TESTIMONY TO THE
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Subcommittee on Health, Education and Human Resources
Reginald S. Avery, President
Coppin State University
February 27, 2009
Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee. On behalf of Coppin State University’s faculty, staff, students, and alumni, thank you for the opportunity to address you this afternoon.

Last month, I celebrated my first anniversary as President of Coppin State University, and as I reflect on the past year, I am extremely grateful for the support that I have received from you and other members of the Maryland General Assembly. Also, thank you, other Members of the General Assembly, and Governor Martin O’Malley for your continued investment in and support of higher education. Your support and investment allow institutions of higher education in Maryland to continue their important efforts to educate students for jobs and careers in Maryland, other parts of the country, and the world.

This afternoon, I will comment on the operating budget and provide examples of accomplishments that Coppin State University has achieved over the last year in the areas of student access and affordability, student persistence through graduation, initiatives that enhance the academic core of the University, and initiatives that address pressing community, state, national and global issues.

The specific written responses regarding the Department of Legislative Services analysis of the Governor’s FY 2010 budget are contained in Appendix A.
Coppin State University continues to provide access to a wide range of high quality educational programs at the baccalaureate and master levels as a means of economic, educational, intellectual, professional, and social mobility for its primary constituencies – students whose promise may have been hindered by limited social, personal, or financial opportunities. The CSU community thanks Governor O’Malley for including funds in his proposal so that we are able to freeze tuition for in-state, full-time undergraduate students for the fourth consecutive year. I am pleased that the Governor continues to demonstrate a high regard for and commitment to higher education. This proposal also acknowledges the significant role higher education plays in moving the State of Maryland forward. I extend my appreciation to the faculty, staff and administrators of Coppin State University for continuing to advance academic quality and standards, as well as demonstrated commitment to helping our students succeed.

I realize that the State faces the daunting task of addressing this ongoing fiscal crisis. Coppin State University and other USM institutions are working hard, individually and collectively, to address this fiscal crisis. To address the general fund reductions for FY 2009, we instituted a hiring freeze and implemented an employee furlough program that takes into account various salary levels (the more you make, the more furlough days you take). This furlough program was developed with agreement from the University’s staff union.

Although the Governor’s proposed FY 2010 operating budget does not allow for significant enrollment growth, program enhancements, and salary increases for employees, it provides allowances that enable us to remain focused on our priority of providing students affordable access to excellent higher educational opportunities. Undergraduate students attending CSU will benefit significantly from this tuition freeze. Approximately 70 percent of the freshmen attending CSU are first-generation college students while two-thirds are from households where one parent has no college or university experience. CSU has the highest proportion of students in the State who are Pell Grant eligible. Students who have the greatest need for financial assistance struggle with paying tuition while managing loan debt. Any reductions to the Governor’s proposal would jeopardize families’ access to affordable higher education.

The Governor’s FY 2010 budget covers the mandatory increase in costs we face next year, including funds to operate our new physical education complex, increases in employee benefits, and other inflationary costs. The provision of funds to cover the cost to operate the physical education complex will strengthen the University’s ability to provide a comparable state-of-the-art facility for the University, and undoubtedly play an important role in helping the University to attract and retain new students and help us become more competitive. On behalf of the Coppin State University community, I wish to thank Governor O’Malley and the Maryland General Assembly for establishing the Higher Education Investment Fund, and I urge you to support legislation that will make these funds permanent.

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ENSURING STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH GRADUATION

The University will continue to focus on statewide priorities, including the University System of Maryland’s major initiatives: closing the student achievement gap, advancing the State’s STEM and research competitiveness. Improving the University’s graduation rate continues to be my highest priority and I strongly believe that if we admit students, we must do everything we can to ensure their academic success. Providing appropriate attention to persistence through graduation is paramount. Over the last year, I have spent considerable time and effort analyzing existing data and having extensive conversations and dialogue with senior administrators, faculty, students, and staff. In addition, I restructured and reorganized enrollment management which included hiring a highly effective Vice President for Enrollment Management to lead this division. Over the next six months, this reorganized division will complete an extensive strategic enrollment and graduation plan that incorporates research based programs and initiatives to effectively address the myriad of variables associated with increasing student retention and graduation rates over the next several years and beyond. For example, enrollment management will assess the feasibility of a summer residential bridge program and a summer developmental/remedial program; explore the feasibility of the ‘merit index score’ in the selection process to predict persistence; and identify and manage ‘threats’ to the fall 2009 enrollment cohort.

