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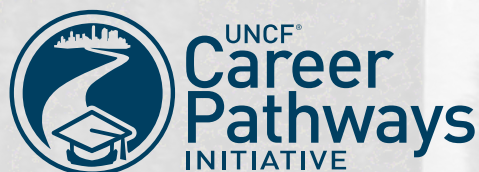
CAREER PATHWAYS INITIATIVE

Insights From the First Two Years of Implementation

Mid-Program Assessment
August 2020

UNCF®
Career
Pathways
INITIATIVE

Introduction

The CPI Mid-Term Assessment provides insights from the first two years of the UNCF® Career Pathways Initiative (CPI). We derived insights from a comprehensive view of the experience of UNCF's (United Negro College Fund) Institute for Capacity Building (ICB) and our network of institutions implementing the program. To facilitate continuous improvement, this assessment will share early insights that will guide how we address the following questions through completion of the grant:

- **How do we refine ICB's delivery of programmatic supports?**

- **How do we will scale promising practices across our three-pronged network-based approach?**

- **How do we amplify current efforts to support student success?**

UNCF, ICB, and the CPI's ultimate goal is to increase student and workforce outcomes for low-income, first generation Black students and other students of color.

This mid-term assessment is an important milestone for the program. Insights from this assessment will shape how UNCF will enhance our execution of the CPI program through the remainder of the grant period. It will also identify promising practices to inform transformative change at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), predominantly Black institutions (PBIs), and other institutions of higher education.

The assessment covers the first two years of program implementation or the period from January 2017 - December 2019. It is organized to provide insights from three critical components: program overview, early outcomes and institutional highlights. The assessment ends with a summary of our progress to date and path forward.

CPI Overview

In 2015, UNCF launched the CPI with a $50 million investment from Lilly Endowment, Inc. The program is designed to engage four-year HBCUs and PBIs by strengthening their academic delivery and operational models to improve student success, graduate and career, and institutional outcomes.

CPI is housed within UNCF's Institute for Capacity Building. Founded in 2006, the ICB seeks to support the resiliency of partnering institutions as they execute programming. For ICB, resiliency sits at the nexus of institutional effectiveness, academic competitiveness and financial viability of Black colleges and universities. Through ICB, CPI is designed to support and strengthen the work of partnering institutions. We prioritize an integrated approach to develop and execute change initiatives. We engage institutions through ongoing and targeted capacity building supports, and deliver continuous institutional feedback.

To help institutions prepare 21st century, career-ready graduates, CPI employs a three-pronged approach to career pathway development. This institution-wide approach was codesigned to shape an undergraduate experience that results in **"students engaged to learn"** and **"graduates ready to earn."**

> Improve student success, graduate career and institutional outcomes.

THE THREE PRONGS ARE:

1. **Guided Pathways –** Direct students' choices and academic behaviors to maximize efficiency and effectiveness of credit accumulation and credential completion
   "How do we make everything about the college-going process easy, but the learning?"

2. **Curricular Enhancements –** Equip students with applied knowledge, skills and abilities the market demands
   "How do we ensure our curriculum, including our pedagogy and content, are aligned to 21st century needs?"

3. **Integrated Co-Curricular Engagement –** Equip students with experiences that enable academic and career success
   "How do we raise expectations for when, where and how students can learn?"

Figure 1 provides details for each of these strategies.

Figure 1

Summary of CPI Strategies, Illustrative Approaches, Aspirations and Intended Impact

