



## **Evidence Document**

for Higher Learning Commission Reaccreditation

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**Document Title:** Enrollment Services Executive Summary Fall 2015

**Office of Origin:** Enrollment Services

### **Document Summary:**

The University of Arkansas is the 7<sup>th</sup> fastest growing university in the nation. Enrollment, currently over 26,500, has exceeded the 2009 goal of reaching 25,000 by 2021 without compromising quality. Incoming students are better prepared, and the U of A has initiatives and programs to support continued academic preparedness and retention.



# ENROLLMENT SERVICES – Executive Summary



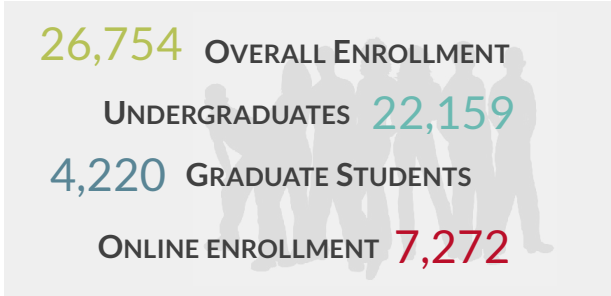
## Enrollment Services Highlights

With the mission to enroll, support, and graduate a diverse group of academically prepared students, the Enrollment Services Division at the University of Arkansas (created in 2009) has successfully cultivated unprecedented growth in the student body, in terms of both the number of students enrolling and their academic quality. Individual offices include Admissions, Financial Aid and Scholarships, Graduation and Retention, Nationally Competitive Awards, and the Registrar. In fall of 2015, overall enrollment reached 26,754 (the goal stated in the Chancellor’s 2009 TAP document was to reach 25,000 by 2021, but the charge was to grow as quickly as possible and still maintain quality).

In addition to joining the largest student body in University history, the incoming freshman class was exceptionally prepared. Since 2009,

**Admissions** has worked to increase the level of academic preparedness across the board:

- Students enrolling with a 3.75 GPA or higher increased 68.8%
- Students with an ACT score of 30 or higher increased 41.2%
- Number of AP credits received by incoming students increased 75.7%
- Number of students eligible to participate in the Honors College (3.5 GPA/28 ACT) increased 63.4%



Additionally, the academic quality of the U of A student body is reflected in the number of current students and alumni who compete for and receive nationally competitive, merit-based scholarships and fellowships. In a review of national standings conducted this year, the **Office of**

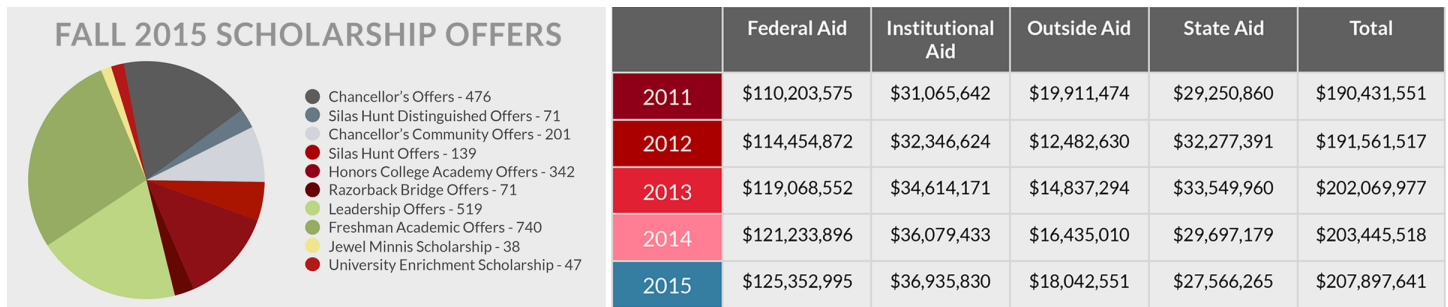
**Nationally Competitive Awards** found U of A students to be ranked among the top winners of the most prestigious national awards, including the Marshall, Rhodes, Truman, and Goldwater scholarships.