In order to help ensure the persistence of our students through graduation, we will continue to redefine enrollment management by developing a more strategically focused, multi-year enrollment management plan. Based on current research and best practices, this strategy includes focusing our attention on the first year of college - a critical time for retention, learning, and skill development.

For the 2008-2009 academic year, CSU was selected to participate in the Foundations of Excellence Program® as part of the national first-year experience program headed by Dr. John N. Gardner. This comprehensive, guided self-study and improvement process is designed to assist the University in enhancing the learning and retention of first-year students by expanding CSU’s ability to realize its goals for student learning, achievement and persistence. Working with the Policy Center on the First Year of College, a non-profit policy and advocacy center, the University will critically evaluate institutional strengths and weaknesses to develop a strategic action plan that will lead to enhanced student learning and persistence.

The Foundations of Excellence model is informed by nationally vetted principles known as Foundational Dimensions® which includes developing a philosophy of the first year based on institutional mission; creating comprehensive organizational structures and policies; promoting engaged learning experiences; promoting a culture of faculty responsibility; facilitating appropriate student transitions; serving all first-year students; supporting diverse ideas, worldviews, and cultures; promoting student understanding of the various roles and purposes of higher education; and conducting continuous assessments and institutional improvements. The Foundations of Excellence Program® is supported by the Atlantic Philanthropies, the Lumina Foundation for Education, and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

Participation in this initiative will guide the University in developing an action plan for institutional change and improvement. I am confident that our participation in this nationally recognized program will improve our students’ first-year experiences and lead to improved student outcomes.

My highest priority is to ensure student success through graduation which includes developing and implementing a Center for Student Success. The primary mission of the Center will be to support the overall first-year experience of our students which includes developing clear and measurable student outcome measures for ‘student success’ and implementing strong support strategies that will include tracking students from the point of entry as freshmen through graduation and beyond. The Center will serve as the main starting point for traditional freshmen and include a freshmen seminar and service learning component. Although we continue to develop the logistical characteristics of the Center, we envision that the Center will provide a single location where students can take care of a range of school-related business such as advising, financial aid, registration, academic services, tutoring, and career development - all under one roof. The Center will also utilize web-based technology to provide 24 hour tutoring and financial literacy training.

We recognize that many of our students must balance their studies with the rigorous demands of both family and employment. Our student body is comprised generally of older, returning students with an average age of 28 years. This requires that we implement programs and services that target the particular needs of commuter students and graduate students. To address the needs of these students, the Student Life Center was established with a mission to determine and address the needs of adult learners as well as the commuter student population. Over the next year, we will continue to increase the engagement of both commuter students and graduate students by providing quality programming.

Over the past year, our institution has been committed to enhancing articulation agreements with community colleges. Last November, CSU and the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) approved a formal agreement that will open new doors of opportunity for students on both campuses. Designed to facilitate the transfer of CCBC graduates to CSU, the agreement involves eight programs within business, health, social sciences and computer science. Both the University and CCBC recognize the need and importance of easing transfers. Under the agreement, CCBC students who earn the A.A.S. degree in the designated programs will be permitted to transfer a total of 70 general education credits if they pursue a bachelor’s degree at Coppin. I am very pleased with this agreement and look forward to working with CCBC as well as developing articulation agreements with other community colleges.

1 For a comprehensive description of the Foundations of Excellence Program®, please visit www.fyfoundations.org/overview.aspx.
I am pleased to report that in June of 2008, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acted to reaffirm accreditation of the University. We also received reaffirmation of accreditation of our social work program by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and of our graduate nursing program by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC). We will continue to ensure CSU maintains Middle States and other specialized accreditations as well as seek specialized accreditations for other academic programs. For example, we are seeking accreditation of the Health Information Management (HIM) program in the School of Nursing, the only four-year baccalaureate degree program of its type in the State that fills the growing demand for health information professionals. These accomplishments are significant as we continue to position the University to be recognized as an academic leader in the community, state, and region.

Coppin State University continues to earn local, national and international recognition of its information technology efforts and the use of technology to advance student learning. CSU pioneered the use of educational technologies with Tegrity Campus, which combines digital audio and video recording of the class lecture with electronic note-taking and computer usage. The software provides 24-hour access to the recorded classroom experience. As a literal learning tool, the Tegrity pen uses camera technology on its tip which allows students to digitally record handwritten notes taken during class and automatically synchronizes it with the recorded lecture. Students are able to replay the entire lecture online while viewing their notes exactly as written in their notebooks.