Twenty-three HBCUs and one PBI are participating in this initiative.
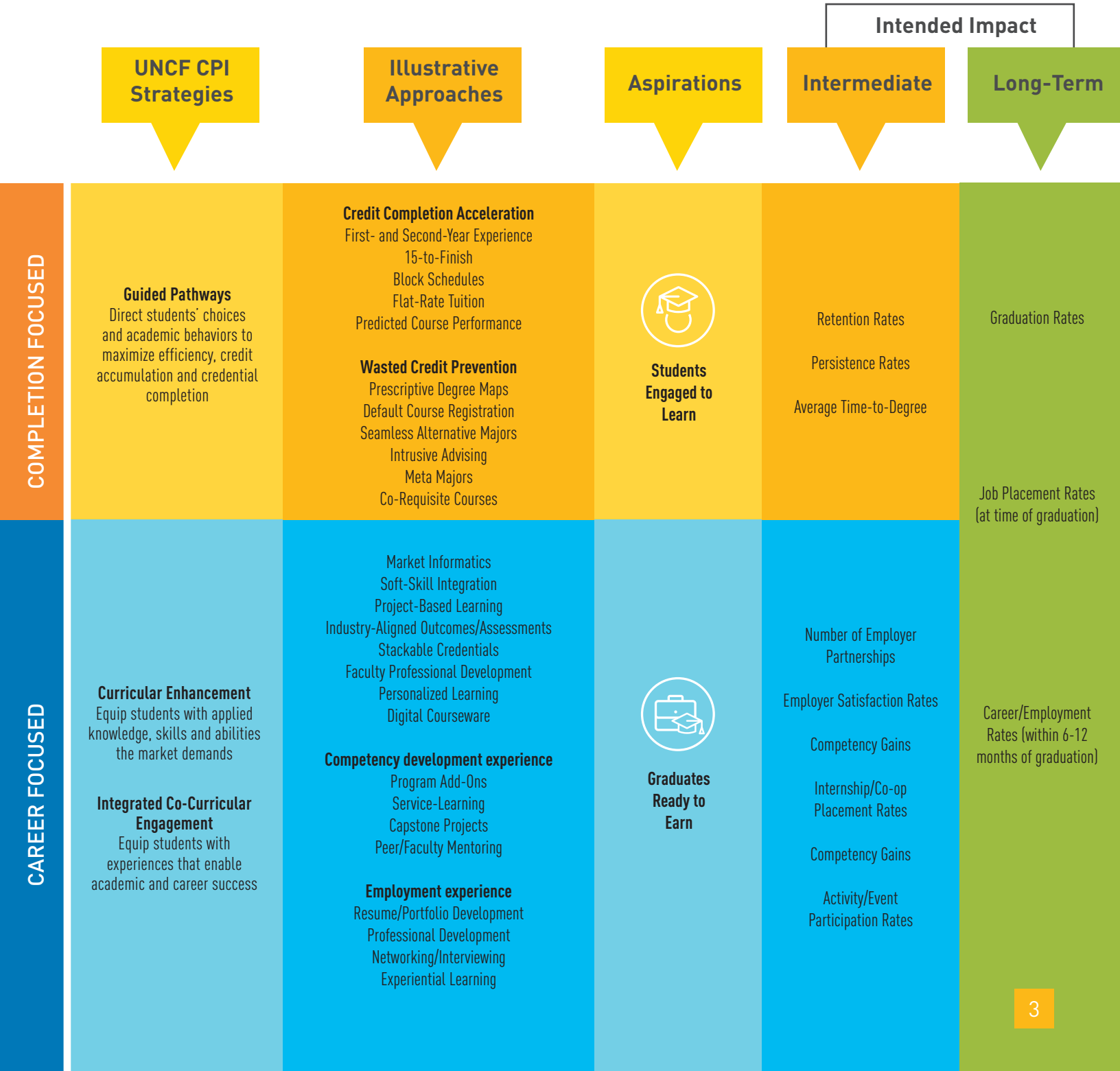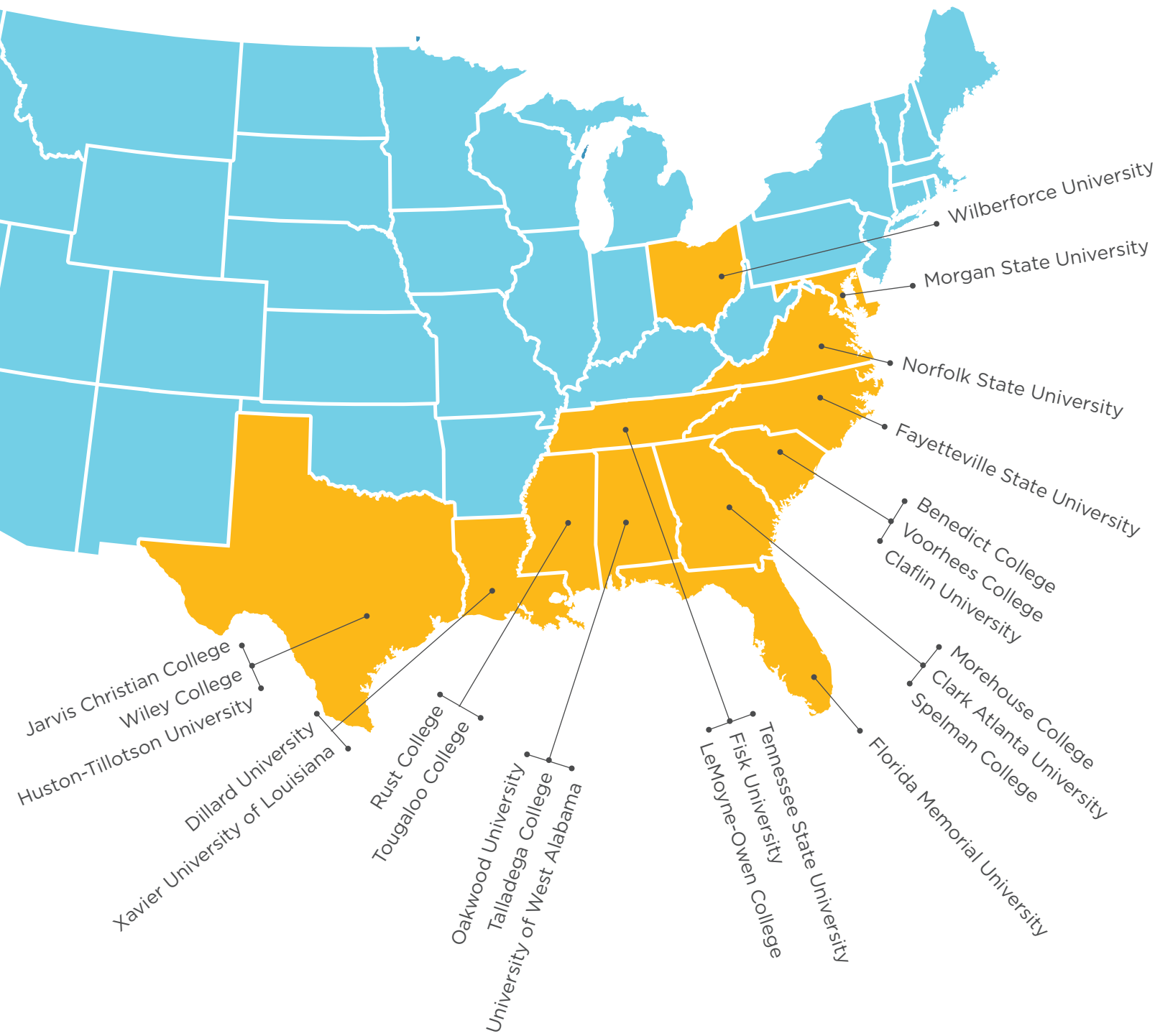**Table 1** and **Figure 2** provide additional details of participating institutions.