Enrollment Services works collaboratively to balance outreach to prospective students with support for current students. In 2014-2015, the **Office of Graduation and Retention**, the latest addition to Enrollment Services, began piloting several initiatives aimed at streamlining academic support services for current students, with the goal of reaching a six-year graduation rate of 70% and beyond. Admissions continued outreach and recruiting of prospective students using industry best practices and communicated with prospective students through traditional channels as well as a range of digital media, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and targeted online messaging. On campus, Admissions facilitated visits for 8,722 students, while **Transfer Central** increased the U of A’s recruiting presence at community colleges across the state. **New Student Orientation** served more than 4,500 incoming freshmen, along with their guests and families, and, together with the **Office of the Registrar**, expanded a pre-enrollment initiative that not only improved the orientation experience for new freshmen, but also helped the academic colleges better prepare fall course offerings. For incoming freshmen and continuing students, the **Academic**

**Scholarship Office and Office of Financial Aid** administered more than \$207 million in aid to a total of 18,113 students.

**Financial Aid** addresses need-based aid, and its mission is to ease the financial burden of a college education and to make education accessible for students from all financial backgrounds. The office assists prospective and current students by collecting and processing information and by creating the best possible financial aid package for each individual student in a timely manner.



**The Registrar's Office** has consistent and significant interaction with students from point of matriculation to graduation and beyond. The responsibility for maintaining student records is great, but the Registrar is also concerned with serving the needs of students, faculty, alumni, and staff. The office's goal is to do this as effectively as possible, utilizing excellent service skills, technology, and the best practices among registrar's offices of peer institutions. The Registrar's Office is the home for records (transcripts, grades, student standing, and degree audits), registration activities (registration appointments, assistance at orientation, administrative adds and withdrawals), curriculum and class scheduling, transfer credit, Integrated Student Information System reporting, commencement and graduation. The Registrar's Office works closely with the other units in Enrollment Services on a variety of services assisting with prospective students, accepting the handoff at matriculation, and working cooperatively and collaboratively on retention and graduation issues.

**Enrollment Services Challenges**

**Academic Scholarships and Financial Aid Office:** More scholarship dollars are desperately needed to keep the University competitive with other major institutions wooing top scholars. Additional need-based aid will also be key in helping students (especially in Arkansas) cope with the rising costs of higher education.

**Admissions:** Predicting and then reaching the expected target number for the first-full time freshman class, for undergraduates, for new transfer students, and for the student body as a whole is always challenging. The office has been able to do this, but more sophisticated analysis in conjunction with housing is needed to help colleges better understand the make up of the incoming and returning classes.

**Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS+):** Space, space, space.

**Graduation and Retention:** There are many challenges, but the major one will be realizing the 70% six-year graduation rate, and bringing the campus together as a team to make it happen.

**Registrar:** The degree audits have been challenging and maintaining them will be an ongoing, but worthwhile effort. Upgrading the Student Information System will be a significant challenge for the campus.

**Partnerships with the Provost and the Chancellor**

The Vice Provost for Enrollment Management interacts with both directly on enrollment growth, national award recipients, appeals/complaints (most often about admissions and scholarship decisions), and campus visits with special guests (donors and their children, dignitaries, top recruits). The Chancellor often assists with recruitment efforts, visiting select schools, and contacting high ability students and National Merit Semifinalists. The Vice Provost for Enrollment Management meets with the Executive Committee on key issues concerning enrollment.