In 2008, CSU was recognized as a Laureate and a Finalist in the 2008 Computer World Honors Program, “A Search of New Heroes” for “Enhancing Student Achievement Through Use of Class Capture Technologies”. We were the only University in Maryland that was honored with such recognition by the Computer World Honors Program.

ENHANCING THE ACADEMIC CORE OF THE UNIVERSITY

Coppin is the only four-year institution in the state of Maryland to offer a four-year baccalaureate degree in Health Information Management (HIM).
A key element of Coppin State University’s mission is to be a leader in elevating communities through education and community engagement. Therefore, it is fitting that CSU, along with twenty other higher educational institutions in the State, took the lead in founding and supporting the Maryland Campus Compact. The Maryland Campus Compact is a network of college and university presidents formed to advance the civic purposes of higher education by deepening our ability to improve community life and to educate students for civic and social responsibility. The University’s involvement in the Maryland Campus Compact will further enhance the practice of service and citizenship which is deeply rooted in our institutional mission. This statewide compact will also enrich the relationships among the students, faculty, staff, and administrators throughout the institutions of higher learning in the State.

CSU also plays a key role in engaging the next generation of leaders on pressing global issues. A few weeks ago, the University participated in the Clinton Global Initiative University meeting at the University of Texas in Austin. President Clinton launched this initiative in 2007 as a way to engage the next generation of leaders on campuses around the world. During this event, CSU joined other colleges and universities to discuss solutions to pressing global issues. Areas of focus include energy and climate change, human rights and peace, global health issues, and poverty alleviation. Participants in this event were also required to develop a commitment of action; a specific action plan that addresses a pressing challenge on their campuses, in their communities, or in different parts of the world. CSU’s commitment entitled, “Improving the World Through Information Technology: An Institute for Local and Global Community Engagement at Coppin State University,” includes using information technology to connect local and global communities in an effort to improve education, enhance inter-cultural understanding, promote conflict resolution, and alleviate poverty.

The University continues to make a concerted effort to focus on a number of community and statewide priorities that will place both CSU and the University System of Maryland in the forefront of educational and institutional responses to global climate change. In March 2008, Coppin State University (CSU) signed the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), a coalition of over 600 colleges and universities concerned about the impacts of global warming and dedicated to reducing campus greenhouse gas emissions. This agreement has provided an excellent opportunity to inform the University and the surrounding community about the impact of global climate change and has increased awareness of climate change issues. Since signing the ACUPCC, I have charged a university-wide taskforce of students, faculty, and staff to develop a climate action plan and to ensure that sustainability informs all aspect of the university’s strategic planning process.

In addition, CSU has implemented several projects to nurture sustainability champions among faculty, staff and students campus-wide. The Green Coppin Initiative, a coalition founded by faculty and students, has placed into action different activities to create awareness of the current climate crisis and global warming among the University and the surrounding community. For the first time ever, CSU is competing against nearly 400 other colleges and universities in a national recycling competition known as Recyclemania.

Furthermore, on February 27, 2009, more than fifty (50) Coppin State University students will converge with more than 10,000 other young people from across the country in Washington, D.C. for Power Shift ’09. At this conference, students will share ideas, learn new skills, develop ways to strengthen the climate and clean energy movement beyond 2009 and send a message of change to elected officials. I am very proud of their participation in this national movement and I support their efforts to establish a national voice for their generation.

We have also engaged in other environmentally conscious practices, including installing new, energy efficient heating and cooling systems and motion sensor lighting systems in our new facilities; installing green tile which contains natural rock and recycled glass in the Library; and installing new energy efficient air handlers and a new motion sensor lighting system when we upgrade the utilities in the Library.

To improve the health of the campus and its constituencies, CSU initiated the Healthy Campus 2010 Initiative. This initiative is designed to make Coppin State University a healthy campus for students, faculty, staff, and community partners and provides campus-wide, student focused activities that utilizes lessons learned from the CSU’s eHealth Project, now considered a national model for ehealth student training and engagement. The goals of this project are to increase the quality and years of healthy life and eliminate health disparities. This initiative focuses on ten leading health indicators specifically, physical activity, obesity, tobacco use, substance abuse, responsible sexual behavior, mental health, injury and violence, environmental quality, immunization, and access to health care.

Six student ehealth educators served on conference panel and gave poster presentations at the National Library of Medicine eHealth Conference on June 10, 2008 at the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, MD. I am pleased to announce that because of the University’s work with the eHealth Project, CSU has been chosen as a National Diabetes Goal Champion.