	UNCF CPI Strategies	Illustrative Approaches	Aspirations	Intended Impact	
				Intermediate	**Long-Term**
COMPLETION FOCUSED	**Guided Pathways** Direct students' choices and academic behaviors to maximize efficiency, credit accumulation and credential completion	**Credit Completion Acceleration** First- and Second-Year Experience 15-to-Finish Block Schedules Flat-Rate Tuition Predicted Course Performance **Wasted Credit Prevention** Prescriptive Degree Maps Default Course Registration Seamless Alternative Majors Intrusive Advising Meta Majors Co-Requisite Courses	**Students Engaged to Learn**	Retention Rates Persistence Rates Average Time-to-Degree	Graduation Rates
CAREER FOCUSED	**Curricular Enhancement** Equip students with applied knowledge, skills and abilities the market demands **Integrated Co-Curricular Engagement** Equip students with experiences that enable academic and career success	Market Informatics Soft-Skill Integration Project-Based Learning Industry-Aligned Outcomes/Assessments Stackable Credentials Faculty Professional Development Personalized Learning Digital Courseware **Competency development experience** Program Add-Ons Service-Learning Capstone Projects Peer/Faculty Mentoring **Employment experience** Resume/Portfolio Development Professional Development Networking/Interviewing Experiential Learning	**Graduates Ready to Earn**	Number of Employer Partnerships Employer Satisfaction Rates Competency Gains Internship/Co-op Placement Rates Competency Gains Activity/Event Participation Rates	Job Placement Rates (at time of graduation) Career/Employment Rates (within 6-12 months of graduation)

Table 1

Alphabetic List and Locations of CPI Institutions

Benedict College Columbia, SC

Claflin University Orangeburg, SC

Clark Atlanta University Atlanta, GA

Dillard University New Orleans, LA

Fayetteville State University Fayetteville, NC

Fisk University Nashville, TN

Florida Memorial University Miami, FL

Huston-Tillotson University Austin, TX

Jarvis Christian College Hawkins, TX

LeMoyne-Owen College Memphis, TN

Morehouse College Atlanta, GA

Morgan State University Baltimore, MD

Norfolk State University Norfolk, VA

Oakwood University Huntsville, AL

Rust College Holly Springs, MS

Spelman College Atlanta, GA

Tougaloo College Jackson, MS

Tennessee State University Nashville, TN

Talladega College Talladega, AL

Voorhees College Denmark, SC

Wilberforce University Wilberforce, OH

Wiley College Marshall, TX

Xavier University of Louisiana New Orleans, LA

University of West Alabama* Livingston, AL

Figure 2
Map of CPI Institutions

- Wilberforce University
- Morgan State University
- Norfolk State University
- Fayetteville State University
- Benedict College
- Voorhees College
- Claflin University
- Morehouse College
- Clark Atlanta University
- Spelman College
- Jarvis Christian College
- Wiley College
- Huston-Tillotson University
- Dillard University
- Xavier University of Louisiana
- Rust College
- Tougaloo College
- Oakwood University
- Talladega College
- University of West Alabama
- Tennessee State University
- Fisk University
- LeMoyne-Owen College
- Florida Memorial University

Note: * Denotes a Predominately Black Institution

Mid-Term Outcomes

To ensure alignment and a collective understanding, ICB developed the CPI Innovation Survey **(see Figure 3)**. While the primary objective of this tool is to ensure a level of standardization across our cohort. It also serves as an awareness and knowledge building tool, connecting our partnering institutions to promising practices leveraged across the higher education space.

The survey attempts to determine whether an institution is participating in a specific intervention and to assess the level of institutional effort (i.e., none, low, moderate or high participation) **(see Figures 4 and 5)**. The survey is administered as a part of our annual reporting process, where outcome metrics are also collected **(see Figure 6)**.

The CPI Innovation Survey serves as an awareness and knowledge building tool to connect our partnering institutions to promising practices.

Figure 3
Institutional Interventions

Guided Pathways

15-to-Finish – A program encouraging students to enroll in 15 credit hours per semester.

Accelerated Courses – Courses that take shorter than a term to complete.

Alternative Credentials – Non-degree awards including nano-degrees, badges, micro-masters and certificates.

Alumni Student/Pairing – Matching of students and alumni for mentoring purposes.

Appreciative Advising – Open-ended, student-centered approach to advising.

Automated Withdrawal Advising - Tracking in-course progress and advising against course failure.

Block Schedules – A system of scheduling allowing for extended class time.

Career Maps – A charted course to achieve a career path.

Corequisite Courses – A course with both developmental and general requirements.

Course Behavior Alerts – Learning analytics indicating student behavior and performance in a course.

Default Course Registration – Automatic course registration.

Degree Maps – A charted course for college completion.

Early Warning System – Data system identifying at-risk students.

Emergency Funds – Emergency aid provided to students by the institution to aid retention and completion.

Flat-Rate Tuition – Students are charged the same price for tuition despite number of credit hours.

First-Year Experience – A program at many American colleges and universities designed to help students prepare for the transition from high school to college.

Intrusive Advising – Consistent intentional contact approach to advising.

Major-Career Interest Mapping – Charted major skills leading to multiple career paths.

Meta Majors – Designing student experiences and narrowing course choice according to initial student interest.

Milestone Degree Requirements – Standards for degree completion beyond course requirements.

Mini-Mesters – Abbreviated academic semesters.

Mini-Scholarships/Gap Funding - Small scholarships to replace tuition dollars provided to students to aid retention and completion.

Modularization – Competency focused curricula.

Peer-to-Peer Mentoring – Student guided/led mentoring.

Pre-and Post-Course Support – Supplemental learning for specified groups of students before and after course.

Predictive Course/Program Performance – The use of data analytics to predict student in-course or program performance.

Program Review – Assessing and redesigning program requirements.

Seamless Alternative Majors – Course and credit alignment between majors allowing for seamless transitions for students.

Second-Year Experience – Program aiming to empower sophomores to excel through providing opportunities to enhance academic and professional success, sense of belonging, engagement with faculty, overall wellness, community citizenship and leadership.

Summer Bridge Programs – Summer preparation for students transitioning from high school to college.

Supplemental Instruction – Peer-assisted in-course support.

Curricular Enhancements

Artificial Intelligence – The use of technology to provide virtual learning environments.

Blended Learning – An education program (formal or non-formal) that combines online digital media with traditional classroom methods.

Business Advisory Board – A board composed to advise institutions on efforts to create pathways to industry and align to workforce demands.

