



**Response to FY 2012 Operating Budget Analysis**  
**Dr. Reginald S. Avery, President**  
**Coppin State University**  
**February 2011**

1. *Page 7: The President should comment on why the institution is looking for new software given its experience with I-strategy. The President should also comment on the timeline for selecting early warning system software, when such a system is expected to be in place, and how the tool will be used.*

iStrategy is Business Intelligence Software that builds dashboards and reports key performance indicators as defined by best practices and campus defined indicators. iStrategy pulls the data from our Enterprise Resource System of Record. It is different from an early warning system and is not the proper tool for an early warning software system. There are many software programs designed specifically from an advising perspective that will track students on an individual level. These programs are geared toward not only alerting advisors to student performance and attendance in class, but also serve as a portal through which students interact with their advisors (including, but not limited to managing advising caseloads, alerts, advising appointments, tutor / study hall sessions, and attendance tracking).

2. *Page 7: The President should comment on CSU's efforts to improve retention of students between the first and second academic year.*

The University has made as its chief priority improving student persistence to graduation. In summer 2010, CSU launched a new pilot program titled the Summer Academic Success Academy (SASA). SASA is an intensive, six-week comprehensive intervention services program that prepares incoming students for the rigor of post-secondary education. SASA is a campus-based, residential program that eases the transitioning of students from high school to college by helping them develop confidence in their ability to learn. Students enrolled in this program are taught college-level survival skills, both academic and social. SASA students are exposed to concepts in financial literacy, career planning, personal growth, and to campus resources and support services. At the conclusion of this program, there were 171 completers who matriculated as first-time, full-time freshmen. Specific program elements also included supplemental instruction, specialized workshops, learning communities, tutorial services (daily and on weekends), cultural and educational events, mandatory housing and program attendance, and mandatory assigned peer

leaders. Because of SASA's success, beginning in summer 2011, the University will expand the program to encompass all new-direct-from-high school students. We anticipate that 250 students will participate in SASA during summer 2011. The 2010 SASA program provided useful baseline information that will be helpful when we expand the program to other student populations.

Given the comprehensive nature of services rendered through SASA and positive SASA outcomes, I am convinced that over the next few years we will see a steady increase in persistence and graduation rates for our students. My vision is that the SASA program will lead directly into a fully functional first-year experience model that we will call, University College. The University College structure will serve as the academic home for freshmen and sophomores, a place where these students will receive supplementary instruction as well as guidance through the completion of the first 30 credits of General Education. The University College will also provide strategic support services to assist students in their matriculation to upper division courses and acceptance into program majors. This model is based on the research and best practices relative to first-year students. Together, these nationally vetted practices are the University's best hope for significant improvement in persistence through graduation.

This fall, we began two new Centers that I believe will also assist the University in improving persistence through graduation. We opened a Center for Adult Learning (CAL) and a Student Success Center. The Center for Adult Learning (CAL) addresses the needs of our non-traditional undergraduate population while the Center for Student Success houses our new student success coaching program and will enhance our advisement outreach.

While the above mentioned will have a positive impact on the six-year graduation rate some years out, we feel that it is very important to begin to address the current graduation rate through a series of faculty outreach and more intrusive advising. Many of our students struggle with resolving academic and financial planning issues or they 'stop-out' without fully being aware of the consequences of that action (e.g., not settling their debt which ends up in collections and prevents them registering and creates a vicious cycle). To better meet the needs of these students, we continue to implement a faculty driven outreach effort known as the 'Cohort Attack'. Through this University wide initiative, faculty reach out to students in their caseload to provide assistance or direction on all matters related to their continued success at the University.

3. *Page 11: The President should comment on the increase in spending per degree and the return on investment the State and students have received for the State's \$143,175 investment per degree.*

Over the past ten years, the State has increased its financial support for Coppin State University as a planned, and considered, implementation of the 2001 Coppin Study Report's findings and recommendations. The capital buildings that were planned in the 2001 study are now coming on-line: the Health and Human Services Building (2008), the Physical Education Complex (2009) and the Science and Technology Center (2015). The University's budget has increased commensurately to support the operation of the additional facilities and other focus areas of the Study (e.g., Information Technology) while the student body had remained constant in size. Our focus is on increasing our retention and graduation rates rather than on the size of the student body. As our new initiatives and programs take hold, we will grow the student body through retention and our ratios should return to our peer norms.

4. *Page 14: The President should comment on how CSU will adequately support its physical plant including the Physical Education Complex and the maintenance of properties acquired for the new Science and Technology Center, given the 2.5% decline in funding for operation and maintenance of plant. The President should also comment on how the institution plans to rebuild both the auxiliary and State-supported fund balances.*

As the DLS analysis correctly notes, operation and maintenance funding has increased approximately \$10 million over the past ten years to provide support both for new buildings and for older buildings whose maintenance had suffered from several decades of underfunding. The variation in FY 2012 funding in this area of our budget is mainly attributable to warranties with new buildings and cost containment strategies in the O&M budget to free up funds to support academic initiatives.

USM has a policy that requires institutions to provide at least 1% of its operating budget as an addition to its State supported fund balance each year. Making this contribution the past two years has been insufficient to offset the drawdown of our existing fund balance to assist in balancing the State's budget. We have budgeted this year to make at least the required minimum transfer to fund balance. Our Auxiliary fund balance is growing.