As we move forward, we will continue to continue to enhance the urban/metropolitan mission of the University and position the University toward receiving the Carnegie Foundation’s ‘community engagement’ classification; an elective classification earned by colleges and universities that have proven their extensive involvement in their communities with regard to service, partnerships, and scholarly activity. The University intends to increase its community engagement efforts through the establishment of a Community Outreach and Partnership Center.
Again, we thank you, other members of the Maryland General Assembly, and the Governor for your continued support of higher education, especially during these challenging and difficult fiscal times. You understand that higher education is the key to an economically viable Maryland and we appreciate your investment in CSU. Your continued support is vital to us in several ways. For example, it will help us to make important investments in the young students that we serve through our Urban Education Corridor initiative; which touches kindergartners to eighth graders at Rosemont Elementary/Middle, the ninth to twelfth grade students enrolled at Coppin Academy and each and every one of the students enrolled at Coppin State University.

Your support must continue to ensure that we continue the tradition of serving as a bridge to opportunity by helping to bring the dreams of our students to fruition through our educational programs, as an anchor in the West Baltimore community by reaching beyond our campus to help our students and as serving as a vital and necessary resource to the City of Baltimore, the State of Maryland and beyond.

Respectfully submitted,

Reginald S. Avery, President

We appreciate your investment in CSU. It will help us to serve our Urban Education Corridor initiative; which touches kindergartners to the students enrolled at Coppin State University.
APPENDIX A
RESPONSE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES
RECOMMENDATION ACTIONS AND ISSUES RAISED

Below are the responses to the Department of Legislative Services’ (DLS) analysis of Coppin State University’s FY 2010 budget. The University’s response is divided into two sections. The first section is a response to recommended actions. The second section includes comments to issues specifically raised by DLS in the analysis.

PRESIDENT’S RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. DLS recommends restricting the expenditure of $1.5 million until the Maryland Higher Education Commission and Coppin State University submits a report outlining programs and services needed to ensure student success and CSU submits a report outlining how funds will be expended to implement the new programs and measures to evaluate the program.

CSU’S RESPONSE: Coppin State University concurs and will submit both reports as requested.

COMMENTS ON ISSUES RAISED BY DLS IN THE ANALYSIS

1. The President should comment on why CSU’s Managing for Results (MFR) goals for future years are reported rather than the expected attainment for some measures (page 6 of the analysis).

CSU’S RESPONSE: The MFR is a report required by the Department of Budget and Management. They require all USM institutions to report data as the following: 4 years of historical data and 2 years of estimated data both of which are based on the established goals.

2. The President should comment on how CSU, given the negative State-supported fund balance, will make the $191,342 fund balance transfer to the general fund (page 9 of the analysis).

CSU’S RESPONSE: The $191,342 has already been transferred. CSU will have a positive State-supported operational end-of-year balance for FY 2009 after accounting for this transfer. Our State-supported fund balance should be positive by the end of FY 2011.

3. The President should comment on how the university will adjust expenditures to compensate for the budgeted tuition and fee revenues that it will not receive in fiscal 2010 (page 10 of the analysis).

CSU’S RESPONSE: CSU embarked on a plan this fiscal year to change the mix of regular rank and adjunct faculty toward more full-time faculty. If tuition and fee revenue, and enrollment are flat in FY 2010, additional full-time faculty increments will be deferred until the necessary revenues are available to continue it. This plan absorbed the marginal increase in tuition revenue. Absent this faculty initiative, a flat budget is essentially in balance.

4. The President should comment on how the operating costs associated with the PEC building will impact the university’s ability to adequately fund priorities such as increasing institutional financial aid and improving retention and graduation rates (page 13 of the analysis).

CSU’S RESPONSE: Recognizing that additional operating costs are associated with new buildings, CSU’s State-supported budget includes additional funds to manage the PEC’s operating costs. The increased funding seems sufficient to operate and maintain this building. We are grateful for the capital planning wisdom that provided this educational building to CSU as it should benefit not only our students and faculty, but also our neighbors in the West Baltimore community.

5. The President should comment on the review of misclassified expenditures and when corrected data will be available (page 13 of the analysis).