Digital Courseware – Adaptive digital learning tools, including software that supports student learning such as games, apps and personalized content.

Industry-Aligned Outcomes and Assessment – Aligning programs and curriculum with needed industry skills.

Industry Exchange Programs – Individuals from the workforce acting as professors, while faculty members engage in externships.

Integration of Soft Skills – Integrating communication and listening skills into curriculum.

Market Informatics – Career information presented along with program information.

Open-Source Curriculum – An online instructional resource that can be freely used, distributed and modified.

Personalized Learning – Instruction that offers pedagogy, curriculum and learning environments to meet the individual student's needs.

Program Redesign – Program analysis or audit and manipulation according to results.

Program Elimination – The elimination of a program following program analysis.

Project-Based Learning – A student-centered pedagogy that involves a dynamic classroom approach in which it is believed that students acquire a deeper knowledge through active exploration of real-world challenges and problems.

Stackable Credentials – Seamless academic programs—ranging potentially from six-credit certificates to terminal degrees—allow students to leave higher education for a job and then return later, with their credits counting toward the next certificate or degree.

Figure 3
Institutional Interventions

Integrated Co-Curricular Engagement

Apprenticeship – A system of training a new generation of practitioners of a trade or profession with on-the-job training and accompanying study or coursework.

Capstone Projects – Students pursue independent research on a question or problem of their choice.

Co-Curricular Transcripts – Transcripts that include accomplishments outside of the traditional classroom.

Experiential Learning – The process of learning through experience or learning by doing.

Interview Training – Providing students with skills to increase interview performance.

Micro-Internship – Short-term work experience placements.

Networking Opportunities- Providing social events for students and the workforce.

On-Campus Internship – An on-campus work experience designed to help students learn about a professional field and to gain valuable work experience.

Personality/Career Interest Assessments – A proficiency in professional psychology that involves the administration, scoring and interpretation of empirically supported measures of personality traits and styles in order to advise on career steps.

Program Ad-Ons – Enhancement of the overall program experience for students using elements outside of the standard curriculum or program to increase competency building.

Resume/Portfolio Development – Providing students assistance in developing resumes and portfolios.

Service-Learning – An educational approach that combines learning objectives with community service.

Study Abroad – A number of arrangements by which students complete part of their degree program through educational activities outside the United States.

Change Management

Accreditation and QEP Inclusion – Including CPI into reporting/ planning processes.

Data Analytics – The analysis of various data points to inform institutional decision-making.

Faculty and Staff Teams – Faculty and/or staff composed to advance solutions supporting increased student outcomes.

Professional Development – training for faculty and staff.

Project Management Professionals – Utilizing industry approaches to project management.

Social Media Leveraging – Using social media outlets to enhance work and outreach.

Standard Operating Procedures – A set of step-by-step instructions compiled by an organization to help workers carry out complex routine operations.

Succession Planning – A process for identifying and developing leaders for positions.

Figure 4

Two-Year Progress of Institutional Activity

Course Behavior Alerts	41%
Social Media Leveraging	36%
Accreditation and QEP Inclusion	32%
Early Warning System	32%
Major Career Interest Mapping	32%
Milestone Degree Requirements	29%