5. *Page 17: The President should comment on why anticipated reductions to athletic aid, given the shift in athletic scholarships to merit and mission-based aid, are not reflected in the fiscal 2011 or 2012 athletic aid estimates.*

The USM Board of Regents has approved Coppin State University's plan to eliminate its annual Athletics' Department operating deficit by fiscal year 2013. While the plan explains how this will be accomplished, the target each year is the bottom line and not

the detail. One of the elements of the plan is student financial aid. Athletes are recruited throughout the year and current athletes depart, not always as planned or anticipated. We budget conservatively and look for the results in the management of the actual numbers. We are confident that we will meet our deficit reduction target this year and we are hopeful that we will have a balanced budget a year earlier than planned.

6. *Page 17: The President should comment on why fiscal 2012 institutional aid is level-funded, despite the proposed 3.0% increase in undergraduate resident tuition and a 15.0% increase in the unrestricted fund scholarships and fellowships budget.*

The fiscal budget projection for level scholarship funding is simply a conservative approach to budgeting during a recession. While increasing scholarship funding is a priority at Coppin State University, we chose in our budget projections not to increase this funding at this time. The correlation with a tuition increase is not as direct at Coppin as it may be on some of the other campuses. The vast majority of Coppin undergraduate students are Pell Grant eligible. A 3% tuition increase would be covered by their grants.

7. *Page 21: The President should comment on how the institution will fund an expanded SASA program in 2011 and on whether CSU will provide additional institutional aid to replace federal aid used during the SASA program*

CSU is planning to use Summer Pell to supplement the budget for the program. This may not be possible given President Obama's proposed budget reductions to the Summer Pell. We continue to seek grant opportunities and external funding sources for the program.

8. *Page 21: The President should also comment on why CSU was unable to provide progression and retention data to MHEC on students participating in the institution's fall 2008 and 2009 summer bridge program, as required by committee narrative in the 2010 Joint Chairmen's Report (JCR).*

In prior years, 'Access and Success' funding for program initiatives was typically distributed among various campus departments (e.g., advising, counseling, and tutorial services), and therefore indirectly supported a wide range of students. Also, in 2008 and 2009, summer bridge programs were federally funded programs and were not a part of the 'Access and Success' programs for the University. After conducting a thorough analysis over the last several years on the 'Access and Success' programs at CSU that included an examination of all programs' impact and effectiveness, the University strategically realigned the appropriate 'Access and Success' dollars to more effective programs, removed funding from others and created new initiatives according to our strategic plan and future direction. As a result, a more focused effort has been placed on increasing first-time, full-time retention rates for entering freshmen and transfer students over time. Given the recent realignment, the development of a new initiative called Summer Academic Success Academy (SASA)

program was created to encompass more effective retention efforts and support the University's new strategic direction. As previously stated in the budget analysis, the new Summer Academic Success Academy (SASA) which was launched in summer 2010 for the fall 2010 cohort and second year retention data for this cohort will be available fall 2011.

9. *Page 22: The President should comment on the impact of supporting part of the athletic budget with State-supported funds on CSU's ability to adequately fund mission critical activities such as instruction and student services.*

Intercollegiate Athletics are an important part of the college experience. There is broad agreement in higher education, that each of us intuitively knows from personal experience, that extracurricular activities in college provide an essential element of the college experience. Coppin provides State supported funding for scholarships for its student athletes just as it does for other individuals with unique talents. Our student athletes, as a group, regularly have a GPA greater than 3.0, with commensurately high retention and graduation rates. With the arrival of the Physical Education Complex, with its wonderful sports venues, we have expanded our intramural and club sports programs. These programs need coaches. While not increasing athletic coaches' salaries, but simply utilizing these resources more efficiently and effectively, those coaches that have the academic credentials for the department where these programs are managed, the Department of Health and Human Performance in the School of Education, are expected to coach intramural and club sports teams and an appropriate share of their salary is charged to the HHP Department.

10. *Page 24: The President should comment on the implementation status of OLA audit recommendations concerning student accounts receivable and residency findings. The President should also comment on any plans to increase institutional financial aid or other initiatives to help students afford tuition payments, such as an installment plan.*

The University's response to the OLA recommendations have been fully implemented. These intended actions have been shared with USM, the OLA, and DLS. We believe they are responsive. The USM Audit Office has an audit in process, consistent with USM's policy to follow up OLA audits, the purpose of which is to review the implementation status of the OLA audit recommendations. This audit is just getting underway.

## **Recommended Actions**

***DLS recommendation reducing the System Office by \$8.1M with the institutions to provide the funds to support its operations:***

Coppin State University opposes the recommended reduction to the University System of Maryland Office (USMO). This recommendation is a direct budget reduction of \$8.1M to the institutions and would be a significant additional reduction to CSU and other USM institutions as well as place a severe burden on us at a time when we all struggle to provide access, improve retention and graduation, and provide critical support for our students. The DLS recommendation to reduce the allowance for USMO by \$8.1M will mean further erosion in access and quality and hinder our ability to support the University's new strategic direction.