

The March 2018 Arizona's universities performance audit report found that the universities have established goals and designed strategies to improve student retention and graduation rates, and can enhance these efforts by consistently evaluating strategies and improving strategic plans. The universities' status in implementing the recommendations is as follows:

Status of 15 recommendations

Implemented:	12
Implemented in a different manner	2
Partially implemented:	1

Unless otherwise directed by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, this concludes our follow-up work on the universities' efforts to implement the recommendations from the March 2018 performance audit.

Chapter 2: Universities should establish guidance for more consistently evaluating strategies to achieve student retention and graduation goals

2.1 ASU, NAU, and UA should continue efforts to develop university-wide approaches for evaluating their student retention and graduation strategies. These approaches should include related policies, procedures, and/or guidance for evaluating their student retention and graduation strategies. Their university-wide evaluation approaches should also include guidance on planning the evaluation of each strategy before it is implemented. In addition, these approaches should include guidance on the following:

- Strategy descriptions that clarify the strategy's activities and desired short-term and long-term results, including an explanation of how the strategy is expected to achieve these results;
- Questions the evaluation will answer, including questions for assessing strategy implementation and short-term outcomes and long-term outcomes related to overcoming common obstacles to staying in school and graduating in a timely manner;
- Methods for answering the evaluation questions, including what information is needed to do so, how the information will be obtained, and how the information will be analyzed and interpreted. Additionally, strategies that involve voluntary participation should include methods for addressing the potential influence of self-selection bias, when applicable; and
- Explanations for how evaluation results will be used.

Implemented at 18 months for ASU

Partially implemented at 18 months for NAU—As reported in the initial followup, NAU established a committee and developed procedures for determining which student retention and graduation strategies NAU's institutional assessment and research staff will evaluate. However, NAU reported that it does not plan to develop university-wide policies, procedures, and/or guidance for evaluating its student retention and graduation strategies that are not selected for evaluation by the committee because it believes not all retention and graduation strategies warrant the same level of in-depth analysis. NAU reported that, although all student retention and graduation strategies will be assessed at some level, the committee will evaluate those that have been prioritized for evaluation, which NAU reported will include the majority of campus-wide initiatives that lead to retention and graduation.

Implemented at 18 months for UA

Chapter 3: Universities should improve strategic plans to help achieve student retention and graduation goals

3.1 ASU should:

- a. Develop a SMART objective for its goal related to increasing the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to Arizona community college transfer students.

Implemented at 6 months

- b. Consider developing multiple SMART objectives for each of its student retention and graduation goals, as appropriate.

Implemented at 6 months

- c. Develop performance measures and/or revise existing performance measures to assess the progress of its strategies and tasks for achieving its goals related to its freshman retention rate, 6-year graduation rate, and the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to all students. ASU should also consider using a combination of multiple types of performance measures to assess different aspects of its performance related to each of its strategies and tasks, where appropriate.

Implemented at 6 months

- d. Revise its action plans for its goals related to its freshman retention rate, 6-year graduation rate, and the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to all students to specify deadlines and the party or parties responsible for implementing each strategy and task.

Implemented at 6 months

3.2 NAU should:

- a. Develop at least one SMART objective for each of its student retention and graduation goals.

Implemented in a different manner at 30 months—NAU has developed 6 strategies for achieving its student retention and graduation goals, and it has developed objectives for achieving these strategies, including developing multiple objectives for 5 of the 6 strategies. Additionally, although some of the objectives NAU developed include various elements of the SMART approach, NAU incorporated all elements of the SMART approach in its action plans and performance measures related to its objectives.

- b. Consider developing multiple SMART objectives for each of its student retention and graduation goals, as appropriate.

Implemented in a different manner at 30 months—See explanation for Recommendation 3.2a

- c. Develop performance measures and/or revise existing performance measures to assess the progress of its strategies and tasks for achieving its goals related to its 6-year graduation rate, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to all students, and the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to Arizona community college transfer students. NAU should also consider using a combination of multiple types of performance measures to assess different aspects of its performance related to each of its strategies and tasks, where appropriate.

Implemented at 30 months

- d. Continue with its efforts to develop action plans for its goals related to its 6-year graduation rate, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to all students, and the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to Arizona community college transfer students, and these action plans should include the strategies and tasks that will be implemented to achieve the goals and specify deadlines and the party or parties responsible for implementing each strategy and task.

Implemented at 30 months

3.3 UA should:

- a. Develop a SMART objective for its goal related to increasing its freshmen retention rate.

Implemented at 18 months

- b. Consider developing multiple SMART objectives for each of its student retention and graduation goals, as appropriate.

Implemented at 18 months

- c. Develop performance measures and/or revise existing performance measures to assess the progress of its strategies and tasks for achieving each of its student retention and graduation goals. UA should also consider using a combination of multiple types of performance measures to assess different aspects of its performance related to each of its strategies and tasks, where appropriate.

Implemented at 18 months

- d. Revise its action plans for each of its student retention and graduation goals to specify the party or parties responsible for implementing each strategy and task.

Implemented at 18 months