Figure 5

Most Used Interventions from 2018-2020

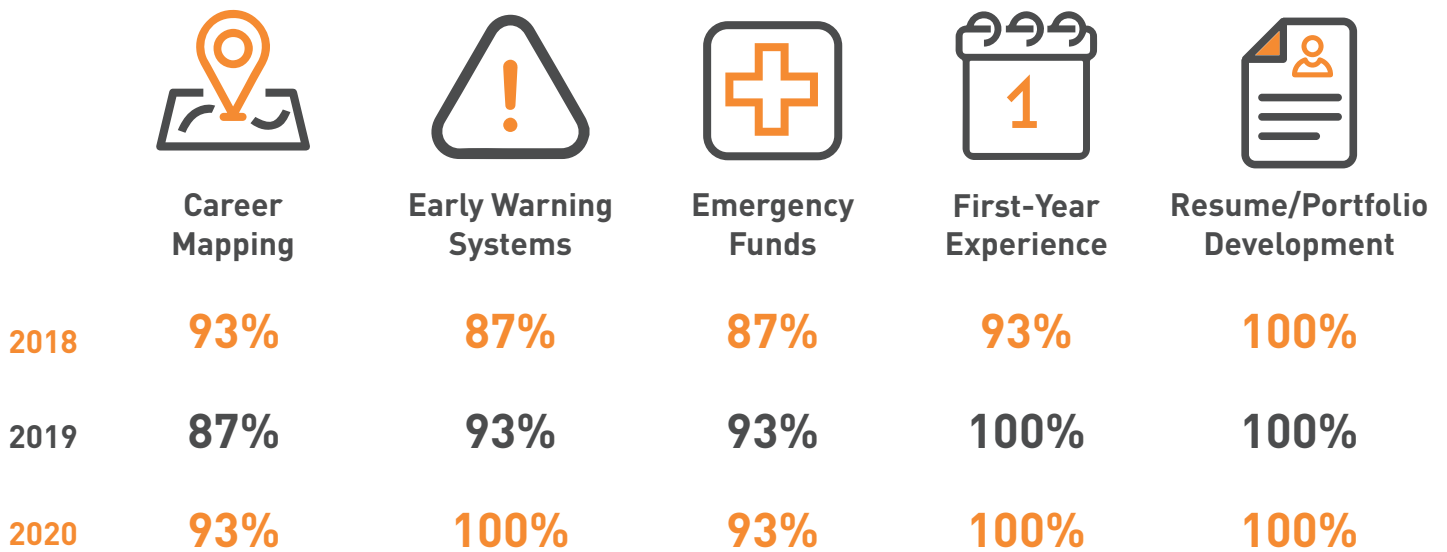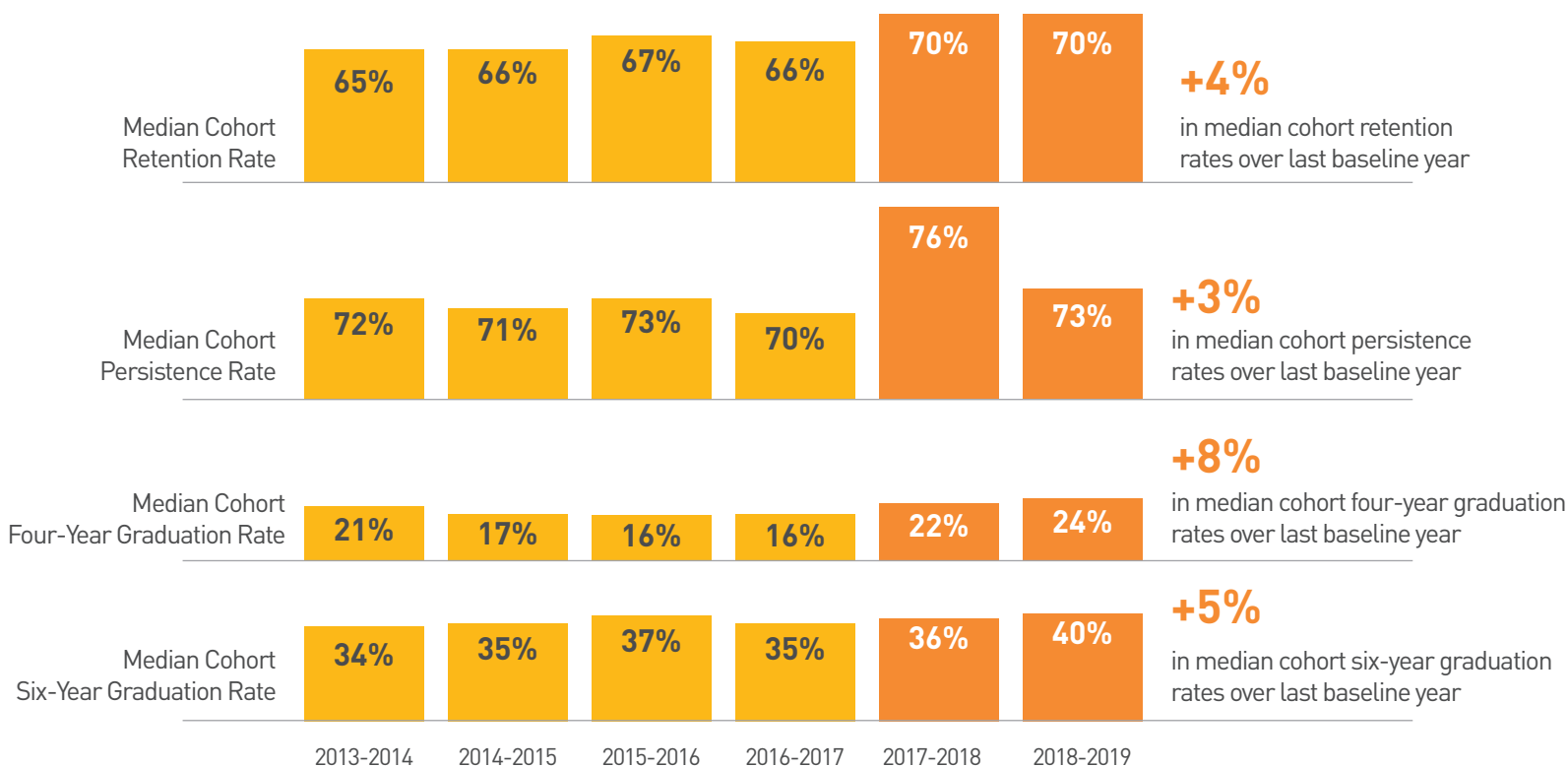|	Career Mapping	Early Warning Systems	Emergency Funds	First-Year Experience	Resume/Portfolio Development
2018	93%	87%	87%	93%	100%
2019	87%	93%	93%	100%	100%
2020	93%	100%	93%	100%	100%

Figure 6

Three-Year Progress of Institutional and Student Outcome Metrics

As a part of our work, we collect institutional and student outcome metrics annually. Thus far, we have established a baseline of institutional metrics from the onset of program implementation and compared that baseline to metrics from the four school years prior to CPI. In year three of implementation, we have seen signs of institutional progress according to metrics presented.

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	
Median Cohort Retention Rate	65%	66%	67%	66%	70%	70%	**+4%** in median cohort retention rates over last baseline year
Median Cohort Persistence Rate	72%	71%	73%	70%	76%	73%	**+3%** in median cohort persistence rates over last baseline year
Median Cohort Four-Year Graduation Rate	21%	17%	16%	16%	22%	24%	**+8%** in median cohort four-year graduation rates over last baseline year
Median Cohort Six-Year Graduation Rate	34%	35%	37%	35%	36%	40%	**+5%** in median cohort six-year graduation rates over last baseline year

Institutions that did not submit data or did not capture data elements were excluded from the analyses.

Institutional Outcomes

From 2013-2019, CPI institutions reported improvements across several student outcome measures. While those outcomes cannot be directly attributed to program participation, all institutions improved on the following metrics: four- and six-year graduation rates, completion rates, job placement rates, median salary of graduates and student loan default rates **(see Figure 7)**. Collectively, four-year graduation rates (percentage of a student cohort who completed their program within 100% of time) increased slightly from 23% to 26%, and six-year graduation rates (percentage of a student cohort who completed their program within 150% of time) increased slightly from 38% to 40%. Additionally, more than 83,000 students completed (number of students conferred degrees) their programs from 2013-2019. Notably, the University of West Alabama (UWA) demonstrated a 29% increase in completion rates during this time, followed by Fayetteville State University with a 10% increase.

