

# Inclusion Council Report: Student Recruitment, Enrollment/Admissions, Retention, and Belonging Workgroup Spring 2021

## Introduction and Summary of Work

The Student Recruitment, Enrollment/Admissions, Retention, and Belonging (SRERB) Workgroup was created in September 2020 as a subcommittee of UMBC's Inclusion Council (IC). The SRERB Workgroup was charged with working with the campus community to identify short- and long-term goals and recommendations for undergraduate and graduate student recruitment efforts, the enrollment/admissions process, student retention, and student sense of belonging. IC members Nadia BenAissa, Chris Hawn, Jasmine A. Lee, and Teresa April Michel volunteered to serve as workgroup chairs and established monthly WebEx meetings. Workgroup members, identified by IC, were split into the subgroup of their choosing to create recommendations based on effective practices on our campus, evidence-based research, and/or best practices at peer and aspirational peer institutions. The subgroups were Recruitment led by Chris Hawn, Enrollment/Admissions lead by Teresa April Michel, Retention lead by Nadia BenAissa, and Belonging lead by Jasmine A. Lee. For a full list of workgroup members and subgroup contributions see Appendix A. The subgroups identified broad areas of interest and researched their area to inform their primary recommendation. All research was compiled in the workgroup's Box folder and done by various members of the workgroup during or outside meetings. Each subgroup identified a primary recommendation to focus on and additional recommendations that were not within the workgroup's scope at this time. The SRERB workgroup's primary recommendations are to:

1. Expand Baltimore City/County, Prince George's County, Howard County, and international recruitment.
2. Create a new Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions eligibility process that uses GRIT or Noncognitive Variables as a foundation of determining minority domestic student readiness from underserved areas (i.e. Baltimore City, Prince George's County, Howard County, applicants with disabilities, and international applicants) replacing traditional methods of determining college readiness (SAT, ACT, GPA, GRE and Personal Statements).
3. Create a withdrawal survey to collect data on who is leaving or transferring away from UMBC.
4. Host focus groups with target groups of students to best inform belonging specific recommendations.

# The Recruitment, Enrollment/Admissions, Retention, and Belonging Recommendations

## Recruitment

**Primary Recommendation: Expand Baltimore City/County, Prince George's County, Howard County, and international recruitment.**

An evaluation of the current recruitment and admissions protocols should be conducted to determine if they are beneficial to the University at this profound moment of change. The University should seek out new ways of making recruitment in heavily minority communities, such as Baltimore City and Prince George's County, equally accessible and admissions less cumbersome to students who do not seek out UMBC as a viable academic option.

For example, students from Baltimore City have one of the highest enrollment conversion rates out of all the Maryland counties (See Appendix B for data), but we currently recruit fewer students from Baltimore City than other surrounding counties. Given the higher enrollment rate, increasing our recruitment to students in Baltimore City can help overall student enrollment as well as increase diversity of UMBC given it is a majority Black county.

- Partners are UMBC Upward Bound, UMBC Choice Program

### Additional Recruitment Recommendations

Recommendation: Update or add to outward facing UMBC websites to include more diverse/inclusive media.

- Websites that prospective students are likely to visit should include more diverse/inclusive photographs and videos so prospective students are seeing others like themselves represented at UMBC. See Appendix C for list.

Recommendation: Have more in-depth virtual campus tours for students with disabilities.

- A virtual tour of wheelchair accessible routes would allow prospective students with mobility assistance needs to get a better sense of campus and what their potential routes could be.
- Virtual tours designed for blind and Deaf students would allow those prospective students to get a better sense of campus as well.
  - Partner with the Office of Student Disability Services to design accessible tours.

Recommendation: Better communicate UMBC recruitment efforts to faculty and staff.

- UMBC has been successful in recruiting students from majority Black counties like Baltimore City and Prince George's county, albeit at lower rates than Howard and Montgomery Counties. However, these efforts are unknown to the larger campus community. Creating a narrative to describe our existing recruitment strategies and plan can help the campus community stay in the loop and see where improvements can be made.

Recommendation: Develop a recruitment plan focusing on the Latinx community specifically.

- 9% of Marylanders identify as Latinx. However, for the past 20 years at UMBC, Latinx students make/have made up on average 3% of the student population, and only recently capping at 6% (See Appendix D for data). Latinx faculty express that they have been told recruitment of Latinx students is low because of a lack of qualified student candidates. We need to make an explicit recruitment plan for Latinx students.

## Enrollment/Admissions

**Primary Recommendation: Create a new Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions eligibility process that uses GRIT or Noncognitive Variables as a foundation of determining minority domestic student readiness from underserved areas (i.e. Baltimore City, Prince George's County, Howard County, applicants with disabilities, and international applicants) replacing traditional methods of determining college readiness (SAT, ACT, GPA, GRE and Personal Statements).**

UMBC prides itself on the characteristics of GRIT. However, GRIT which can be understood as a set of intrinsic values and personality traits, can be measured as determined by research found in a study conducted by Professor Emeritus William Sedlacek of the University of Maryland, College Park. His study entitled: "Employing Noncognitive Variables to Improve Admissions and Increase Retention," provides eight skill sets (outside of traditional methods of determining qualified admissions) that establish a profound skills based standard for academic student success. His research is also supported by Dr. Paul Tough's 2014 study entitled: "Who get's to Graduate?" which describes minority students ability to thrive on campus with the right support and resources from student support departments and student groups.