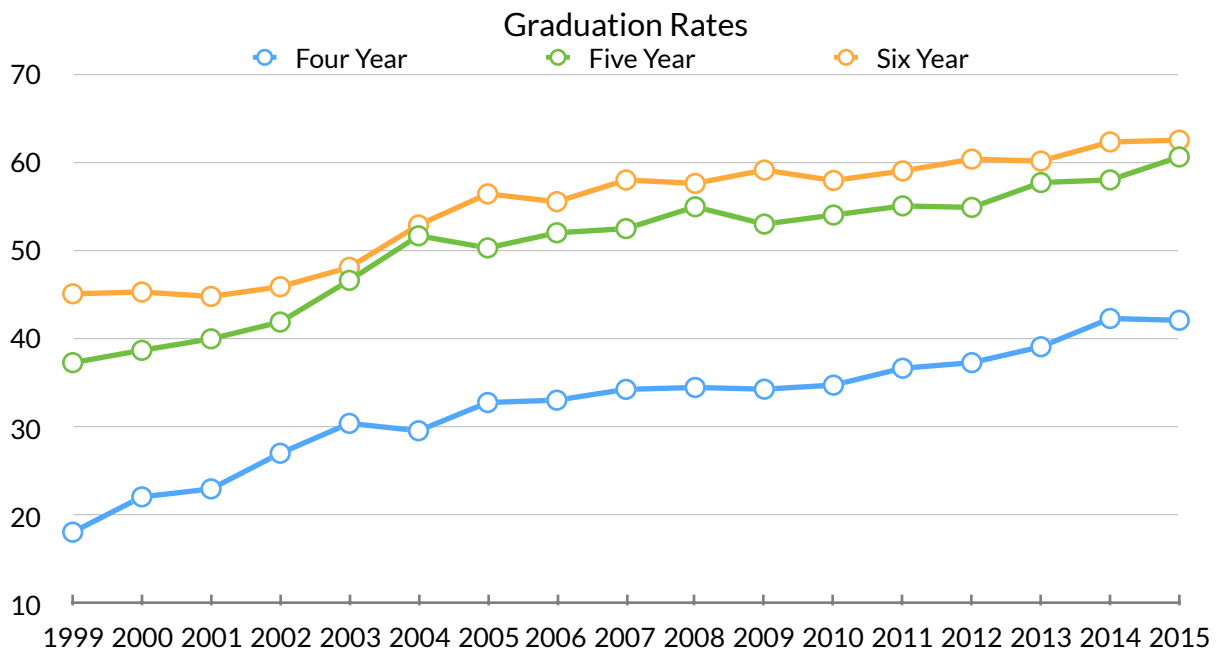
**Partnership with the Provost**

Enrollment Services works closely with the Provost and the Provost's Office on key issues connected to enrollment, budget requests, room scheduling, academic policies, commencement, and any of the issues found in these four pages.



The **Office of Graduation and Retention** was created in 2014 in response to the University’s Quality Initiative Proposal (QIP). Housed in Enrollment Services, the graduation office is directed by the recently appointed Associate Vice Provost for Graduation and Retention. The office also includes a Graduation Analyst (a position created in 2011) and a newly added Assistant Director for Retention and Recruitment. Additionally, the Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS+) has moved under the office’s umbrella.

The Office of Graduation and Retention exists in order “to make substantive sustainable changes” of the sort that enable the University to retain and graduate more of its students (QIP, p. 4). Thanks in some measure to Enrollment Services (especially changes in admissions recruitment and appellate board practices), the University is already seeing consistent improvement in its graduation rates. The most recent six-year graduation rate for full-time, degree-seeking freshmen is more than 17 percentage points higher than it was in 1999; the four-year graduation rate is 24 percentage points higher.



Despite this improvement, the University’s graduation rates remain “an area of underperformance for the institution” (QIP, p. 1). As of 2013, the University’s six-year graduation rate was tied for 36th among the 50 flagships; it ranked 91st among the 106 universities that received the Carnegie Foundation’s very high research activity classification; and it was among the lowest in the SEC. The progress the University has seen in its six-year graduation rate is a reflection of stronger enrollment and additional student outreach (an increase in advisors, changes in policies like the drop deadline, an increase in tutoring, etc.), but the University is still a long way from its goal of a 70% six-year graduation rate.

