

## **Mason Campbell and Tracy Harrell on MMA in Arkansas Colleges**

**Mason Campbell, chief academic officer, Arkansas Division of Higher Education:** Multiple measures was sort of what we dug into initially with our policy, so the more indicators, the better. So what that research showed is that even that single GPA indicator is so much stronger than any single test score.

**Tracy Harrell, chief program development officer, Arkansas Division of Higher Education:** The research doesn't lie. I mean, it was absolutely compelling. The analysis that—and I mention this, and I don't know that everyone knows what a ROC curve is—but the analysis contained the ROC curves that showed the probability of a student's success based on different measures of placement, and it was outstanding how far ahead GPA was as a predictor of student success in math and English. So numbers don't lie.

**Campbell:** We didn't have nearly enough adoption in the state. So while we had all the appropriate policy levers in place and we were encouraging at a state level, you know, we didn't have enough adoption, and we needed to double down on that encouragement and reinforce why it was a positive thing for our state.

**Harrell:** We also needed our institutions to trust that multiple measures work and that high school GPA is a strong indicator of success.

**Campbell:** We issued those recommendations to make it clear that we support a minimum threshold for the use of high school GPA. We wanted them to know that we're comfortable and that we're confident in their use of high school GPA, and we wanted them to push the boundaries further than they have in the past.

**Harrell:** And I think also that we decided with issuing recommendations rather than changing policy because we wanted the flexibility to update those recommendations as updated information or research became available. Policy change is not always easy, so changing recommendations is a much easier process. And like Mason said, it also allowed us to set a GPA minimum threshold, which we had not done before.

**Campbell:** Yeah, so the policy is not restrictive, it's permissive. But then, like Tracy said, the recommendations just allow us to be even more flexible in that. Sixty percent of the students taking remediation have a high school GPA of 3.0 or higher, which is a bit staggering. So, you know, that's great evidence that we have more work to do. Of course, our retention rates, you know, our statewide retention rates are just a little lower than the national average, so we want to move the needle on those. Our next phase will be to improve the data collection so we can see how institutions are leveraging MMA for each student. So right now, broadly, we can see how they're using their placement plan across different populations and across different programs. But as of today, we can't track how specific students were placed. So it's a little difficult to track student success based on placement measures. But that's our ultimate goal, and we've been working with our data team to find a way to achieve that lift without overwhelming or creating lots of unnecessary new reporting requirements. And we're optimistic

that we can get it done. But, yeah, the more we know about how institutions are using MMA, we'd love to have CAPR back to do phase two of a research study.