From 2013-2019, the job placement rate for all CPI institutions increased slightly from 42% to 45%. Additionally, the median salary for students who graduated from these institutions grew nominally from $44,750 to $45,000. Graduates from Rust College, Fayetteville State University and Xavier University of Louisiana (XULA) demonstrated the highest increase in median salary from 2013-2019 **(see Figure 8)**. Lastly, our institutions experienced an overall decline in student loan default rates from 16% to 13%. Fisk University and Huston-Tillotson University were among those with the highest decrease in this measure, both at 9%.

> More than 83,000 students completed (number of students conferred degrees) their programs from 2013-2019.

Figure 7

Student Outcome Measures

Graduation Rates
4-YEAR **23% - 26%**
6-YEAR **38% - 40%**

Job Placement Rates **42% - 45%**

Median Salary of Graduates **$44,700 - $45,000**

Completion Rates **OVER 83,000 Students**

Student Loan Default Rates **16% - 13%**

Guided Pathways

CPI institutions used a guided pathways model as an approach to institutional transformation. Pathways required institutions to develop an integrated, institution-wide approach to student success based on intentionally designed, clear, coherent and structured educational experiences. To effectively execute work under this prong, institutions gathered significant institutional research to craft evidence-based approaches aimed at increasing student access and degree attainment.

> Pathways required institutions to develop an integrated, institution-wide approach to student success.

Aligned with the guided pathways approach, institutions executed a range of departmental review activities aiding the development of program maps and accessible documents outlining course sequences, progress milestones and program learning outcomes, with plans for continuous evaluation to ensure students are well served.

The primary use and purposes are seen in institutional progress in tracking and responding to retention and graduation trends with increasingly targeted efforts. These targeted programs frequently involve employers in curriculum and program development; provide critical support services to students, such as job placement and emergency aid; and aim to provide guidance to successful outcomes for diverse learners. Ultimately, guided pathways approaches serve as a framework for redesign to improve the overall student experience at institutions.

Curricular Enhancements

Under the curricular enhancements prong, CPI institutions executed a multitude of efforts, largely focused on re-imagining course delivery and workforce alignment. Partnering institutions are making strides by engaging faculty in cross-functional teams dedicated to institutional transformation. These teams provide extensive faculty development and are revising curriculum to align ever-changing needs of students.

Several institutions developed faculty workgroups, and, in some cases, industry advisory committees to review course descriptions, discuss 21st century workforce needs, and develop paths to enhance curriculum. The purpose of these workgroups is to move toward a more interdisciplinary and industry-aligned approaches to academic programming, and to increase student opportunities and connection with the workforce. These workgroups were also effective in breaking down departmental silos and giving students access to high impact faculty across campus.

Additionally, some institutions have implemented CPI in other ways: by employing an interdisciplinary approach to major/course creation or revision; developing meta-majors; and/or integrating social media and other technologies as classroom tools.

For many institutions, re-imaging course delivery meant revamping the general education program. Through program audits, institutions revamped general education courses to minimize the time it takes for students to get into their major and ensure their general education courses align with students' career goals. This has minimized the amount of credit hours students need to graduate.

As a result, some approaches delivered across our institutions have been able to employ an interdisciplinary approach to major/course creation, development of meta-majors, integration of social media and other technologies as classroom tools, and course elimination, refreshing or joining. The interdisciplinary approach has allowed students to reimagine the career possibilities through a liberal arts degree. For example, the development of meta-majors has allowed for students to choose and change majors seamlessly, without impeding their progress toward graduation. The integration of social media and other technologies has allowed instructors to engage with students in multiple capacities in a more effective and efficient manner. Through a curriculum enhancement focus, institutions were able to update their curriculum to eliminate, refresh, or join courses that will prepare students for the 21st century workforce.
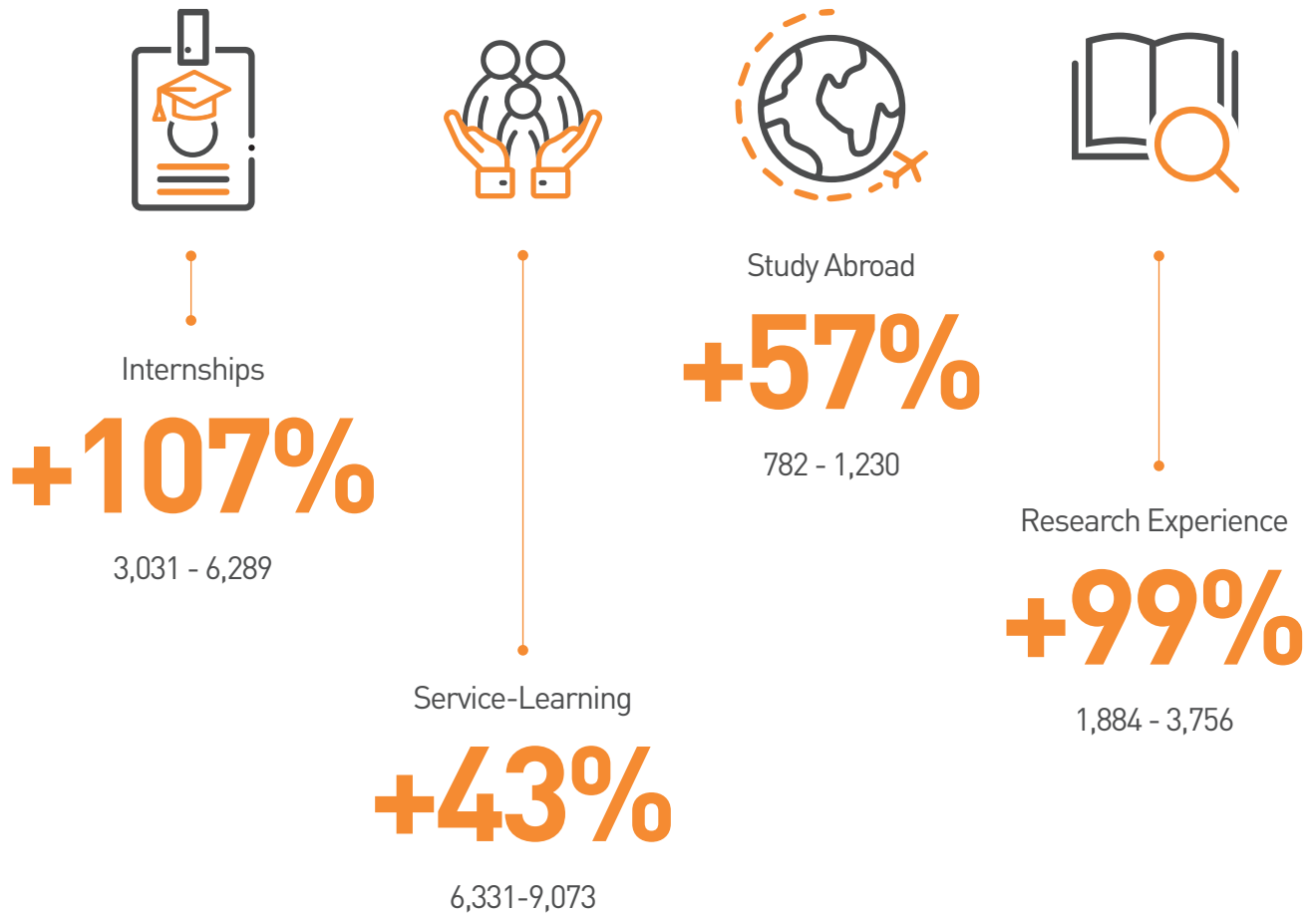
Integrated Co-Curricular Engagement

