



PRESS RELEASE
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Record High Six-year Graduation Rate Caps Spring Semester
University Also Sees Significant Increase in Student Retention

Pine Bluff, AR — The [University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff's](#) (UAPB) six-year graduation rate reached 40 percent for the 2020-2021 academic year. This number is a record high since the university began reporting the six-year graduation rate in 1998. The university coupled this figure with an 81 percent retention rate at the end of the spring semester.

“We are proud to acknowledge this achievement and to recognize the leadership roles that our faculty and staff have played in making this possible. The diligence of the entire university has allowed us to defy the odds created by a global pandemic and achieve success in our enrollment, graduation and retention goals,” said Chancellor Laurence B. Alexander. “Our university has experienced a phenomenal year—from our enrollment growth in the fall to the growth of our graduation and retention rates.”

Since assuming the role of chancellor in 2013, Dr. Alexander has prioritized improving student success. Under his leadership, both UAPB’s 6-year graduation and overall retention rates have increased from 25.8 percent to 40 percent and from 71.5 percent to 81 percent, respectively. Additionally, the retention rate for first-time full-time entering cohorts increased from 62.1 to 74.2 percent. This growth is indicative of Alexander’s intentional focus on student success and the student experience, hallmarks of his administration. In 2016, this focus led to the creation of the Division of Enrollment Management and Student Success and signaled the chancellor’s commitment to increase student enrollment, retention, and graduation rates.

The importance of student support programs in achieving the six-year rate is echoed by Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management and Student Success Braque Talley, Sr., who also emphasized the integral role of the alignment of university-wide efforts in reaching these numbers.



“Achieving the 40 percent mark on our graduation rate is truly a team win,” said Dr. Talley. “Reaching this benchmark is the culmination of goal setting, strategic collaboration, data management, seamless lines of communication and being intentional about our support for students. However, we refuse to rest on our laurels and are committed to further increasing our graduation rate.”

Nearly 270 students earned degrees during UAPB’s spring 2021 Commencement Ceremony, held Saturday, May 8, at Simmons Bank Field. The graduating class, comprised of students from the 2015 cohort, which is represented by the number of first-time, first-year undergraduates who completed their degrees within six years, drove the six-year graduation rate to 40 percent.

Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Robert Z. Carr, Jr. attributed the increased matriculation rates to the university’s student-support systems and its continued focus on instructional improvements.

“While we are cautiously optimistic about the improvement of our six-year graduation rate, our faculty continues to understand the importance of mentoring our students in the classroom and challenging them to succeed,” said Dr. Carr. “A 40 percent, six-year graduation rate is a 23-year record high for the university, but we are not satisfied. We realize that we must continue to strive to improve our instructional processes and academic support systems as we look to increase our six-year graduation rate even more for the next student cohort.”

Rita D. Conley, director of the UAPB student success center, acknowledged the role of the university’s synergistic approach to ensuring student matriculation and the importance of maintaining this strategy for future success.

“Every academic department and co-curricular unit played an important role in this great achievement, said Conley. “We will continue to work together to increase student success and develop innovative support programs such as our student success workshops, academic recovery programs and our senior completion programs to offer our students the academic and personal support they need to earn their degrees from UAPB.”



About the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) is an 1890 Land-Grant HBCU with a diverse student population, competitive degree offerings and stellar faculty. For more than 140 years, UAPB has worked to create an environment that emphasizes learning, growth and productivity while affording a basic need to its students: a chance to advance. UAPB offers certificate and associate degree programs, more than 40 undergraduate and master's degree programs and a doctoral program in Aquaculture/Fisheries. Students are active in more than 100 organizations, including an internationally renowned Vesper Choir, Marching Musical Machine of the Mid-South Band, concert bands, wind symphony and an accomplished athletics program.

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Information Contact:

Braque Talley, PhD
Vice Chancellor, Enrollment Management and Student Success
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
870.575.8364
talleyb@uapb.edu