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We should not be satisfied with simply reaching our expected student retention and graduation rates but rather exceed those rates by at least 5%. This can be accomplished through our continued efforts in enhancing student success—we are on the right course.

Enhancing the success of our students is one of our highest campus priorities and we have made great strides over the last few years on this priority. Much of our efforts have concentrated on our undergraduate students. Our most recent data show that our first- to second-year retention rate is at an all-time high, as is our 4th, 5th and 6th year graduation rates. Perhaps most notably, over the last three years we have reduced the difference between our expected and actual 6-year graduate rates from 8% to 1%. This improvement is in large part due to the great work being done across campus in our individual academic units. New central programs have also been created to address the five major areas that shape student success: college readiness, the transition from high school to college, retention and persistence of students, timely graduation, and the transition from the university to the next phase of our students' lives. We also intend to work hard to enhance the success of our graduate and professional students by developing and designing programs that specifically address their unique needs. All of these efforts are a direct reflection of our “one student at a time” philosophy.

The creation of a small student success center on Garland Ave to pilot some of the programs has helped us make progress on student success. Additionally, we've taken perhaps the biggest step toward attaining even higher retention and graduation rates by breaking ground on a 71,000-square-foot student success center in the heart of campus. Scheduled to be completed in 2022, this center will be a hub of services and resources to support students from the time they are admitted through graduation and the beginning of their careers. This center will allow us to more effectively coordinate a campus-wide network of student success efforts in a

way that is bigger, better, and more efficient. The goal is to help the whole student, which includes academic, physical, mental and emotional health issues, as well as issues related to cultural and social adjustment.

As with the interim student success center on Garland Avenue, the new center will also serve as a laboratory for new ideas and pilot programs that promote K-12 college readiness, student recruitment, transition, retention, and graduation. As a member of the APLU's southern cluster, we also have a platform for sharing data, ideas, and best practices with our peers, particularly through the *Powered by Publics: Scaling Student Success* initiative. The goal of this initiative is to work collaboratively “to increase college access, eliminate the achievement gap, and award hundreds of thousands more degrees by 2025.” We are serving as the lead institution for this effort. We also hope to hire tenure-track faculty in relevant departments whose research and scholarship are in the areas of student success, including the use of predictive data analytics and formal modeling to identify factors that promote student success.

In light of anticipated declines in the number of students graduating from Arkansas high schools over the next decade, we will also need to create a comprehensive and long-term plan for more strategic recruitment and enrollment of students. Our goal should be to create a 5-year plan that identifies factors like: academic areas we expect to either grow or retract, the balance we want to strike between undergraduate and graduate/professional students, the number of on-campus versus 100% online students, and the balance of first-year and transfer student admits. Needless to say, this will necessitate that we direct resources to support the enrollment plan we create.

We also have to make a stronger case for the importance of a college education. Even though demographic data show a future decline in available high school graduates here in Arkansas, data also show that our state has one of the lowest rates of high school students who attend college. If we increase this rate, more students will be available for recruitment to our campus. Thus, our recruitment strategy will necessarily mean targeting and encouraging students from areas of the state who have been underserved in past years. To do this, we will need to reevaluate our strategy for distributing financial aid to find ways to promote strategic recruitment and retention. And we will need to design retention programs and assistance targeting students most likely to struggle, including first-generation, transfer and underserved students.

Additionally, we must find ways to reduce the overall cost of education. A recent example of this is the Arkansas Transfer Achievement Scholarship, which enables students who graduated from a UA System two-year college with an associate's degree to transfer to our campus and continue to pay the same tuition they paid at their two-year school. We need to find other innovative ways to alleviate the financial burden on our students and this means controlling the entire cost of education, including the cost of tuition, housing, textbooks, and fees.

Both students and the university benefit when students are employed on campus. As such, we should promote on-campus employment opportunities for students wherever we can. The data is straightforward: students who work on campus graduate at higher rates. The student success center is expected to provide upwards of 300 jobs, so this is a good step in the right direction. We just need to keep looking for opportunities to create student jobs in other areas of our operation, such as IT services, UREC, student affairs, and in our academic units.

Finding as much external funding as possible to support our students is important. For example, we should apply for and secure more federal grants, such as those offered by the National Science Foundation's Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation to support student success initiatives, as well as find private foundation support. We also need to continue actively raising more private funds for new scholarships after the conclusion of Campaign Arkansas. While we expect to reach our funding goal of \$10 million for the Advance Arkansas scholarship program, we still have a long way to go in meeting the overall needs of our students.

In the end, I do believe that we can be a national leader in promoting and enhancing the success of our students. More University of Arkansas degrees, at all levels, will help our students, the region, the state and our nation to prosper.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe E. Steinmetz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joe Steinmetz,
Chancellor, University of Arkansas