CSU’S RESPONSE: We have not paid the attention we should have to correctly categorizing our expenses for reporting purposes. Partly this is due to insufficient cost allocation procedures; partly to not sufficiently screening actual expenses to be sure they are reported in the correct expense category. We will correctly categorize all material expenses this fiscal year and years thereafter. This is not a difficult undertaking. It just requires attention to detail.
6. The President should comment on why the university does not plan to increase institutional aid in fiscal 2010, and on measures being taken to increase the amount of need-based aid in particular (page 14 of the analysis).

CSU'S RESPONSE: CSU has a new Vice President for Enrollment Management who arrived in November of 2008. He is working with constituent groups on campus to develop a strategic enrollment management plan for attracting, retaining and graduating our students. Our budget for FY 2010 was submitted in advance of his arrival and the flat funding was necessitated by fiscal realities. As this strategic plan is developed, we expect that it will contain an increased requirement for need based financial aid that will have to come from reallocation and reengineering strategies within CSU.

7. DLS recommends that the fiscal 2009 funding be reprogrammed to support the start-up of the new program recommended by the study panel and the commission, in effect doubling the funds available for the new program in fiscal 2010. DLS further recommends budget bill language restricting the expenditure of $1.5 million of the fiscal 2010 appropriation until a report is submitted to the budget committees from HBI and MHEC on the best practices identified to be used in the new program to improve student graduation rates and the common measures to evaluate performance, including graduation rates. Each university must also provide a report describing the new program, how the funds will be used to support the new program, and performance measures (page 17 of the analysis).

CSU'S RESPONSE: The University concurs with this recommendation. We look forward to working with the Maryland Higher Education Commission and the other HBIs to develop this new program.

8. The President should comment on the university’s progress in implementing the Achievement Gap Plan (page 20 of the analysis).

CSU'S RESPONSE: CSU began implementation of the Closing Achievement Gap Plan in the spring of 2008. The University adopted the Foundations of Excellence Program and the entire campus was engaged in its implementation. This initiative is a part of the National First-Year Experience Program headed by Dr. John Gardner. It is a comprehensive, guided self-study process which will assist CSU in realizing its goals for student learning, achievement and persistence. The data management system has been adopted and it is being populated to support accountability and data-driven decisions. The new Vice President for Enrollment Management will work with the constituent groups to align the University’s Strategic Enrollment Management Plan with the Closing the Achievement Gap Plan. The Enrollment Management Plan is in the process of being developed as a rolling 3-year plan with clear and measurable goals. The overarching objective of the plan is to significantly improve persistence-to-graduation rates among all cohorts. Additionally, to support this objective, we will need to complete a restructure our current academic advising model and engage a detailed feasibility study of a residential summer program for incoming freshmen.

9. The President should comment on how the plan will be fully implemented in fiscal 2010 given the constraints of the fiscal 2010 allowance (page 21 of the analysis).

CSU'S RESPONSE: We will continue to move forward with the implementation of various components of the Closing the Achievement Gap Plan, given the budget constraints. As the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan is developed, it will identify new budget needs and well as define unmet needs for the Achievement Gap Initiative. An important part of the comprehensive plan will be to coordinate the recommendations of the Achievement Gap plan, the HBI study panel, and the University's various internal plans.

10. The President should comment on why no cost reductions were recommended in the ICA deficit reduction plan and on how much personnel costs are expected to be transferred to the State-supported OHRL. The President should also comment on the effect the proposed athletic fee increase will have on CSU’s lower-income students. Finally, the President should comment on the impact PEC operating expenses will have on the ICA fund balance (page 22 of the analysis).

CSU'S RESPONSE: In October, 2008, CSU presented a plan to the Board of Regents to eliminate the annual deficit in Athletics. There is no carry-forward deficit as ICA is an auxiliary operation, although Athletics has continually run a current year deficit. The plan had three parts: increase the student athletic fee, provide an intramural program in the athletic department, and increase fund raising by the Athletic Director. We are carrying forward with all three elements. The fee increase is in our FY 2010 budget. The Division of Student Affairs will contract with the Athletic Department to provide an extensive intramural program taking advantage of the new Physical Education Complex and its facilities and fields. In addition, the new Athletic Director is actively developing financial relationships for his programs. We do not expect to transfer personnel costs to the State-supported budget. ICA will need to effect cost containment strategies in order to provide the expected intramural program, consistent with the deficit reduction plan, within the funding the University intends to provide. ICA's move to the PEC will increase its operating costs. The new facility should provide an opportunity to increase its revenue as well. We are concerned about the increase in any costs to our students, but continue to feel that an active athletic program, especially one involving the student body in club and intramural sports, is a necessary part of the college experience.