Institutions showed substantial growth in student participation in experiential learning opportunities, including internships, service-learning, study abroad and research. Overall, participation in each of these areas increased for all institutions **(see Figure 9)**. To address student needs in this area, academic affairs departments have collaborated with student affairs, offices of student success and offices of career services to rethink and redesign everything from first- and second-year programs to courses, colloquiums/seminars and labs. Redesign efforts focused on creating a more stimulating academic environment by introducing career-focused knowledge and hands-on experiences both in classrooms and their community. Staff and faculty are working together to create activities and experiences that apply classroom knowledge, improve student "soft skills" and prepare them to better serve their communities. As a result, institutions have seen growth in student touchpoints and event attendance for offices of career services, as well as student satisfaction with courses integrating career-focused components.

> Overall, participation in each of these areas increased for all institutions.

Figure 9

Overall Increase in Statistics for Integrated Co-Curricular Engagement Opportunities

Internships

+107%

3,031 - 6,289

Service-Learning

+43%

6,331-9,073

Study Abroad

+57%

782 - 1,230

Research Experience

+99%

1,884 - 3,756

Institutional Highlights

Many of the CPI institutions lead in providing Black students with invaluable experiential learning opportunities, not only among our cohort or HBCUs in general, but in higher education more broadly **(see Figure 10)**.

For example, Florida Memorial University and Morgan State University led the cohort in percent increase of students participating in an internship, with growth of 68% and 60%, respectively. Tennessee State University (TSU) and Dillard University saw the largest percent increases in service-learning participation at 113% and 64%, respectively.

Spelman College had the overall highest proportion of students who studied abroad, with roughly 24% annually from 2013-2014 to 2018-2019. They have also recently implemented a program that is intended to allow all students to study abroad for at least one semester during their matriculation, with the purpose of maintaining a 96% study abroad rate for graduates.

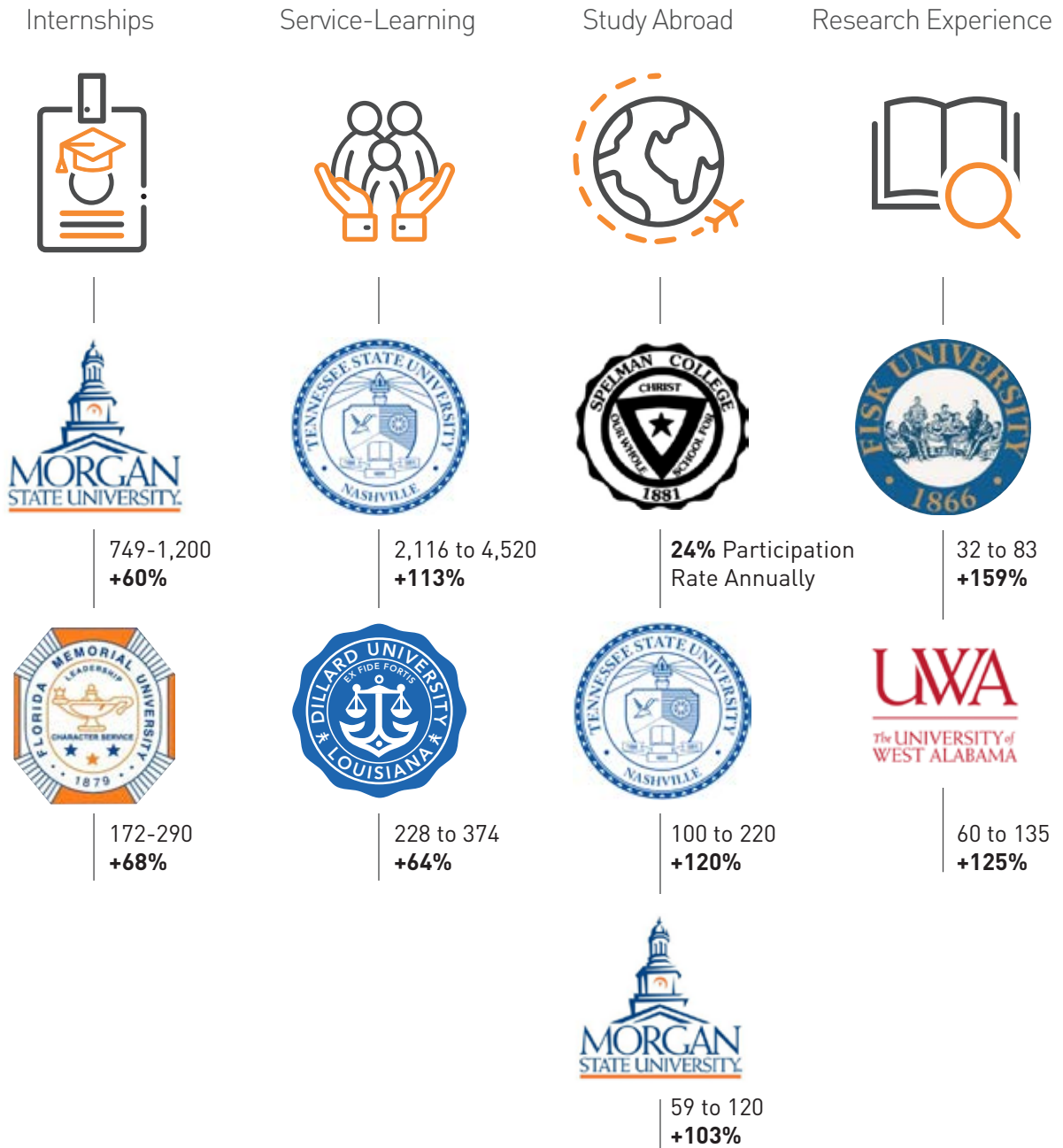Further, TSU and Morgan State University led the group in percent increase of students participating in study abroad, with increases of 120% and 103%, respectively.

