

Fayetteville State University

Fayetteville, North Carolina

A constituent institution of the University of North Carolina

ACE/FIDELITY INVESTMENT INNOVATION AWARD APPLICATION:

**FAYETTEVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY'S CONTINUOUS
IMPROVEMENT REPORT:
A RESPONSE TO CRISES AND TOOL FOR CONTINUOUS
IMPROVEMENT**

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Fayetteville State University's Continuous Improvement Report (CIR) is an innovative tool for rewarding academic departments' performance on ten metrics related to major components of the institution's mission. The CIR has had a short-term and long-term impact on the university: 1) in a relatively short time, it has helped the university respond effectively to threatening economic and political conditions; and 2) it has established a culture of continuous improvement that prepares the university to achieve future successes.

Fayetteville State University (FSU) is a historically-Black, comprehensive, regional constituent institution of the University of North Carolina (UNC). Founded in 1867, the university's primary mission is to "... promote the educational, social, cultural, and economic transformation of southeastern North Carolina and beyond." As an institution of access and opportunity, FSU has a current student enrollment of approximately 6,100 students, two-thirds of which are African-American, with nearly half (49.2%) adult learners, and one-fifth (20.2%) military affiliated (active-duty soldiers, veterans, and their dependents).

The Continuous Improvement Report – Response to Crises

The 2008 recession led to successive years of budget reductions to the UNC system, which translated into a reduction of nearly 22% in state funding to FSU (from \$61.2 million to \$47.8 million) and the loss of 150 faculty positions (433 to 283). The diminishing state resources created a political environment in which the costs and benefits of the University of North Carolina system, and especially the five HBCUs, came under critical public scrutiny. As an institution that serves African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students and adult learners, FSU cannot boast of incoming student profiles (i.e., high average SAT scores or % in top ten percent of class) or outcomes (retention and graduation rates of first-time students) comparable to institutions that serve more affluent, traditional-aged, majority students. In a political context in which the value of HBCU's was being called into question, the measures

more appropriate to student populations at majority institutions could be used to fuel the rancor toward HBCUs by legislators and members of the general public who have limited understanding of the broader context of higher education and are indifferent – if not hostile -- to HBCUs.

In the midst of this crisis, FSU could ill afford to take a passive, reactive posture in addressing the economic and political challenges. It was essential to be proactive. Dr. James A. Anderson, appointed as Chancellor in 2008, insisted that the university adopt a business-model approach to addressing these economic and political challenges. The Continuous Improvement Report was one effort to implement a business-model approach.

Impact of the Continuous Improvement Report

The implementation of the Continuous Improvement Report as part of the adoption of a business-model approach enabled the university to make significant progress despite the challenging economic and political environment. The effectiveness of the CIR derives from two essential features: 1) its emphasis on departmental specific data that indicates the extent to which each department is contributing to institutional progress on key metrics and 2) its provision of budgetary rewards for high performance and improvement.

The overall climate of continuous improvement established by the CIR helped the university make significant progress despite budget reductions and has provided a means for conveying this progress to more skeptical critics of HBCUs. The chart below shows that FSU became more efficient in degree productivity. Prior to the recession, approximately 15.2% of degree seeking undergraduates earned a degree; By 2010-11, that percentage had increased to 20.8% and has remained above our peer average of 19.1% in each subsequent year, with the highest percentage of 22.2% in 2011- 12. Not only did a higher percentage of undergraduates

earn degrees, but these increases were achieved even as state funding decreased by nearly 22% from \$61.2 million to \$47.8 million.

Year	UG FTE/Degree Seeking	# UG degrees	% UG degrees	State Funding (millions)
2007-08	5,264/ 5,105	775	15.2%	\$61.2
2008-09	4,905/ 4,608	773	16.7%	\$61.2
2009-10	4,926/ 4,759	876	18.4%	\$55.7
2010-11	4,512/ 4,339	902	20.8%	\$52.7
2011-12	4,592/ 4,453	991	22.2%	\$50.3
2012-13	4,615/ 4,476	937	20.9%	\$49.7
2013-14	4,705/ 4,533	965	21.3%	\$49.4
2014-15	4,603/ 4,365	911	20.9%	\$47.8

The increased degree productivity was coupled with significant improvements in academic performance as reflected in the average cumulative GPA of undergraduates. The average for each semester is reported below.

Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015
2.73	2.74	2.8	2.83	2.92	2.93	2.99

This improvement in student GPAs by .26 point from 2009 – 2015 is a reflection of a campus culture committed to continuous improvement in challenging and supporting students to achieve higher academic standards.

As noted above, traditional retention and graduation rates – because they focus exclusively on first time students and ignore the university’s significant transfer population – are not fully adequate measures of FSU’s effectiveness. Yet, given the public attention to these metrics, it is important to show progress on them. As the chart below shows, FSU has surpassed its average of peer institutions for one year retention rates and is making progress in matching peers in four- and six-year rates.

1st-time students who enrolled in fall :	N	1-year retention rate (% returned for year 2)	4-year graduation rate (% completed degree in 4 years)	6-year graduation rate (% completed degree in 6 years)
2007	931	69.3%	12%	32.1%
2008	579	73.6%	17.1%	34.5%
2009	754	69.1%	16%	35.1%
2010	538	72.3%	16.5%	NA
2011	647	75.6%	17.2%	NA
2012	600	71.3%	NA	NA
2013	707	74.5%	NA	NA
2014	476	78%	NA	NA
Peer Average		70.5%	20%	41.6%

The CIR Metrics

As the sample report below shows, the CIR awards additional funds for both performance and improvement on ten metrics that are essential to the university’s mission. Improvement is always measured as a ratio of actual to possible improvement to avoid giving an unfair

advantage to departments with persistently low performance. Each fall semester, the provost meets with each department to review the report and discuss departmental strengths and areas of needed improvement. These annual meetings help convey the importance of using data to guide continuous improvement.

Sample CIR Report

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Continuous Improvement Report	Department: ABC							
2	Metrics	Year One*	Points	Year Two*	Points (4)	Possible Imp	Actual Imp	Imp Pts	
3	Persistence (First-Time) (1)	0.71	0.71	0.91	0.91	0.29	0.19	0.68	
4	Persistence (Transfer) (1)	0.86	0.86	0.63	0.63	0.14	-0.23	-0.23	
5	Teaching Evaluation	4.49	0.90	4.52	0.90	0.51	0.03	0.06	
6	Advisement Survey Results	1.00	1.00	0.94	0.94	0.00	-0.06	-0.06	
7	PSLO evaluation	3.00	0.60	3.00	0.60	2.00	0.00	0.00	
8	OPAR evaluation	3.20	0.64	3.35	0.67	1.80	0.15	0.08	
9	SCH/FTE Ratio	0.97	0.97	0.98	0.98			0.38	
10	Research/Creative Activities (2)			0.80	0.80				
11	Community Service (2)			0.60	0.60				
12	CLA Senior Results (3)			0.00	0.00				
13	Total		Performance Points (5)		5.63	Improvement Points (6)		0.90	
14									
15	Points					Total Points		9.24 (7)	
16			Department Size	5		Normalized Score		11.16 (8)	
17	CIR Funds (Normalized Pts. X \$125.00)		Maximum Size	24		CIR Funds		\$1,395 (9)	
18									
19	**"Improvement" compares these two years								
20									

The CIR metrics encompass multiple components of institutions effectiveness, such as student learning, instruction advisement, fiscal efficiency, and faculty accomplishments.

1. Persistence – First-time students - Each department is evaluated on the percentage of its majors that either earn a degree in a year or re-enroll in the subsequent year. Departments are challenged to achieve at least 80% persistence and in the most recent year, 56% (11/16) have done so, with two departments surpassing 90%.
2. Persistence – Transfer students – Since many students matriculate initially at FSU as transfer students, it is essential to monitor the number of majors in each department who either earn a degree in a year or re-enroll in the subsequent year. In 2014-15, 88% (14/16) of departments surpassed the 80% target with four departments surpassing 90%.