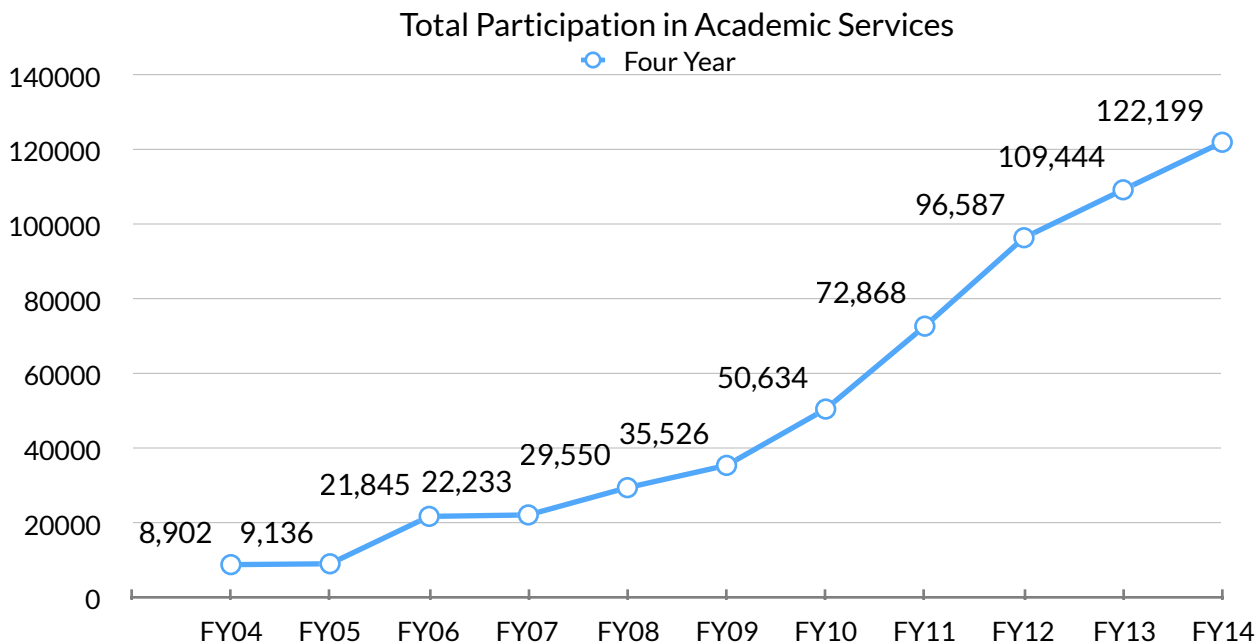
**Initiatives Completed or Underway**

The Office of Graduation and Retention is working to address barriers. Since its creation, the office has proposed changes to the undeclared policy on campus, worked to create a one-stop academic support presence on-campus and online (CLASS+, class.uark.edu) and has collaborated with the Fulbright College to create nine 10-month “Undergraduate Director” positions within Fulbright departments that lose the most

students. The office also participated in Fulbright College’s Research, Retention, and Diversity Strategic Planning sessions. Working to assist other units also involved in graduation efforts, the Graduation and Retention Office has reported on graduation rates among various student populations (such as NWACC transfers, first-generation students, and students admitted by the Appellate Board). It has analyzed factors underlying trends in the U of A’s graduation rates and has participated actively in conversations regarding best practices for retaining undeclared students, first-generation students, and students in academic crisis. In compliance with the QIP’s “Technical and Communication Component,” the office has taken steps to create a one-stop website for student success (class.uark.edu), a staff position dedicated to fully utilizing Starfish’s retention tools, and success communication plans for undergraduates. To help fulfill the QIP’s “Student Support Component,” the office has initiated conversations related to Living Learning Communities, and has researched best practices regarding academic pathways for college students. It has created a high impact learning webpage to be profiled on class.uark.edu, and has created webpage information for undeclared and exploring students. In accord with the QIP’s “Learning Centered Component,” the office’s director facilitated discussion at the winter faculty symposium regarding teaching methods that promote student engagement.

**Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS+)**

Student participation in Supplemental Instruction (S.I.), academic coaching, and tutoring has dramatically increased over the past ten years. As enrollment increases during the 2015-2016 academic year, student and faculty requests for S.I., academic coaching, and tutoring will continue to trend upward. Our student success team is proactively working to meet the most urgent S.I. and tutoring demands, to offer support to the 1,300 students on academic probation, and to create a model that answers the most urgent academic needs. Finding additional space for the Center for Learning and Student Success will be a priority.



**Plans for the Future**

During the coming spring and summer semesters, the office intends to enhance and create programs, communications, and policies that promote the retention of undeclared students, first-generation students, and students in academic crisis. It plans to work with CLASS+ to offer extending hours for tutoring, as well as online tutoring. The office will also deliver a destination graduation component during new student orientation and work to compile a list of mentoring and advising programs on campus and to develop mentoring action plans for individual colleges. The office’s analyst is continuing various studies of factors that contribute to or impede student success. To support the QIP’s “Learning Centered Component,” the office has hired a faculty fellow. Finally, to realize the QIP’s “Student Support” and “Technical and Communication” components, the office plans to work with colleges to develop “Academic Pathways” for each major, incorporating these plans into UASuccess and the Student Information System and collaborating with the colleges to standardize an Academic Recovery Plan in UASuccess that can be used during one-on-one meetings with students in academic crisis.