Lastly, Fisk University and UWA reported the highest increases in students participating in research experiences at 159% and 125%, respectively.

Many of the CPI institutions lead in providing Black students with invaluable experiential learning opportunities.

Figure 10

Select Exemplar Institutions Reporting Increases in Internships, Service-Learning, Study Abroad Programs and Research Experience From School-Year 2013-2014 to 2018-2019

Internships	Service-Learning	Study Abroad	Research Experience
MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY	**TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY**	**SPELMAN COLLEGE**	**FISK UNIVERSITY**
749-1,200 **+60%**	2,116 to 4,520 **+113%**	**24%** Participation Rate Annually	32 to 83 **+159%**
FLORIDA MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY	**DILLARD UNIVERSITY**	**TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY**	**UWA The UNIVERSITY of WEST ALABAMA**
172-290 **+68%**	228 to 374 **+64%**	100 to 220 **+120%**	60 to 135 **+125%**
		MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY	
		59 to 120 **+103%**	

Student perspectives from focus groups informed us on the impact of CPI and related programs. We were able to get a true understanding of its use and effectiveness, as well as other key factors that played a role in students' preparation for the workforce post-graduation.

At **Benedict College**, one student leader recalled her experience with the CPI Office during her four years at the institution being the source for many of the opportunities she received throughout her matriculation. The following statement shows how CPI made a difference in her post-graduation decisions.

One student from **Norfolk State University** spoke to their faculty's critical role in preparing students for the workforce.

A **Spelman College** senior spoke to the impact of their study abroad program.

QUOTE "

I never thought about Alabama A&M (for graduate school), so if had I not attended that career fair, I wouldn't have had that opportunity offered to me. I've also participated in the student leadership and diversity conference that they [the CPI Office] hold. I could go on and on because I take advantage of almost every opportunity that they have.

"

QUOTE "

Our faculty are a very close knit group with high expectations. They push us to the extreme in the political science program, so you have to be analytical all the time. They make sure that we stay focused and when we enter the workforce, we use the skills we have learned.

"

QUOTE "

I've had the privilege of studying abroad in Morocco and London. I must say those experiences allowed me to develop the understanding, knowledge and skills to engage appropriately across many cultures and, ultimately, become a better leader in today's globalizing world.

"

Progress Summary

To measure the progress of participating institutions and UNCF, in addition to the interim success of CPI, we developed six key indicators and 12 associated evaluative questions. Of the six indicators **(see Figure 11)**, we are "accomplished" in four areas and "developing" in two. One area in development is an alignment with workforce. Though many institutions have workforce partnerships, we are still in discussions related to a cohort-wide initiative. To assess culture and readiness for institutional transformation in our institutions, we deployed the institutional transformation assessment in a pilot effort in 2019 (12 schools). Our pilot allowed us to develop best practices in execution, and we will scale assessment to all 24 CPI institutions in 2020.

In addition to the interim success of CPI, we developed six key indicators and 12 associated evaluative questions.

Figure 11

Mid-Term Analysis

A — **Continuous improvement in terms of level of program execution demonstrated on progress reports.**

Have report scores increased over the course of the grant?

Have changes in goals, objectives and strategies minimized as the program has right-sized?

A — **Institutions show continuous increases in executing pathways-related innovative programs.**

Have report scores increased over the course of the grant?

Have changes in goals, objectives and strategies minimized as the program has right-sized?

A — **Institutions have established data collection protocols and a baseline measure for program-related data indicators to produce a work/life ready student.**

Do all participating institutions have established data reporting protocols?

Does baseline data indicate a positive increase in student success outcomes?

Does baseline data indicate a positive increase in institutional health outcomes?

D — **Institutions demonstrate increased work readiness and SES of graduates, through job skills, attainment and salary.**

Do all participating institutions have established data reporting protocols?

Does baseline data indicate a positive increase in student success outcomes?

Does baseline data indicate a positive increase in institutional health outcomes?

A — **Institutions have identified discreet pathways-related programs and right-sized for scaling.**

Has the institution developed data-informed/backed pathways activities?

D — **Institution demonstrates institution wide buy-in to strategy, signaling a cultural shift toward being data-informed and student-success focused.**

Has the institution developed data-informed/backed pathways activities?

A Accomplished   **D** Developing   **O** Off-Track

Citations: Owens, L. James, B. Smith-Lewis, E. & Preston, D. (2020). CPI Mid-Term Report. Washington, DC: UNCF Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute.