program is called KeyBank Scholars. One element of the program provides cohort programming and intrusive advising modeled on the TRIO program for CMSD graduates attending CSU. All CMSD graduates entering CSU as freshmen will be assigned to an advisor whose sole focus will be on CMSD graduates. Freshman admits who continue at CSU will eventually acquire a college advisor, but will continue to have a relationship with the CMSD-focused advisor throughout their college career. Transfer students who graduated from CMSD will also have a link to the CMSD advisor, in addition to their normal college advisor. The CMSD advisor(s) will serve as a continuous point of contact for CMSD graduates, will monitor students' progress, and will refer students to support services as needed. In addition, admitted freshmen will have routine access to success coaching, assistance in finding on-campus employment, and will receive a book scholarship if they participate consistently in program activities.

The CMSD advisor(s) will organize a range of activities for CMSD graduates, including events to introduce them to campus services, social events, opportunities for community involvement, and joint events with the TRIO and other programs on campus

In addition, CMSD graduates admitted as freshmen will be eligible to participate in the University's summer program, STEP. This provides incoming freshmen with the opportunity either to complete developmental coursework, or, if they are eligible, to complete up to 7 credit hours of college-level work, thereby accelerating their progress towards a degree. Substantial scholarship support is available for participants, making this a very low cost way to get an early start on a college degree.

**Leadership:** The KeyBank Scholars Program is housed in the office of the Vice-Provost for Academic Programs. Two full-time advisors/staff members are assigned to the program (one of whom is paid for fully by the gift from KeyBank.)

**Outcomes/Measures of Success:** The goal of the program is to raise retention and graduation rates for CMSD grads *at least* to the level achieved by the overall undergraduate population at CSU.

**Timeline:** The program will begin with the cohort admitted for Fall 2016(with the STEP program to begin in Summer 2016).

#### **h. Wrap-Around Services**

**Objective:** To identify and address non-academic obstacles to persistence and completion.

**Strategy:** Design interventions to address non-academic obstacles to persistence and completion by completing the "Beyond Financial Aid" self-assessment, inventorying existing programming available on campus and in the region, identifying gaps, and developing programs to fill gaps. Areas of need include, but are not limited to:

- Food self-sufficiency
- Counselling services
- Legal and tax preparation assistance
- Affordable campus housing
- Access to Health care/Health Insurance
- Access to child care services

**Leadership:** The University has established a cross-functional "Retention Roundtable," consisting of senior administrators in various divisions, who will take the lead in identifying unmet needs that could be addressed. Student Life, through its "Lift-Up Vikes" program will play a leadership role in implementation.

Timeline: Lift-Up Vikes was implemented in Spring 2016 and is offering food bank services and other supports – e.g., assistance with accessing government benefits for which students may be eligible. The Retention Roundtable has completed the “Beyond Financial Aid” self-assessment and is working to identify areas of need that are not being addressed. The goal is to complete an inventory of what is currently available and what is not by the end of Summer 2016. During AY 2016-17, the group will identify those areas of need that can be met through improved access to existing services or scaling up existing services and will identify the appropriate groups on campus to intervene. Those needs that will require *new* interventions will be the subject of meetings with relevant groups (Student Government, Campus Housing, etc.) during AY 2016-17 to determine if there are implementation opportunities for AY 2017-18.

### **i. Use data to develop Targeted Interventions**

Objective: to move beyond across-the-board interventions by identifying specific subgroups of undergraduate students at risk and developing interventions tailored to their specific needs.

Strategy: Utilize data on the undergraduate student population generated by Institutional Research and Civitas Illume to isolate the characteristics of students who are particularly at risk of not persisting to graduation. Preliminary analyses of the data confirm that not all types of students are equally at risk. For example, students who transfer with low credit hour totals, part-time students, students who enroll late, and students whose cumulative GPA at CSU is below 2.5 are significantly more likely to leave the university than the overall student population. The goal of this strategy is to identify clearly these and other “subgroups” at high risk, to develop an understanding of *why* they are at risk, and to design interventions that will reduce the numbers of students in these categories who leave the university.

Leadership: Data Analysis and the development of Targeted Interventions will be led by the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Programs, in collaboration with Institutional Research.

Outcomes/Measures of Success: Measures of success will be improved retention in the categories of students targeted. Baseline data will be gathered before interventions are begun, and the effect of interventions will be measured in subsequent years.

Timeline: A working group is currently using Illume to analyze student data; Institutional Research is collaborating with this effort and will provide follow-up, in-depth analyses as patterns are identified by the group. The goal is to identify two or three target populations during summer 2016 and to design interventions that would be implemented during AY 2016-17.



## 6. Workforce Development Priorities

CSU's efforts to promote college completion are linked in various ways to the University's efforts to serve the economic needs of the Northeast Ohio region. Several elements of those efforts are worthy of particular note:

a. Program Prioritization: the Provost's office has completed a program prioritization effort, in which the Colleges were asked to identify programs that are worthy of support and expansion and others from which resources could safely be transferred. Part of this process involved asking programs to identify areas of unmet labor market demand and to comment on how programmatic change or expansion would serve that demand. The Provost's office is using this information to direct resources to areas in which the region has unmet labor market demands so that graduating students will be more successful in finding appropriate professional employment and so that area employers' needs will be served by the University.

b. Engaged Learning: CSU successfully earned Carnegie classification for Community Engagement in 2015. An important part of the effort to achieve that designation has been outreach to area employers and a strong commitment to expanding the numbers of students who engage in co-op and internship experiences in the region. In response to campus-wide discussion, involving student government, faculty, the University administration, and the Board of Trustees, CSU is in the process of taking a variety of steps to expand the number of students who experience internships and co-ops and to improve the quality of the experiences they have. A working group was convened by the Provost in Fall 2015 to make recommendations to the University Senate. The first of their recommendations, to create a "not-for-credit" internship option available, was approved by Senate in Spring 2016. This makes it possible for a student to have an internship experience linked to their major program appear on their transcript, without the barrier of additional tuition cost. Other recommendations, including that CSU endorse NACE guidelines on internships and adopt stronger guidelines for internship quality, are under review by a Senate committee. Also under review is a recommendation that each academic program identify an internship coordinator so that students interested in internship experiences can more easily get help in organizing one.

c. "Careers Across the Curriculum:" Supported by a grant from the Cleveland Foundation, and led by the Division of University Engagement and a committee of faculty, CSU is engaged in an effort to make career exploration an ongoing part of students' experience through the curriculum. During AY 2015-16, the project has focused on incorporating career exploration into the freshman year and on providing students with an experience at the end of their major program that focuses on career outcomes. Career exploration is being built into the Introduction to University Life course that every entering freshman must complete. The syllabus

for that course has been redesigned to include a focus on exploring the Cleveland region (which will offer opportunities to learn about employment trends relevant to students' area of academic interest) and to introduce students to resources on campus to help them begin learning about career opportunities and planning their future direction. In addition, CSU is implementing a Careers Across the Curriculum (CAC) orientation modeled after the University's Writing Across the Curriculum project to incorporate career exploration into upper-level courses within the majors. The program will allow faculty to convert any course into a CAC "cumulative course," which means they would incorporate three of five workforce skills into the curriculum: 1) Professional Exploration; 2) Skills & Value Articulation; 3) Professional Culture; 4) Project Work/Portfolio Development; or 5) Personalized Career Planning. Faculty could also qualify their course as a "skills-builder course" by choosing to focus on any one of the five skills. A web-based repository for resources and information sharing, as well as faculty mentors will provide support to faculty who choose to teach these courses.