- Campus partners include: Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions Departments, The Financial Aid Office, The Registrar's Office and i3B.
- Recommended Next Steps: In order to make systemic changes to the admissions process, the departments listed above should form a focus group to determine the possibility of admissions process changes. These changes should be implemented before the Fall 2022.

**Additional Admissions Recommendation:** Provide admissions fee waivers for specific demographics and heavily advertise the waivers.

- Admission fee waivers would help remove a financial barrier to prospective students during the application process.

## Retention

**Primary Recommendation: Create a withdrawal survey to collect data on who is leaving or transferring away from UMBC.**

UMBC previously had a withdrawal survey and we recommend reimplementing one. The goal of the withdrawal survey would be to identify potential barriers to students staying/graduating from UMBC and to understand if anything would have kept them enrolled. Data from this withdrawal survey would also inform us of potential trends within specific demographics leaving UMBC.

- The survey should be given to undergraduates and graduates after they have declined to re-enroll or after they have requested their transcript.
- The survey design should involve the input of Off Campus Student Services, Student Affairs, and Enrollment Management.
- The survey should be conducted over the phone or through an online form if the student cannot be reached by phone. Refer to Appendix E for examples of withdrawal surveys.

**Additional Retention Recommendation:** Provide compensation to student volunteers participating in diversity, equity, and inclusion work/initiatives.

- UMBC needs the input and involvement of students in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work. So far only students that can afford to go uncompensated for their personal time are able to participate in DEI work. Currently, the same students are continuously called on to join DEI initiatives and as a result experience burnt out. This does not allow UMBC to have input from the full range of diverse student experiences and further marginalizes underrepresented populations.
- Compensation should be decided on a case-by-case basis with the student involved in the DEI committee/initiative.

## Belonging

**Primary Recommendation: Host focus groups with target groups of students to best inform belonging specific recommendations.**

The student sense of belonging group started by exploring recent climate study data conducted by [EAB in Spring 2020](#). While the survey suggests overall positive experiences at UMBC as connected to diversity and inclusion, the survey analysis did not provide clear demographic breakdowns or disaggregated data by race, gender, ability status, etc; leaving much information unknown about how marginalized students experience UMBC. As a result, the Sense of Belonging workgroup recommends a series of focus groups be conducted to elicit narratives and stories connected to student experiences. Focus groups should be designed to explore sense of belonging as connected to race, ethnicity and nationality; Scholar program membership; religion and spirituality; and ability status. All focus groups should contain questions or prompts that determine sense of belonging overall and at pivotal moments such as transition into the university, within major specific classrooms, etc. Focus groups could also explore experiences as connected to hometown (within MD), as well as commuter, transfer and first-generation statuses.

- Facilitators – Compensated graduate students should be recruited and trained to facilitate the focus groups. A co-facilitation model should be employed, with at least one facilitator mirroring the identities of the specific group. Graduate students can be recruited from programs like Language, Literature and Culture and Modern Languages, Linguistics & Intercultural Communication.
- Focus Group Recruitment – In order to center access and equity in the implementation process, focus groups should be held in spaces and at times students typically meet –i.e. 7pm on weekends. Student groups should be engaged in the planning and recruitment process. Groups like NESBE, Chinese Student Association, T.E.A.M., can help gather students in order to cultivate a captive audience.
- Implementation – Given the importance of reaching multiple populations, there will likely need to be around 10 focus groups as outlined below:
  - Black/Africana (including students identifying as international and/or immigrant)
  - AAPI/APIIDA (including students identifying as international and/or immigrant)
  - Hispanic/Latinx (including students identifying as international and/or immigrant)
  - International students
  - Students with disabilities (regardless of connection to SDS)
  - Students who consider themselves religious minorities on campus (self-identified)
  - First generation students (self-identified)
  - Graduate students (Including masters, professional and doctoral degrees)
  - Open group (open to any student across any identity) (held twice)

## Appendices:

### Appendix Index

Appendix A: Workgroup Members and Subgroups

Appendix B: Map of Recruits by County (Fall 2019)

Appendix C: UMBC Website Links for Review

Appendix D: New First-Year Students by Race and Ethnicity (Fall 1997-2020)

Appendix E: Examples of Withdrawal Surveys

### Appendix A: Workgroup Members and Subgroups

#### Co-Chairs:

Nadia BenAissa (*Retention*)

Chris Hawn (*Recruitment*)

Jasmine A. Lee (*Belonging*)

Teresa April Michel (*Enrollment/Admissions*)