3. Teaching evaluation – This metric is based on the average rating on student evaluations to the question, “To what extent has this course contributed to your learning?” With the number of respondents ranging between 25,000 and 35,000, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 the highest rating, the overall rating has improved from 4.18 to 4.56 since the inception of the CIR, with 100% of departments showing improvement. The CIR emphasis on student evaluations has encouraged departments to focus their attention on strategies to improve instruction.
4. Advisement Survey – Departments are evaluated on the responses of their majors to a question on an annual survey, “To what extent are you satisfied with the quality of advisement you have received?” In 2008, approximately two-thirds of students responded affirmatively to this question, while in 2014-15, 90% responded affirmatively.
5. Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLO) Evaluation – Given the importance of assessment of student learning, each department’s program learning outcomes, the assessment measures and targets, and the use of result for improvement are evaluated based on rubric. All departments have improved their ratings of assessment of student learning.
6. Operational Plan and Assessment Report (OPAR) – Each department is required to develop an annual OPAR, which establishes its departmental missions, goals, outcomes, assessments, and strategies for improvement. The OPAR is evaluated based on a rubric that has resulted in steady progress on this tool in operational planning and assessment.
7. SCH/FTE ratio – This metric has focused departmental attention on the use of faculty resources by comparing the department’s student-credit-hour generated faculty positions, based on the UNC funding model, and the department’s actual number of faculty positions. Departments with a ratio of less than one recognize that they are not enrolling the number of students that match their actual faculty positions and are therefore not eligible for receiving

additional faculty positions. Since the inception of the SCH/FTE ratio, the institutional average has increased from 67% to 99%.

8. **Research/Creative Activities** – Since research and creative activities are part of the university’s mission and faculty workload, the CIR utilizes a rubric that establishes minimum expectations for each faculty each year and measures the percentage of faculty who meet this expectation. This metric was only recently included in the CIR, so trend data are not yet available.
9. **Service** - Since community engagement and service are part of the university’s mission and faculty workload, the CIR utilizes a rubric that establishes minimum expectations for each faculty each year and measures the percentage of faculty who meet this expectation. This metric was only recently included in the CIR, so trend data are not yet available.
10. **Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) departmental results** – This metric refers to the percentage of seniors in a department that earn a score of proficient or advanced on the CLA, which is a graduation requirement at FSU. Since this metric has only recently been added to the CIR, trend data are not yet available.

Long-term Impact of the CIR

While the CIR has enabled FSU to respond effectively to immediate economic and political challenges, its more significant value lies in its impact on university culture. By providing data specific to each department for each metric, the CIR helps faculty build upon areas of strength and develop strategies for addressing areas of needed improvement. The findings of the CIR and strategies for improvement based on the CIR data are incorporated into each department’s annual Operational Plan and Assessment Report (OPAR); the CIR data provide a basis for setting performance targets and measuring success in achieving these targets. Even though the funds awarded to each department are normally modest, ranging from \$1,000 to

\$4,000, they have helped motivate faculty to develop improvement strategies since these funds have supported professional development activities that would have otherwise not been possible. Moreover, because the CIR metrics are incorporated into evaluations of department chairs, deans, and the provost, institutional leaders have an incentive to ensure that the metrics are used to guide continuous improvement.

The culture of continuous improvement promoted by the CIR is now well established at FSU. Continuous improvement has been operationalized. Faculty staff and administrators now value the process of establishing goals and intended outcomes, assessing the extent to which they achieve the goals and outcomes, and – most importantly – using the results to guide improvement. Even if specific components of the CIR are revised, this culture of continuous improvement prepares the university to thrive as the economic climate slowly improves. Thanks to the impact of the CIR on institutional culture, proponents of new academic programs and services, departmental or college reorganizations, revisions in faculty workload, or other new ventures will not make such recommendations without considering their potential impact on the CIR metrics. Moreover, given the culture of continuous improvement, advocates for new programs recognize the necessity of supporting their proposal with strong evidence and effective plans for assessment.

The CIR was one response to Chancellor Anderson's mandate to operate on a business model. This tool enabled the university to respond to the economic and political crises that arose from the recession and has established a culture of continuous improvement that provides a basis for the university to thrive in the future.