

## *Maryland's ABC's for Student Success: Advising, Belonging and Coaching for Student Success*

*Maryland's ABC's for Student Success* addresses the critical challenge of increasing student success, persistence, and graduation for underserved college students. This project focuses on building the bridge between the multiple supports that exist at IHEs and the students who need them. The University System of Maryland (USM) Office, in collaboration with eleven diverse partner institutions, proposes *Maryland's ABCs for Student Success*, answering Absolute Priority 1 and the Competitive Preference Priority.

Grounded in Tinto's (1975) theory of academic and social integration, Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement, and Strayhorn's (2019) work on student belonging, the goals of this project are rooted in evidence-based research coaching (Bettinger & Baker, 2014), peer mentoring (Graham & McClain, 2019), advising underserved students (Swecker et al., 2013), and other relevant work that links theory to high-impact practice (Karp et al., 2021).

The *Maryland's ABCs for Student Success* primary **intervention** is the establishment of a cadre of peer mentors trained to implement coaching-informed practices and act as the critical link between the student's academic advisor and the multitude of resources available at every USM institution. Research demonstrates that intentionally developed advising and mentoring can improve student sense of belonging and increased use of academic and non-academic campus resources (Gonzales et al., 2015; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Scrivener & Weiss, 2009).

*Maryland's ABCs for Student Success* proposes two **innovations**, supporting the primary **intervention**, which will be evaluated using a rigorous quasi-experimental design (QED):

1. **Creation of Communities of Practice** that include Administrators, Advisors, Trainers of Peer Mentors, and Data Liaisons draws on USM's implementation of "Systemness." Collectively, these actors support peer mentors and advisors in each institution by training, leveraging existing resources and expertise, and building capacity to ensure that students access what they need to progress towards completing their degree requirements.
2. **Design and development of a System-awarded micro-credential for peer mentors** across 11 institutions that will draw on evidence-based practice to elevate the standard of practice for peer-advising across the System.

The QED is designed to answer three confirmatory research questions:

1. To what extent do first-time-in-college (FTIC) underserved students (students of color, Pell-eligible, and non-traditional students) who receive PD-trained peer mentoring accumulate more college-level credits compared to their peers after 1, 2 and 3 years?
2. Do FTIC underserved students who receive PD-trained peer mentoring persist in college at higher rates relative to their peers after 1, 2 and 3 years?
3. Are there differences in academic outcomes of FTIC underserved students who receive PD-trained peer mentoring relative to their peers after 1, 2 and 3 years of treatment?

The project evaluation will include two exploratory research questions:

1. Does the PD-trained mentorship experience improve FTIC underserved students' sense of belonging after 1, 2 and 3 years?
2. How are early indicators of achievement and progression distributed among underserved subgroups of students at the end of each cohort's first year?

The project evaluation will also include implementation-focused research questions to ensure fidelity of implementation and help USM, campus teams, and mentors use data to see which services students are accessing and how often and passing required courses in their first year.