**OIE Liaison:** Kathy Ibitoye

#### Workgroup Members and Sub-group Contributions:

Banke Abassi (*Subgroup Admissions/Enrollment*)

Bunmi Adeniji

Kelly Akambi

Stephanie Akanoh  
Maame Araba Brookman  
Anbu-Enya Carter (*Subgroup: Retention*)  
Sandra Crespín-Melgar (*Subgroup: Belonging*)  
Shirl Curtis (*Subgroup Admissions/Enrollment*)  
Corris Davis (*Subgroup: Enrollment/Admissions*)  
Peter DeCrescenzo (*Subgroup: Belonging*) (*Subgroup Admissions/Enrollment*)  
Catalina Sofia Dansberger Duque (*Subgroup: Recruitment*)  
Adrienne Ekas-Mueting  
Julius Gayle (*Subgroup: Retention*)  
Delana Gregg (*Subgroup: Retention*)  
Beatriz Gutierrez-Malagon (*Subgroup: Belonging*)  
Adam Holden (*Subgroup: Belonging*)  
Gina Hurny  
Sunji Jangha (*Subgroup Admissions/Enrollment*)  
Sonia Jarral  
Adam Julian  
Aju Kalu  
Natalie Lobb (*Subgroup: Recruitment*)  
Theresa Mabe (*Subgroup: Recruitment*)  
Helena Mentis  
Chelsea Moyer  
Antoinette Newsome (*Subgroup: Belonging*)  
Steve Park  
Roshnee Roberts (*Subgroup: Recruitment*)  
David Shanks  
Christina Shrestha (*Subgroup Admissions/Enrollment*)  
Joseph Siu  
Cassie Kilroy Thompson (*Subgroup: Recruitment*)  
Jameka Wiggins  
Michele Wolff

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Jasmine A. Lee  
Teresa April Michel  
Chris Hawn

**Appendix B: Map of Recruits by County (Fall 2019)**

<https://umbc.box.com/s/b7pnu88d0nrmx586zbbdczz4si61ofkb>

## Appendix C: UMBC Website Links for Review

<https://www.umbc.edu/>

<https://about.umbc.edu/visitors-guide/>

<https://catalog.umbc.edu/>

<https://financialaid.umbc.edu/>

<https://orientation.umbc.edu/>

<https://scholarships.umbc.edu/>

<https://veterans.umbc.edu/>

<https://enrollment.umbc.edu/undocumented/>

<https://ies.umbc.edu/>

<https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/>

No media on <https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/apply/first-year/>

No media on <https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/apply/international-first-year/>

No media on <https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/apply/transfer/>

No media on <https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/apply/international-transfer/>

<https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/visit/explore-umbc-virtually/>

<https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/visit/online-events/>

No media on <https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/community/>

- Links to <https://campuslife.umbc.edu/>

No media on <https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/community/housing/>

- Links to <https://reslife.umbc.edu/>

No media on <https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/community/dining/>

- Links to <https://dineoncampus.com/umbc/>

No media on <https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/community/student-organizations/>

- Links to <https://campuslife.umbc.edu/student-organizations/>

No media on <https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/community/athletics/>

- Links to <https://www.umbceventcenter.com/>
- <https://umbcretrievers.com/landing/index>
- <https://recreation.umbc.edu/>

No media on <https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/resources/>

No media on <https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/resources/for-parents/>

<https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/resources/transfer-students/>

No media on <https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/resources/for-coordinators/>

No media on <https://undergraduate.umbc.edu/connect/>

<https://about.umbc.edu/grad-professional/>

<https://gradschool.umbc.edu/>

<https://gradschool.umbc.edu/discover/dean/>

<https://gradschool.umbc.edu/discover/umbc/>

<https://gradschool.umbc.edu/discover/research/>

<https://gradschool.umbc.edu/admissions/international/>

No media on <https://gradschool.umbc.edu/admissions/international/pathway/>

No media on <https://gradschool.umbc.edu/admissions/nontraditional/>

No media on <https://gradschool.umbc.edu/admissions/apply/>

No media on <https://gradschool.umbc.edu/students/orientation/>

No media on <https://gradschool.umbc.edu/students/checklist/>

No media on <https://gradschool.umbc.edu/resources/services/>

#### **Appendix D: New First-Year Students By Race and Ethnicity (Fall 1997-2020)**

<https://umbc.app.box.com/s/3sqr197ohn11imyhiyqibyxyfgtdl6qd>

#### **Appendix E: Examples of Withdrawal Surveys**

University of Maryland, College Park : <https://www.registrar.umd.edu/petitions-forms/WithdrawalSurvey.pdf>

George Mason University (*Peer Institution*): <https://cehd.gmu.edu/assets/docs/saa/withdrawal-request-SAA.pdf>

University at Albany, SUNY (*Peer Institution*): <https://albany.jotform.com/92024199632155>

Binghamton, SUNY (*Peer Institution*):

[https://binghamton.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_5cZB8dxozlN4u1v](https://binghamton.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5cZB8dxozlN4u1v)